

**Cholon's urban evolution, 1879–1930:
State, Locals, and Trans-locals**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Cholon was an independent port-town with its own separate Municipal Council under French rule from 1880 until 1930. Once the French amalgamated Cholon with Saigon, it has only survived as the colloquial name for districts 5 and 6 in Vietnam's largest metropolitan area, now renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

In a bid to retrieve Cholon's lost history this study profiles its evolution as a separate port town, and how the French colonial government in Saigon and the local Municipal Government administered it. After detailing Cholon's relevant pre-colonial antecedents, this task is pursued by using the triangle of interactions between three actors—the state, the local population and the trans-local population. This triangular framework provides the basis for analysing the town's transformation at four points in time: 1880, 1896, 1913, and 1930.

This cross-sectional analysis reveals constant negotiations between non-state actors and state actors in Cholon's local affairs. The central state saw Cholon as economically important, but too 'foreign' to be fully absorbed into the colonial enterprise. This perception kept the central state from imposing its total dominance over municipal affairs.

The study argues that a weak central governance allowed Cholon's non-state actors the autonomy and obscurity to build the town in a way that often bypassed Cochinchina's Colonial Council in Saigon. Cholon experienced accelerated growth when the Municipal Government recognised and enabled the enduring pattern of opaque community leadership by non-state actors to function in the urban area. These actors comprised a mixture of trans-local and local groups and networks.

Cholon's society sustained an enduring tradition of strong self-governance, connections to wider non-local networks, and entrepreneurialism that drove the economy of the French colonial state. Moreover, its history provides a vivid account of lived experiences in a port-town, whose waterborne way-of-life was pressured to change by the imperative of land-focused colonial urbanisation.

Keywords: port-town urbanisation, French colonial governance, cross-sectional analysis

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study profiles Cholon's evolution as a separate port-town and examines how the French colonial governments at municipal and metropolitan levels governed it. It argues that Cholon's society was characterised by strong self-governance. This phenomenon was marked by several mixed Chinese-Vietnamese communities, who commanded large segments of both population and resources. They used their position to negotiate with both municipal and metropolitan governments. Initially, the literature review contextualises and justifies the port-town of Cholon as a research choice. Then a series of key issues pertinent to its history and culture are identified. Based on these issues, an appropriate methodology is developed, which informs the study's structure and its component chapters. Finally, the significance of this research is discussed.

Why Cholon?

Originally, the name Cholon referred to the Big Market; it became the official name of the settlement when the French founded the Municipality in 1879. Since then, Cholon has been known by many names: 'the Big Market', 'the Chinese town', 'the industrial town', 'the rice town', and most recently, Districts 5 and 6 of Ho Chi Minh City. The urban area is often mentioned as a side note to Saigon's histories. Nevertheless, Cholon's peculiarities have remained unexplained, because it has appeared to be so well-integrated into the Saigon metropolitan area.

This study contends that Cholon merits its own history. It had a history equalling Saigon when it was a separate town. Cholon only became 'part of Saigon' when administrative reforms in the early 1930s amalgamated the two centres into one urban region. Even then, doubts were raised about the integration of two vastly different towns.

The study traces Cholon's evolution under a separate municipality up to this amalgamation. Also, it unpacks the list of connotations that Cholon invoked. Questions are raised about the colonial categorisation of so-called 'foreign Asians', most notably the Chinese, who had a long-running influence on the town's transformation. Then the analysis delves into the social and economic patterns that together formed an outsider's impression of a robust market site with many temples. Finally, the examination goes beyond the touristic sights of steam-driven mills on the quays to find out the forces behind their rise and fall. In doing so, the study seeks to answer several key questions.

Why did Cholon remain obscure in historical discourse? The town's obscurity was disproportionate to its significant role as an economic hub and major urban area within French Cochinchina. Only a handful of towns had their own municipal government: Hà Nội, Haiphong, Saigon, and Cholon.¹ The clue may be found in Cholon's demography. Many people deviated from the colonial government's neat categorisation of ethnicity and citizenship. A large portion of the population comprised highly mobile waterborne travellers and dwellers. The permanent, long-term residents were often in a minority.

How did the Cholon Municipality govern the town? The Municipality of Cholon experienced enduring pre-existing socio-economic patterns. Cholon's society was led by local associations that often, overtly or covertly, resisted imposition from central directives. Many economic and social activities were connected with wider regional networks that traversed colonial borders, which empowered local notable families with influence and wealth to act independently. Such local, semi-informal authorities were even emboldened during the early decades by the government's dependence on their economic support. Hence, the Municipality

¹ Tracy C. Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indochina* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 19.

was caught in a bind between responding to pragmatic local demands and complying with hierarchical imperatives.

How did the communities in Cholon govern themselves? One commonality pervading Saigon's histories is that the colonial government was not the only ruling authority in the urban area; it was not. In Cholon, the communities insisted on preserving a pre-existing way-of-life in which some forms of self-governance were the norm. Community leadership in the form of administratively entitled *congrégations*, temples, associations, clubs, or firms, channelled the energy, resources and ideas of highly mobile groups of people into the town's local affairs. Hence, they held much sway over changes in the town.

Overall, this study profiles Cholon's evolution as a self-determining port-town until its amalgamation into the larger urban region. This narrower scope on local affairs is used as a manageable way of overcoming certain limitations evident in the current literature.

Literature review

Considering Cholon's comparable importance to Saigon, there has not been a monograph on its history in the English and French language. As noted, Cholon often appears as a footnote that is interesting, but ultimately irrelevant, to Saigon's history.² Cholon's issues, if acknowledged in this literature, are treated as a sub-set of Saigon's history, with little awareness given to the fact that it was a commensurate town with a bigger area and larger population between the 1880s and the 1930s.

² For example, Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991), 85–160. Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *From Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City: 300 Years History* (Ho Chi Minh City: Land Service, Science and Technics Publishing House, 1998). Vũ Hồng Liên, British Academy and ECAF fellow 2013, *The Making of Saigon: From the Nguyen Lords to 1954* (London, 2013). André Baudrit, *Contribution à l'histoire de Saigon : Extraits des Registres de Délibérations de la Ville de Saigon, Indochine Française, 1867-1916* (Saigon: J. Testelin, 1936). X. Guillaume, "Saigon, or the Failure of an Ambition (1858–1945)," in *Colonial Cities: Essays on Urbanism in a Colonial Context*, ed. R.J. Ross and Gerard J. Telkamp (Dordrecht, Netherlands ; Boston : Hingham; MA, USA: Springer, 1985), 181–92.

Some studies recognise the town's separateness and value. Nguyễn Đình Đầu points out that the degree of urbanisation in Cholon had already been quite dense prior to colonisation.³ Vo M. Nghia states that Cholon had been more developed as an urban area than Saigon, before the explosions of construction that occurred during the 1920s as an urban area.⁴ Both Charles Wheeler and Phillippe Peycam acknowledge the capability and influence of Cholon's original inhabitants—the Minh Hương Chinese—in the founding and development of formal states and cities in southern Vietnam.⁵ Yet these research studies do not probe into what the presence of a separate Cholon, or its local communities, might have meant for the governance and urbanisation of urban areas.

Son Nam and Vương Hồng Sển are well-known writers and researchers, who captured the authentic cultures of the Saigon-Cholon areas. Their writings are a treasure trove of local knowledge, individual voices, and popular tales, interspersed with more official information upon relevant major events. Partly research treatises, and partly literature, they approached the urban areas from the perspective of long-term residents, who were also informed of general historical transformations that had occurred. In particular, the time when Vương Hồng Sển lived in Saigon overlapped with the period under study. In 1919, he moved to Saigon to study at *Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat*⁶ and, after graduation in 1923, he stayed on in the city and worked in various government departments. He retired in the 1960s after two decades of

³ Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *Nghiên Cứu Địa Bạ Triều Nguyễn: Gia Định* (Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1994), 188.

⁴ Nghia M. Vo, *Saigon: A History* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2011).

⁵ Phillippe M.F. Peycam, *The Birth of Vietnamese Political Journalism: Saigon 1916–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 25. Charles Wheeler, “Interests, Institutions, and Identity: Strategic Adaptation and the Ethno-Evolution of Minh Hương (Central Vietnam), 16th-19th Centuries”, *Itinerario* 39, no. 1 (2015): 141–66. Eric Tagliacozzo, “An Urban Ocean: Notes on the Historical Evolution of Coastal Cities in Greater Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 6 (2007): 911–32.

⁶ Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa* (Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà xuất bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1992), 9.

working at *Musée Blanchard de la Brosse*.⁷ His writings on both Cholon and Saigon went beyond the scope of his formal education and career, as they included recitation of oral information. His accounts were not intended to be academically rigorous because Vương Hồng Sển, like Sơn Nam, never followed the contemporary convention in citations. Nevertheless, thanks to both their writings, fragments of their lived experiences have been preserved which otherwise would have been lost. This study consults their writings, where relevant, and treats them as clues, pointers, or possibilities to corroborate archival sources.⁸

Haydon Cherry's (2011) account of the poor in Saigon uncovers certain degrees of self-governance that individuals and communities exercised.⁹ By following the life stories of individuals who lived at the bottom levels of colonial society, Cherry exposes their active agency to survive, to make a niche for themselves, and, occasionally, to thrive. Also, Cherry discusses the colonial institutions such as hospitals, the police, and registration, all of which affected the lives of the urban poor. Nevertheless, without an emphasis on the separate municipalities of Saigon and Cholon, Cherry's study mainly refers to them as the principal urban areas of Cochinchina. Following in Cherry's footsteps, this study teases out how urban institutions were able to function. Not only did they draw upon official functionaries, but also private supporters of government initiatives. Further, this study makes a distinction between differences in governance between Cholon and Saigon.

⁷ Now Museum of Vietnamese History.

⁸ Some reprints of their works on Saigon and Cholon: Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa* (Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà xuất bản Tổng hợp, 2013). Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Tạp Pín Lù* (Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Tổng Hợp, 2013). Sơn Nam, *Sài Gòn Xưa, Ấn Tượng 300 Năm Và Tiếp Cận Với Đồng Bằng Sông Cửu Long* (T.P. Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2008). Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định - Bến Nghé Xưa và Người Sài Gòn* (T.P. Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2014).

⁹ Haydon Leslie Cherry, "Down and Out in Saigon: A Social History of the Poor in a Colonial City, 1860–1940" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2011), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I (921659501).

The study intends to go further than just separating the two towns. Inspired by James Scott's work on 'metis',¹⁰ this study challenges the all-important role of the colonial state in developing a town, without also considering the agency of local communities. While Saigon often served as the seat of regional or central government under both the Nguyễn and French regimes, it was harder to recognise the agency of the community in relation to the state. Saigon's local affairs were often embroiled in government concerns. Focusing on Cholon, a comparable town nearby, makes it easier to tease out the roles of local communities in shaping an urban area.

By highlighting the often overlooked roles of local communities, this study agrees with the contention raised by an area of research that traced the emergence of Saigon and Cholon as major port-towns within a wider space called 'the Water Frontier'. In particular, Li Tana and Nola Cooke's edited volume has provided rich accounts of the century-long process of migration, trade and military expansion within the Water Frontier.¹¹ As shown in Figure 1.1, the Water Frontier is defined as a sparsely inhabited territory stretching from "Champa in the north past the Mekong Delta around to the Gulf of Thailand and south to Nakhon Si Thammarat on the Malay Peninsula".¹² Crossing over the borders of modern nation-states, this region shared some distinctive characteristics. There were free movements and exchanges of people, goods, ideas, and practices; these energy flows blended with various pre-existing elements, and re-emerged in different local forms. Consequently, local communities went through repeated shaping and re-shaping periods, during which all ethnic labels "should be

¹⁰ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State : How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, United States: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Nola Cooke and Tana Li, eds., *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880* (Lanham, MD; Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).

¹² Li, *Water Frontier*, 1–8.

taken as tentative, fluid, even temporary.”¹³ Hence, the study builds upon the literature on the Water Frontier to characterise the particular path that led to the emergence of Cholon as an urban settlement.

Expanding upon the coastal connection delineated in the Water Frontier, this study uses Ng Chin Keong’s research to locate and contextualise Cholon as a port-town within a wider unitary Maritime East Asia.¹⁴ The northern and southern areas of the East Asian Maritime space should be considered, according to Ng Chin Keong, as one unified space of exchange and movement (Fig. 1.1). He argues that this enduring unity has been blurred, because two different historical approaches have been pursued: one depends on an over-reliance on Chinese sources, and the other focuses on Southeast Asian-centred sources, including those from Europe and Japan. Both of these historiographical biases need to be transcended in order to comprehend the common history of maritime East Asia. From north to south Maritime East Asia encompasses the coast of the East Asian and Southeast Asian mainland, and the archipelagos of both the East Asian and Southeast Asian seas. The resultant region has four key geographical features: a long coastline, mountain ranges, river deltas, and archipelagos. What unites the settlements within these vastly different geographical domains has been the sea.

¹³ Li, *Water Frontier*, 1–8.

¹⁴ Chin-Keong Ng, *Boundaries and Beyond: China’s Maritime Southeast in Late Imperial Times* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017).



Figure 1.1 The Water Frontier in Maritime East Asia

Sources: see Appendix 1.

The study uses the previous research contributions to contextualise the influences exerted on Cholon's evolution. These influences came from not only the French metropole, but also from the regional connections within the Water Frontier and the wider Maritime East Asia. Pertinent to Cholon is the argument that urban areas in this space have been formed and

driven by settler communities long before any state established a substantial presence. Archival records may have over-emphasised the state's authority. Instead, the state's role distilled from the records should be interpreted as a constant balancing act in relation to the communities' self-governing authority, by drawing upon annual directories, memoirs and temple records.

A well-known group of communities in Cholon was known collectively as the Chinese. Tracy C. Barrett (2012) provides the most comprehensive study of the ethnic Chinese in French Indochina.¹⁵ By focusing on the Chinese *congrégations*, Barrett provides a broad sweep of how these *congrégations* functioned in various parts of Indochina. Her study is most instrumental in learning how the ethnic Chinese communities negotiated, complied, or defied state regulations. Nevertheless, the study is restrictive in the sense that the *congrégation* was a colonial institution seeking to manage those whom it conceived to be a 'foreign Asian' population, while allowing a strong degree of self-governance via elected *congrégation* heads. As the numerous examples in this study will show, the so-called *congrégation* heads were often not effective group leaders; the actual leaders remained behind-the-scenes. Therefore, the *congrégation*, as argued by Elizabeth Sinn,¹⁶ was a France-centred approach that risked seeing the people in question as an ethnically exclusive population of a regulated colony, instead of ethnically heterodox and highly mobile communities.

Barrett's research helps us to make sense of how a major proportion of Cholon's society self-governed and negotiated their position with the colonial authorities. Yet seeing Cholon as *la ville chinois*, a 'Chinatown', is a gross simplification of its complexities. The Chinese only

¹⁵ Tracy C. Barrett, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indochina* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

¹⁶ Elizabeth Sinn, "The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia: The Overseas Chinese in Indochina," review of *Chinese Diaspora*, by Tracy C. Barrett, *The China Quarterly* 211 (2012): 873–74.

surpassed the Vietnamese in population size a decade after the First World War.¹⁷ In addition to a continuously sizeable Vietnamese population, there were also peoples from other parts of Indochina, ‘foreign Asians’, the Chettiars who were either *assimilés* or *Indiens*, the ethnic Chinese and Malay British subjects from the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong, and a handful of Europeans. Among the Vietnamese majority, there were *assimilés*, *indigènes*, and the mixed Sino-Viet Minh Hương. All of these variables and variations further complicate Cholon’s simple label as a ‘Chinese town’.

The triangle of three actors

To approach Cholon’s complexities and the tendency for the state to loom large in archival records, three key actors are proposed to analyse Cholon’s development: (i) the state authorities; (ii) the local inhabitants; and (iii) the trans-local sojourners and migrants (Fig. 1.2). While all three groups were present in varying degrees within most of maritime East Asia’s port-towns, this study contends that trans-local actors were the most important agent in Cholon.

Considerable caution must be exercised in using ethnicities to define these three agents. An easy misconception is to align the state with either the Imperial Vietnamese Nguyễn or the colonial French; the locals with Vietnamese or Khmer peasants; and the trans-locals with Chinese migrants. This imposition of ethnic constructs onto previous societies is compounded by the prevailing impression of life in Cholon being derived from the archives. Recognising the limitations of the available state-centred archives means that these impressions should be taken loosely. At best, they should be seen as an indicator of the activities of different agencies, rather than as a marker for the effective and exclusive demarcation of ethnicities.

¹⁷ André Baudrit, *Guide Historique Des Rues de Saigon* (Saigon: S. I. L. I., 1943), 74–75.

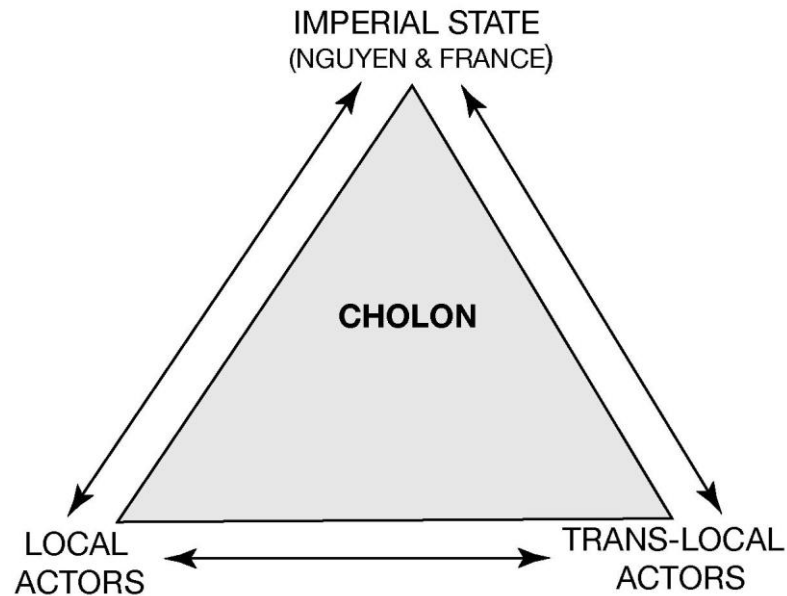


Figure 1.2 The triangle comprising three key actors

The dynamics between the three key agents provides a framework to analyse Cholon's development. First, the **state**, nominally, included indirect military rule by the Nguyễn's frontier regime up until the early 1830s, and the French early colonial regime from the 1860s until the 1880s. Second were the direct imperial bureaucracy from the mid-1830s to the French conquest, and the colonial civil administration from 1880. Further distinctions are made between the Municipal government in Cholon, the Cochinchinese Colonial Council in Saigon, and the Governor-General of Indochina in Hà Nội.

Secondly, the **locals** were those identified by the state as their legitimate subjects, which they were directly responsible for administering. They were assumed to have an attachment or access to resources such as land and properties, the value of which was registered, taxed, and

conscripted. As the numerical majority, the locals were often categorised as Vietnamese, but, over time, a minority in the administration and industry attained *assimilé* status. Also complicating this category, though, was the continuing existence of thousands of Minh Hương people who, with a mixed Sino-Viet parentage, often garnered particular social respect in Cholon.

Thirdly, the **trans-locals** rarely fit neatly into the state's categorisation. In Cholon's case, the ethnic Chinese assumed the major role in this group. Only a tiny minority managed to attain *assimilé* status or French citizenship before the 1910s.¹⁸ The majority were migrants, who were grouped into 'foreign Asians' and were administered by *congrégations*.¹⁹ Being seen as ethnic Chinese did not mean they all came from China. An influential group of residents were born and raised in neighbouring colonies. They maintained extensive ties with these localities, even after they had settled down in Cholon. In the early decades, they proved more familiar with the workings of colonial regimes than many of the so-called Vietnamese locals.

Being seen as 'foreign' did not mean all were strangers to Cholon. Many lived there for several decades, forming sustained business partnerships and marriages. Compared to the Vietnamese, who moved to Cholon from other places, these long-term urban residents could be described as being more local in their familiarity and attachment to Cholon. They did not limit themselves to one place either; many travelled across the region for business and family purposes. Their mobility allowed them to get attached to a second hometown, but they also faced the risk of expulsion and separation from families in case of trouble with the law. They did not segregate themselves, but in later decades a specific habitation pattern emerged.

¹⁸ 'Naturalisation des Chinois. Questions de Principe', 1908, ANOM, INDO GGI 20527.

¹⁹ Barrett on the arbitrariness of the categorisation after the conquest. Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 186–87.

Ignoring paperwork, the trans-locals could be hard to discern from locals in Cholon.²⁰ Their mobility, diversity, and fluctuating numbers complicated the state's task of governing.

Cross-sectional analysis

The triangle above provides the foundation for exploring the port-town's history in four specific years: 1880, 1896, 1913, and 1930. The selection draws upon the available concentration of materials, amidst a general scarcity of information, to provide thematic answers to the three issues outlined above: Cholon's obscurity, governance, and self-governance. In particular, maps of the urban territory are provided for each year to enable a comparative view of the changes to the waterways underpinning the port-town's way of life.

The periodisation of the cross-sections responds to Christopher Goscha's call to go beyond 1858—the propensity of researchers to divide Vietnam's history into pre-colonial and colonial periods.²¹ This study recognises and describes an enduring substructure on which the French imposed their superstructure. The turning point for Cholon was at the end of 1879 when a sustained Municipality was appointed to govern it. Even then, the Municipality was constrained within pre-existing patterns that only started to change at the turn of the twentieth century.

The cross sectional approach of “slicing history” gives an opportunity to provide an in-depth analysis at one point in time. Several slices allow us to explore and make sense of Cholon's history from its roots in the pre-colonial era, through the beginning of the Municipality under the colonial regime in 1879, industrialisation in 1896 and the port-town's heyday in 1913, before ending with its virtual merger with Saigon in 1930. Before proceeding to the subsequent chapters that discuss each historical slice, an outline of their content is

²⁰ Erica J. Peters, “Colonial Cholon and Its “Missing” Métisses, 1859–1919”, *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 21 (September 2009), <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue21/peters.htm>.

²¹ Christopher E. Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 7–8.

provided. Such research has the benefit of employing a series of slices to demonstrate history as a lived experience, rather than relying on key national turning points. The resultant outcome avoids big national accounts, and provides locally focused histories of selected ‘insignificant’ years, or slices seventeen years apart to capture generational change.

This study draws upon the maps to illustrate Cholon’s urbanisation pattern at each time slice. These maps aid the text in highlighting how municipal priorities shifted over time. Much can be learned from these changes in the physical urban form or lack thereof. Of particular note are the replacement of canals by boulevards, and the specialised development of Cholon’s outskirts.

Thesis structure

Chapter 2 establishes the substructure on which the superstructure was later imposed by the colonial regime. It explains how Cholon started as a semi-urban market site that straddled the boundaries of several villages. By contextualising the 1698 founding of the Nguyễn’s rule in the south, the analysis shows that, despite its official nature, the founding did not mark a brand new beginning. Building upon existing settlers’ villages, the various Nguyễn regimes, from the seventeenth century to the 1850s, co-opted dispersed settlements, local strongmen, and trans-local peoples into a hierarchy that was often weakly enforced. The continuing importance of this substructure continued after the French conquest in 1858.

Chapter 3 studies Cholon in the year 1880, during the Municipality’s first year in office. After more than two decades of French colonisation, Cholon had attained municipal status and a clearly defined urban boundary. Despite such formalisation, the town continued under indirect rule. With several functions unfilled, the Municipal Authority found itself having to rely on community leaders, whose command over both population groups and resources often surpassed official capability.

Chapter 4 hones in on the emergence of the steam-powered rice mills in 1896, which represented the port-town's first industrial endeavour. In the process Cholon's status was raised to be one of the most economically productive towns in Indochina. Also, these large urban mills in the industrialising Western Area emboldened the growth of trans-local firms and business networks. This, in turn, made visible a new Chinese elite group stemming from the diaspora, which comprised rice mill managers and commercial brokers, notably Ong Ka Tiong and Li Cheung. With continuing dependence on such local and trans-local elites, the Municipality was overwhelmed at having to respond to the demands of a growing town. This is borne out by an overview of municipal infrastructure, notably lighting, sewerage, roads, transport, healthcare, and education.

Chapter 5 examines Cholon as a thriving town in 1913. Enriched by the rice industry's strong growth, the elite class translated their wealth into social influence by collaborating with the Municipality on several welfare projects. Such collaborative arrangements resulted in a newly developed northern area, where several municipal buildings began to serve the community's need for both hospitals and schools. While the Municipality had been maintaining a relatively effective balance in their dynamics with local communities, higher levels of government started to call for, and implement, reforms that sought to alter this equilibrium.

Chapter 6 analyses how Cholon started to lose its municipal autonomy in 1930. The merger with Saigon was preceded by several administrative reforms lasting over a decade. Cholon's locals remained ambiguous about such reforms, as the Cholon Municipality had proved to be more efficient in exercising its fiscal duties profitably compared with its Saigon counterpart. Nevertheless, the economic downturn from 1930 led to the collapse of major firms, precipitating Cholon's loss of autonomy to Saigon.

Significance

This study aims to salvage Cholon's lost history in the midst of Saigon's cultural hegemony. Without the pre-existing networks of the diasporic Chinese inside and outside Cholon, colonial Saigon before the 1920s would have had no other source to finance, and justify, the prohibitive costs of colonisation. Indeed, Cochinchina's colonial government continued to count on Cholon's vitality until the late 1930s.

Cholon's extensive economic, social, familial, and political linkages with other major cities in Maritime East Asia cannot be overlooked. Cholon sustained its position as a major rice exporting centre for most of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Cholon's export-oriented economy provided a critical source of funds that enabled commercial projects to succeed in other parts of the region such as tin-mining in Bangka or silk production in Guangzhou.²² Saigon's rice export market was well-known to others, but without the industrial and commercial apparatus in Cholon, its port would hardly have had any rice to export. Without the economic powerhouse, labour, and resources that Cholon attracted, Saigon enterprises could not have survived.

Studying the evolution of Cholon's particular governance is also important because the seemingly impenetrable obscurity of local communities and their enduring way-of-life enabled resistance against both the officials of the Nguyễn and the French governments. Cholon's society preserved a tenacious urban way of life that preceded and continued to subtly influence the viability of urbanisation during the colonial period.

In current memory, Ho Chi Minh City is symbolised by Saigon landmarks, notably the Ben Thanh market, the Notre Dame Cathedral, and the Palace of Unification. Cholon is

²² Cherry, "*Down and Out*," 27.

remembered only by a small minority.²³ This was not the case a hundred years ago. The Cholon way-of-life and culture may seem ‘foreign’ now, only because of the deep transformation that Vietnam has gone through during the last century. There is a need to reclaim this way-of-life as part of Vietnam’s urban experience —a tradition that is fast being forgotten.

²³ Only 3.4% of the people surveyed nominate Cholon as a symbol for the metropolitan. Survey result of ‘Urban Dwellers and Urban Space in Ho Chi Minh City’s Urbanisation (*Cư dân đô thị và không gian đô thị trong tiến trình đô thị hóa ở TP.HCM*)’, by the Institute for Development Studies, HCMC. Cited in Trần Hữu Quang, *Hạ Tầng Đô Thị Sài Gòn Buổi Đầu* (Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Tổng Hợp, 2012), 180–81.

CHAPTER 2: CHOLON'S ANTECEDENTS

The site embraces the precise features of the terrain on which the settlement began and over which it has spread... [and] how, with the passage of time, the settlement utilized, adapts itself to, and transforms these conditions in the process of its formation and expansion.²⁴

The thesis focuses on Cholon's urban development between 1879 and 1930 as a municipality under French colonial administration. An overview of the town's urban structure prior to the French conquest is essential for comprehending the town's subsequent evolution. An understanding of the key elements of Cholon's pre-conquest urban site and situation is necessary for understanding and interpreting changes in its subsequent municipal development at key dates between 1879 and 1930—1880, 1896, 1913 and 1930.

Several important issues stem from an analysis of the physical site's characteristics and the settlement's evolution. What was the precise nature of the terrain on which the settlement began and over which its population later spread? What was the settlement's situation in the southern frontier and Maritime East Asia? And how did this situation transform it into a notable market location?²⁵

In addressing these issues travelogues and temple stone inscriptions are used to complement the reliance on secondary sources to provide the background for analysing Cholon's urban development. Initially, attention is focused upon the site of the sparsely inhabited Đồng Nai-Saigon rivers and how the site shaped and was shaped by waves of immigrants. Then the emergence of the Minh Hương identity as a major migrant group is examined within: (1) the stateless frontier world (from the late 1660s), (2) the Gia Định

²⁴ Robert E. Dickinson, "The Scope and Status of Urban Geography: An Assessment," in *Readings in Urban Geography*, ed. Harold M. Mayer and Clyde F. Kohn (The University of Chicago Press, 1959), 12-13.,.

²⁵ Dickinson, *Urban Geography*, 12-13.

regime (1790s to 1830s), and (3) the Nguyễn Confucian state building (the 1800s to the 1850s). Finally, we return to the transformation of the site into a major settlement and market site between the 1800s to the eve of the French Conquest in the 1850s — a composite picture because the information available is too thin to produce a historical slice at one point in time.

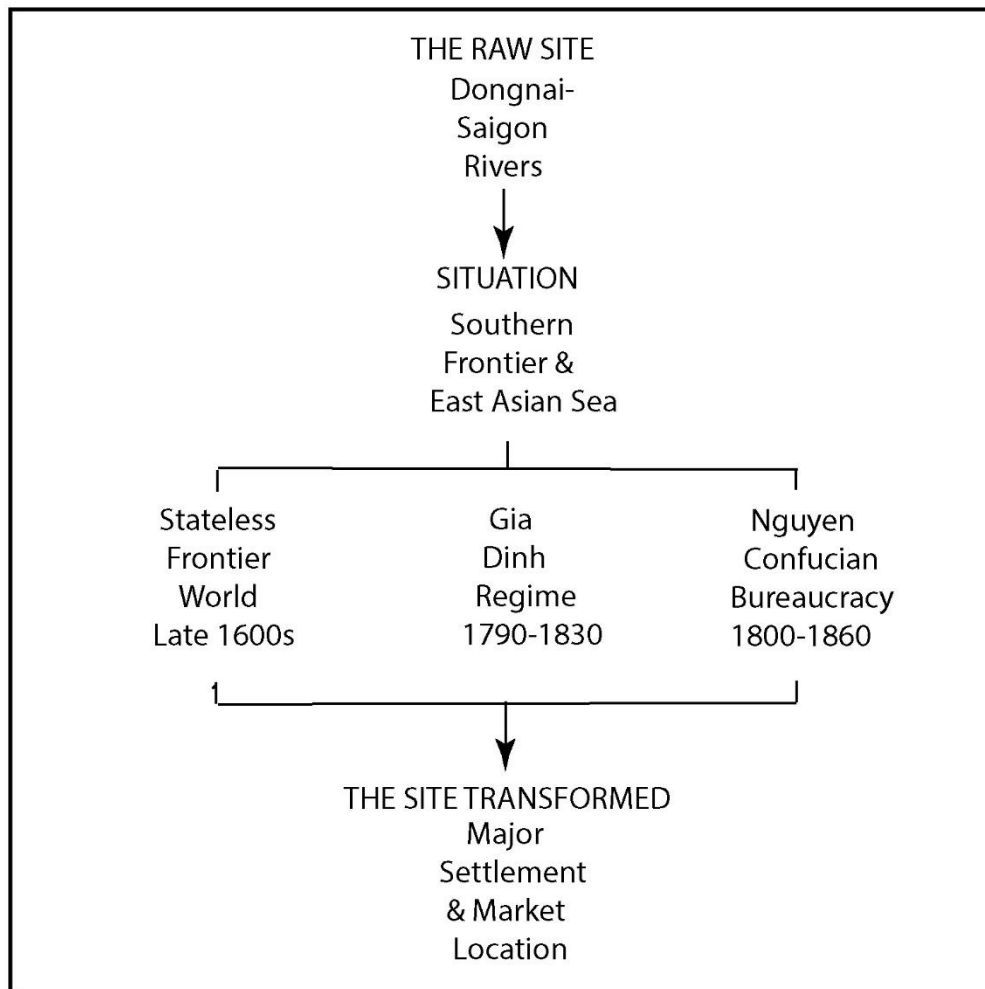


Figure 2.1 The chapter's structure.

The raw site

Both the Saigon and Cholon settlements were established at either end of the same site which embraced “the precise features of the terrain on which the settlement began and over which it has spread”.²⁶ This site was criss-crossed by a network of creeks and swamps, and enclosed by four major waterways: the Saigon River, the Bình Dương River,²⁷ the Thị Nghè River, and the Lò Gốm River (Fig. 2.2).

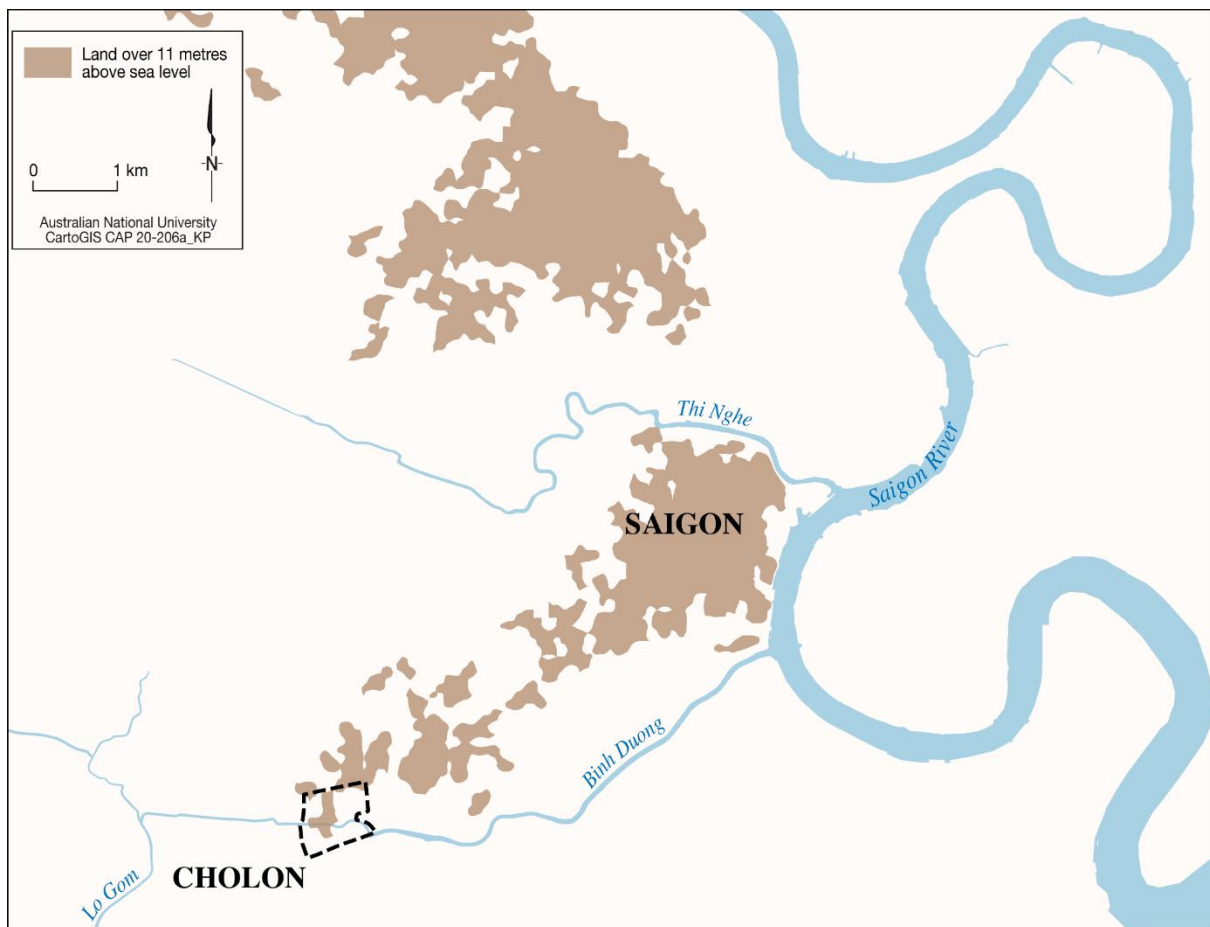


Figure 2.2 Site map of Cholon and Saigon ca. late seventeenth century.

²⁶ Dickinson, *Urban Geography*, 12–13.

²⁷ Also called Arroyo Chinois in colonial times, or kinh Tàu Hủ, or rạch Vàm Bến Nghé. Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định*, 245.

A large marsh occupied much of the far north of the site, which was later known as the Plain of Tombs. Apart from a few areas of higher ground, the flat terrain was prone to flooding during the wet season. Even then, the flooding reached an average of two metres, less severe than in the western area of the Mekong Delta. Saigon-Cholon is situated in between the higher ground of the Đồng Nai plateau, and the low ground of the Delta.²⁸ Not surprisingly, the higher areas above the plain were favoured by the sparse Khmer villages by the late 1660s.

Among these waterways, the Saigon River had the widest and deepest flow, which allowed ample access for ocean-going vessels. The other three waterways only accommodated smaller vessels, but they were linked with a web of rivers and canals that flowed into the Mekong Delta and the upland.²⁹

The situation

Attention is focused on how “with the passage of time, the settlement utilized, adapts itself to, and transforms these [site conditions] in the process of Cholon’s formation and expansion that stems from its situation”.³⁰ within the southern frontier and Maritime East Asia (Fig. 2.3). The situation in which Cholon was located changed over time from the stateless frontier (late 1660s), through the Gia Định regime (1790s–1830s) to the Nguyễn Confucian state building (1802–1860). Each of these re-evaluations of the situation in which Cholon was located have contributed to its emergence as a semi-urban area prior to the French Conquest.

²⁸ Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định*, 21–23, 240–42.

²⁹ Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định - Bến Nghé Xưa và Người Sài Gòn* (T.P. Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2009), 240.

³⁰ Dickinson, *Urban Geography*, , 12–13.



Figure 2.3 Maritime East Asia.

Before the subsequent French occupation, Cholon and Saigon could be seen as being part of a single area that stretched across the river ports to the string of markets, which were surrounded by villages and cultivated fields. The confusion regarding which site ‘Saigon’ referred to suggested an interdependent relationship. Any mention of ‘Saigon’ (old Bến Nghé)

would have inevitably included Cholon (old Saigon). While being aware that Cholon only came into use from the 1820s, and Saigon after the French occupation, the colonial names of Saigon and Cholon are used throughout the study beginning with the stateless frontier in the late 1600s.

The stateless frontier (late 1660s)

The beginning of the settlement on the southern frontier adjacent to Maritime East Asia coincided with a climatic transition between the end of a cool period and the commencement of a warmer period. After the mid-sixteenth century, a “little ice age” severely disrupted the climate and hence agriculture and population in the northern part of Maritime East Asia.³¹

The Mekong Delta, as in most other deltas within the Water Frontier, were still sparsely inhabited. Low populations, an absence of centralised states, and an abundance of alternative sources of food resulted in a lack of incentives and labour to develop a system of irrigation for wet-rice farming, or to drain the marshy fields for habitation. From the Đồng Nai river basin to the Mekong Delta, virtually no large-scale agriculture was pursued. Only small fields were maintained to serve the immediate villages. The low levels of cultivation meant that the villages were not self-sufficient. For the villagers, therefore, trade was essential, and mobility was necessary for sustenance.

By the seventeenth century, the climate had warmed up, which reset favourable conditions for settled agriculture.³² From the mid-1660s, the site witnessed a gradual increase in population growth as waves of refugees, settlers, and troops moved into the Water Frontier.

³¹ ~~Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 149.~~ Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993), 291.

³² Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 149.

These water conditions might have explained why the site was fitting for settlement. The coast was only half-a-day away,³³ but still far enough to keep salt from infiltrating cultivated fields. The Saigon River accommodated a large number of ships; the occasional area of higher ground afforded clear vision for a military base. The settlements and fields were nestled further away, along smaller courses that were well-connected, but also defensible.³⁴

Autonomous settlements started before any state power could have mustered enough resources to rule them. Using 1698 as the founding date of Saigon and Cholon remains in dispute. Brian A. Zottoli shows that the date was not documented in any contemporary sources, but only in nineteenth-century records.³⁵ These records might have attributed the

³³ As recorded by several travelogues: John White, *A Voyage to Cochinchina* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824), 193–200. John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), 317–18. Claudine Salmon and Tạ Trọng Hiệp, ‘Wang Annan Riji: A Hokkien Literatus Visits Saigon (1890)’, trans. Nola Cooke, *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 74–88, 83.

³⁴ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce: The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1988), 15.

³⁵ The period immediately after the 1698 founding was obscure in records. Brian A. Zottoli, “Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History from the 15th to 18th Centuries: Competition along the Coasts from Guangdong to Cambodia” (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 2011), 322.

Zottoli highlights the conflicting claims made by sources from the 17th to the late 18th century, in which the Nguyễn base at Saigon was believed to be founded and developed. His study argues that the Nguyen court records of the 19th century (*Đại Nam Thực Lục Tiền Biên*, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*) provided the authoritative account on the period, but since the records were written retrospectively in the 19th century, often corrupted to assert the Nguyễn’s legitimacy of rule, they must be placed under scrutiny. To remedy the conflicting accounts, Zottoli examines and corroborates court records with other alternative sources more contemporary to the time period, such as: missionaries’ letters by Portuguese Jesuits and those of the M.E.P. (*Les Missions Étrangères de Paris*), and *tōsen* ship captain reports from Nagasaki who traded with Cochinchina, Cambodian chronicles by the historian Mak Phoeun. Ibid, 282–326.

Zottoli’s study reveals that these sources do not allow a definite affirmation on the founding of Saigon in 1698, or the existence of such a site in the early decades of the following century. Since the 17th to 18th centuries are beyond the scope of the thesis’ fieldwork, the study relies on Zottoli’s research for this time period. Thus, it

seventeenth-century founding as justification for the consolidation of the Nguyễn's political influence in the frontier area. Indeed, these records were written in the 1850s, when the Nguyễn's political power was at its peak.³⁶ Thus, the 1698 date probably stemmed from projecting back Nguyễn's political triumph into an earlier time period.

What happened in 1698, as reported by missionary reports, was less momentous. They referred merely to "Cochinchina's subjugation of Champa, and some intervention in Cambodia."³⁷ So Saigon's 1698 founding might have been read into later records as being symbolic of these happenings, rather than the factually limited extent of the Nguyễn's nascent presence on the southern border.

More likely, the beginning of a settlement on the later Cholon site happened sometime between the late 1600s and early 1700s. In this period, large groups of settlers and military forces began to enter the Mekong Delta and the Cambodian upland area through gateways such as the Đồng Nai-Saigon rivers (Figure 2.4). Military forces in the succession dispute between the two Khmer princes, Nặc Nôn and Nặc Thu, fought to gain control over these waterways.³⁸ The Nguyễn forces from the coast of Cochinchina intervened in this dispute to expand their influence into the far south.³⁹ Concurrently, the waves of frontier settlers comprised several disparate groups. These groups added to the area's existing mobile population, whose movement was further necessitated by unchecked conflicts.⁴⁰

accepts the current uncertainty surrounding the 1698 founding, even though the event has been lauded by several scholars as the first milestone of the Nguyễn's hegemony in the Mekong Delta.

³⁶ Ibid, 399.

³⁷ Ibid, 327.

³⁸ Yumio Sakurai, "Eighteenth-Century Chinese Pioneers," 35–37.

³⁹ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 184.

⁴⁰ Reid, *The Lands below the Winds*, 26.

Given the virtual absence of roads, both the settlers and troops shared a common need to control the waterways. For the settlers, by transforming forests and swamps into cultivated land, they either expanded the extent of existing villages, or formed new settlements along the watercourses. Since virtually no settlement was large or established enough to be self-sustaining, the rivers were crucial for food, communication, security, and supplies.



Figure 2.4: Map of Đồng Nai-Saigon Rivers.

For the military forces, having access to the waterways necessitated maintaining reasonable relationships with the villages, rather than engaging in looting and destruction.⁴¹ The settlement of Cù Lao Phố was often mentioned in Nguyễn records and Christian missionary reports, because its settlers appeared to have reliable command of the Đồng Nai River section on which it was located.⁴² While Cù Lao Phố did not submit to a single patronage of any competing forces, the settlement lay within the Gia Định border region that was an area under constant dispute between Cambodia and Cochinchina.⁴³

Cù Lao Phố's reliable command of the Đồng Nai River was a likely reason why more settlements were commenced downstream, including the villages on the site of Saigon and Cholon. The nature of these villages was determined by the inhabitants, rather than by which military forces these inhabitants happened to support. From the late 1600s, several groups of settlers joined from existing Khmer, Cham, and Malay villages. They included thousands of Ming Loyalists refugees accompanied by both ships and soldiers;⁴⁴ smaller, intermittent groups of people and individuals escaping from the Nguyễn Cochinchina's tax burden; and Christian communities fleeing from the Nguyễn court's purge.⁴⁵ During the early 1670s, in particular, both Christians and Jesuits living on Cochinchina's central coast ran away to the far south to dodge eradication by a new power group residing at the Nguyễn's court. This new

⁴¹ Reid, *The Lands below the Winds*, 17 and 123.

⁴² Exceptions were in 1688 when Huang Jian (Hoàng Tiển), a Ming Loyalist, rebelled and took control of the settlement. Zottoli, *Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History*, 301–302. Also in 1747 when Li Wenguang, a Qing merchant, launched a surprise attack on the Nguyễn commander. Zottoli, "Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History," 358.

⁴³ Ibid, 360.

⁴⁴ Wheeler, "Interests, Institutions, and Identity," 152.

⁴⁵ Zottoli, "Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History," 330.

power group, with the support of *Chan* Buddhists, consolidated their power quickly after the arrival of the southern Ming Loyalists.⁴⁶

The growing sway of Ming merchants on Cochinchina's coast did not mean all Ming Loyalists formed a unified group. While Charles Wheeler claims that the coastal merchants expanded to the frontier southwards, Zottoli finds no evidence to support this interpretation. It did not make sense that having formed a strong base at the Nguyễn court, the Ming Loyalist Buddhist faction would want to move away and rebuild settlement within a turbulent frontier. Rather, the situation was much more fragmented. From the 1670s onwards, the capitulation of the Ming Loyalist movement to the Qing empire triggered an ongoing migration to Cochinchina's coast and frontier.⁴⁷ Among the two well-known generals, Yang Yandi and Chen Shangchuan, who famously led settlers to the south, only Yang Yandi was mentioned in missionary records. In 1679 Yang Yandi's entourage arrived in coastal Danang, but it was not until 1687 that they came to the far south.⁴⁸ Initially, they came to Tiền Giang river harbour (likely Mỹ Tho) before later moving to Cù Lao Phố, where Yang died in 1688.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, it was not until 1690 that the earliest appearance of Chen Shangchuan was noted, with no reference to Yang at all.⁵⁰ Chen Shangchuan's leadership of the Cù Lao Phố settlement was also questionable. Neither Chen nor Yang commanded all Ming Loyalist settlers in the frontier.⁵¹ Their forces were merely two among several groups, probably the two that interacted the most with Nguyễn frontier generals, based on numerous references, typified by Brian Zottoli, to their activities in Nguyễn records.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 295.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 530.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 294–95.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 307.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 294–295, and 307.

⁵¹ Ibid, 307.

Overall, between the late 1600s and the early 1700s, it remains unclear how these military commanders were related to the beginning of settler communities. Generally, details on the fighting were more reliable than those on settlements. The most organised ‘state’ actions during this time were a series of Nguyễn punitive raids against a Cambodian prince.⁵² Gaps in the records for the early 1700s suggest that the Khmer and Nguyễn forces, which orchestrated the confrontations, were not in total command of the settlements.

Despite such uncertainty, the big picture is clear. Between the late 1600s and the early 1700s, disparate groups of people from China’s southern coastal provinces migrated to the frontier land along the Đồng Nai-Saigon Rivers and the Mekong Delta.⁵³ As communities, they generally possessed resources that surpassed most existing settlements, bringing with them armed troops, ocean-going vessels, additional populations, and maritime skills.⁵⁴ With such resources, they established frontier villages, including those at Saigon and Cholon. These settlements were joined by people from the Christian-backed royal faction, who had fled south from the Nguyễn court. Also, these political refugees inter-mingled with a motley group of migrant individuals and families.

Largely self-governing and self-defended, these settlements forged varying alliances with the conflicting forces of Khmer, Nguyễn, or Cham, in the land stretching from Quảng Nam to Cancao.⁵⁵ Control of the waterways lay at the core of these conflicts. Before the mid-eighteenth century, present-day Cholon was one among these settlements. Its location on the

⁵² Zottoli, “Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History,” 331.

⁵³ A more evident community was Cancao (or Ha Tien), located closer to the Khmer domain than the Nguyễn’s. Li Tana and Paul A. Van Dyke, ‘Canton, Cancao, and Cochinchina: New Data and New Light on Eighteenth-Century Canton and the Nanyang,’ *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 1 (2007): 10–28.

⁵⁴ Anthony Reid, “Long-term Chinese Interactions with Southeast Asia”, in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 43–44.

⁵⁵ Cancao, or Ha Tien, was an independent Ming Loyalist country governed by Mac Cuu (Mo Jiu) and his son Mac Thien Tu. Li and Van Dyke, “Canton, Cancao, and Cochinchina”..

lower Đồng Nai-Saigon Rivers may have been attributed to the strong presence of the more established upstream settlement of Cù Lao Phố.

The year 1725 was the earliest mention of Saigon in Nguyễn records. Between 1725 and 1738 the site came under the domain of Prince Ninh.⁵⁶ Despite the association with a Nguyễn prince, this event could be seen as merely one bearing a person's name. With no proper bureaucracy and a military force that engaged in conflicts across the Delta, the Prince more than likely did not initiate the founding. Rather, the settlers preferred to support him.

The second mention of the 'Saigon' settlement was between 1745 and 1747, when missionary letters reported a new Franciscan church built in Cholon (then referred to as Saigon).⁵⁷ The building of a church suggested that the Christians there had adequate security, labour, and resources, and most of all, a strong sense of community and internal cohesion. Moreover, referred to as "four or five hours by small boat from Đồng Nai",⁵⁸ Cholon was likely one among other smaller settlements that were connected to the major harbour of Cù Lao Phố (i.e. Đồng Nai). Nevertheless, it was not until the 1780s that Cholon was a major stop along the Đồng Nai-Saigon Rivers.

Thus, the accounts of Gia Định during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, were told by Trịnh Hoài Đức in his famous volume *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí* written in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁹ The later records, written by the officials of a Confucian bureaucratic state, sought to justify the presence of the Việt rule in the frontier region over claims by the Khmer, Chinese, other ethnicities and those with a distinct religious orientation. The Viet presence in the Đồng Nai-Saigon Rivers could have been much more

⁵⁶ Zottoli, "Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History," 319.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 350.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Trịnh Hoài Đức, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí. Tập Hạ*, 1820. (Saigon: Phủ Quốc Vụ Khanh Đặc Trách Văn Hóa, 1972).

modest. Although the military nature of the Viets was obvious, their hold over the civilian population was likely much weaker than later records claimed.

Gia Định regime (1790s–1830s)

Coinciding with Cholon's origins, Southeast Asian societies were turning inwards, opting to consolidate their cultural identities, and reducing their engagement with foreign ideas. Anthony Reid asserts that, during this time: “cultural identities consolidated which enable us to speak of Bama, Thai, Vietnamese, Khmer, Acehnese, Bugis, Javanese, and Balinese as coherent identities, more enduring than dynasties that claimed to rule them.”⁶⁰ The eighteenth century was also the time when the first generation of Ming Loyalists effected several political changes in Siam and Cochinchina. Therefore, Ming Loyalists were part of the identity consolidation process. Minh Hương identity formed the cultural basis of Cholon society, which leaders of later times were expected to emulate in order to succeed in the port-town (elaborated in chapters 3 and 4).

During the late eighteenth century disparate Minh Hương groups were scattered across Cochinchina's coast and frontiers. Nevertheless, this period saw the consolidation of the Minh Hương identity in Cholon. Before this period, Cholon was not known as a Minh Hương town; the term Minh Hương xã as a place name only came into use between 1810 and 1819.⁶¹ Two developments cemented the Minh Hương's association with Cholon: first, was the opening of the China trade in the 1750s; and the second was the rise of the Gia Định regime during the Tây Sơn rebellion from the 1780s.

During the 1750s, the Qing Dynasty in China (1644–1911) lifted the imperial ban on private trade and overseas travel through its ports. This brought about ‘the Chinese century’,

⁶⁰ Reid, *Expansion and Crisis*, 328-329.

⁶¹ Zottoli, “Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History,” 320.

in which the China trade drew Southeast Asian ports into the orbit of ethnic Chinese commerce and migration.⁶² By the 1780s, Cholon, along with Cancao and Bassac, became established nodes in this trade.⁶³ With pre-existing resources and familiarity with Maritime East Asia, the Minh Hương communities emerged as prominent participants. The China trade did not necessarily make Cholon a Minh Hương place, but it highlighted the site's valuable position as an exchange hub that attracted both flows of goods and people.

Saigon was the major seaport for the large ocean-going junks but, presumably, lacked the necessary communities of small traders and available space for on-forwarding cargoes. Consequently, small traders then distributed the goods via the Bình Dương river direct to riverbank markets using a variety of smaller vessels. Cholon was a major stop, because its canals enabled the unloading of goods onto the quays, giving direct access to the markets, shops, and warehouses. From then on, goods could be shipped to more distant inland ports. Smaller ports such as Cholon, therefore, were important subsidiary hubs for accumulating, exchanging, storing, supplying, and transshipping cargo. Such hubs ensured the viability of the trade.⁶⁴ Thus, archival mentions of Saigon during this period would have inevitably included Cholon, given the dynamics between the larger and smaller port.

In the 1770s, the China trade, which was centred originally upon the port emporia, had shifted its focus to export production areas to accommodate the changed economic

⁶² Reid, *Expansion and Crisis*, 312-315.

⁶³ Anthony Reid, 'Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: An Overview', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 21-34, 23-27. Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 185.

⁶⁴ Li Tana, 'The Water Frontier, an Introduction', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 1-20, 9. James Kong Chin, 'The Junk Trade between South China and Nguyễn Vietnam in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 53-72, 54.

conditions.⁶⁵ Inter-port consolidation and transshipment were no longer adequate. Stable access to production areas was necessary. Consequently, rice emerged in Cholon as a key commodity. By the 1780s, rice exports to China from Saigon bypassed Siam.⁶⁶ The new conditions enabled Cholon to surpass Cù Lao Phố in commercial terms. Being downstream, Cholon was more accessible to the emerging rice-producing areas in the Mekong Delta. From then, Cholon's rice sector came to dominate the local economy.

This period under review also witnessed the Tây Sơn's two massacres of the ethnic Chinese communities in Cù Lao Phố (1776) and Cholon (1782).⁶⁷ Inadvertently, these massacres provided a cause to rally all those connected with the Minh Hương to consolidate into a single identity.

Also, the upheaval associated with the massacres prompted the Minh Hương to ally with the Nguyễn's Gia Định regime. This was likely why Cholon, not Cù Lao Phố, became a Minh Hương town. Being closer to Saigon, Cholon was built upon a more militaristic past than the stateless inhabitants of upstream Cù Lao Phố. It is still unclear as to why the Nguyễn Anh chose Saigon other than that they had the support of the descendants of the Ming Loyalists in their decision-making, who, just a few decades ago, had waged a series of rebellions to carve out their own domain. In other words, Saigon's history with the Minh Hương at the centre, was likely a history written by victors, thus masking several other

⁶⁵ Sakurai, "Eighteenth-Century Chinese Pioneers", 46.

⁶⁶ Reid, "Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion", 27.

⁶⁷ Choi believed that Tây Sơn's 1782 massacre took place because they "wished to wipe out the Chinese community of Saigon that had been the most serious obstacle to their capture of this city." Choi Byung Wook, *Southern Vietnam under the Reign of Minh Mang* (Ithaca, N.Y: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2004), 37. Choi Byung Wook, 'The Nguyễn Dynasty's Policy toward Chinese on the Water Frontier in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 85–100, 85.

alternative perspectives⁶⁸ The convergence of loyalty to the Saigon-based Gia Định regime ascribed to Cholon the cultural significance of becoming the Minh Hương home base. As the community recovered, it again sustained a stable economy that was key to the Gia Định regime's military success.

Nguyễn Ánh's Gia Định regime won by capitalising upon the heterogeneity inherent in the frontier society. They developed Saigon into a mighty fortress aided by support from various cultural, religious, and social groupings.⁶⁹ Thus, the Gia Định army was an amalgam of different forces, personally commanded by separate leaders, who, while cooperating with Nguyễn Ánh, also commanded a local domain.⁷⁰

The Minh Hương allegiance proved to be vital. Their maritime contacts brought thousands of firearms, gunpowder, strategic metals, battleships, and military and naval personnel skilled in operating them.⁷¹ Moreover, the Minh Hương's rice trade was a crucial factor in fortifying the Saigon base. Choi Byung Wook asserts that Nguyễn Ánh kept his territory in Gia Định [Saigon], because he wished to keep control of the rice trade, because rice production in Gia Định was not always sufficient to feed population northeast of Biên

⁶⁸ Zottoli reveals contrasting perspectives on the rise of Nguyễn Ánh in the 1780s and the emergence of the Nguyễn dynasty, provided by different Christian groups (Jesuits, Franciscans, MEP missions) and the court histories. It remains unclear why Saigon was chosen as the site for the Gia Định regime. Since several court histories were written in the early 19th century during the height of Minh Hương elitism, there is a possibility that the history on Minh Hương xa in Saigon, its original founding in 1698, and its emergence as the Gia Định capital, did not reflect the actual picture. The actual picture was that, for some unclear reasons, Saigon happened to be chosen by Nguyễn Ánh who had already garnered the support of descendants of Ming Loyalists who, just a few decades ago, also waged rebellions to carve out their own domain. In other words, Saigon's history with the Minh Hương at the centre was likely a history written by victors, thus masking over several other alternative perspectives. Zottoli, *Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History*, 393–96.

⁶⁹ Goscha, *A New History*, 43–44. Choi Byung Wook, *Southern Vietnam*, 30–42.

⁷⁰ Choi, *Southern Vietnam*, 27–29.

⁷¹ Minh Hương, and to a lesser extent, Thanh Nhân, were entrusted with supplies and equipment. Choi, *Southern Vietnam*, 41. Li Tana, "The Water Frontier," 4–10.

Hoà.⁷² An important subtext to this would be the need to maintain the Minh Hương support, the Minh Hương commanded access to larger rice supply in the Delta. In 1802 the Gia Định regime secured victory against the Tây Sơn helped by a wide range of economic, military, and political support.⁷³

As noted, ethnic identities consolidated during the 1700s were longer-lasting than any regime that claimed to rule over them. The frontier communities in Cholon had gone through several decades cementing their identity by participating in the China trade and interacting with other settler groups, before contributing their support to Nguyễn. The Minh Hương identity preceded the Gia Định regime by several decades, but it was also strengthened by it. Several Minh Hương figures emerged as prominent leaders such as Trịnh Hoài Đức, Ngô Nhân Tịnh, Lê Quang Định. Concurrently, Cholon thanks to its proximity to Saigon, attained the important role as the pivotal rice bowl for the Gia Định forces. Thus, the period between the 1780s and the early 1800s was the first time that the Minh Hương identity came to be associated with Saigon and Cholon, bonded by its allegiance to the Gia Định regime.

This has led Anthony Reid to posit that the integration of the Minh Hương within the Việt domain was inevitable, since “Ming people were accepted by the Nguyễn lords as civilized fellow *Han*”.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, this integration into Viet society was not seen as momentous as the Việt hybridisation with Cham and Khmer cultures.

On the other hand, Han culture and civilisation were defined by the extent of the imperial bureaucracy and the readers of Confucian classics.⁷⁵ While being ethnic Chinese, these Ming Loyalists eschewed many aspects of Confucianism. They were less Confucian and

⁷² Rice production in Gia Định was not always sufficient to feed the population northeast of Biên Hoà. Choi, *Southern Vietnam*, 23.

⁷³ Li Tana, “‘The Water Frontier,’” 10.

⁷⁴ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 184.

⁷⁵ ‘Chineseness’ as a word for civilization. Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 26.

more militaristic strongmen and members of commercial syndicates. Only the later generations experimented with Confucian classics,⁷⁶ but this was short-lived due to upheavals. Indeed, it was the Việt imperial regime who sought to impose a Confucian bureaucracy onto a mainly state-resisting, ethnic Chinese frontier population. Perhaps this interpretation helps explain the growth of Cholon as an escape from the Nguyễn fortress Saigon.

Conceivably, before the 1830s, Ming Loyalist societies, despite being *Han*, did not entirely subscribe to the Nguyễn's Han-styled imperial bureaucracy. The Ming Loyalists brought over a *Han* culture which was more concerned with their past domestic and functional way of life, involving goods, clothing and housing rather than the filial following of Confucianism. It was a selective implantation of *Han* culture by refugees and migrants, who sought to live outside the Confucian imperial bureaucracy.

In particular, Nguyễn Ánh recognised the duality with which state Confucianism had to compromise. As Emperor Gia Long, he chose Confucianism as the state ideology to consolidate the central court. Simultaneously, ever a pragmatic person, he allowed the wartime policies of flexible accommodation of local governance to proceed as usual.⁷⁷

During wartime, the Gia Định regime incorporated a combination of stateless peoples, self-governing communities, and state actors. Their allegiance was to an immediate and militaristic cause: victory over the Tây Sơn. Allowed by Emperor Gia Long to remain relatively unchanged in character, the southern regime continued to provide refuge for those, who eschewed state power. Hence, it was inherently incompatible with the centralised Confucian state that was being established at the Nguyễn court.

⁷⁶ Li and Van Dyke, "Canton, Cancao, and Cochinchina", 10–28.

⁷⁷ Goscha, *A New History*, 48.

Nguyễn Confucian bureaucracy (1800s–1850s)

During the 1820s and 1830s the clash between the Gia Định regime and the Huế court was one between old local powers asserting their continuing autonomy, and a central government eager to impose a new unitary order. In Cholon’s history of dealing with central governments, this clash was the first and the most overt one; this was the first time a central government had ever attempted to assert regulations and hierarchy over the region. It ended with enforced victory on the government’s side, but it did not put an end to the exercise of local powers. Cholon’s society remained very much in favour of local divergence. Subsequent centralised reforms drove powerful local figures underground, thus starting the enduring pattern of opaque community leadership (see chapters 3 and 4).

During Minh Mạng’s reign in the 1820s, several new central policies were imposed to curb local autonomy. After 1820, for example, new Chinese migrants were enlisted in seven dialect-based associations, called ‘*bang*’. Simultaneously, they were also able to join the Minh Hương association as well. These associations tended to hide members from the authority in order to evade taxes.⁷⁸ Concurrently, the Gia Định ruling group enjoyed multiple fruitful connections with Chinese associations, so violating royal directives was for them a normality.⁷⁹ This practice of local government protecting local interests, while preserving individual ‘opacity’, at the expense of central policies continued through the colonial era (see chapters 3 to 6 inclusive).

Choi Byung Wook describes how a general recruited his army and how allegiance was gained in the Gia Định regime.⁸⁰ This mode could be applied to how local associations such as temples and militia associations mustered their members. These associations strengthened

⁷⁸ Choi Byung Wook, “‘The Nguyễn Dynasty’s Policy’”, 93.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 94.

⁸⁰ Choi, *Southern Vietnam*, 27–29.

their power by increasing the size of their membership. Moreover, the more people the better. Willing to overlook a potential member's questionable past, they rarely turned down new recruits. Moreover, people were not attached to a place, but to a community leader. Since they led a mobile life, when a community leader moved to a new place, he brought his people with him. If this number of adherents was large, the move would cause a noticeable drop in the local labour force and, therefore, a decline in vitality. Commanding the likely temporary cooperation or loyalty of a community leader, therefore, opened up access to the manpower under his authority. In this way, the Water Frontier society in Cholon was used to the state managing the population indirectly through individual leaders, who commanded more local authority than the state. This was partly why the bureaucratic mechanisms of direct taxation, registration, and imperial hierarchy were resisted for so long.

Moreover, from 1820, Minh Mạng issued several prohibitions on key aspects of Cholon's participation in the maritime trade and regulations over rice shipping.⁸¹ On the other hand, Lê Văn Duyệt, the Gia Định regime's Governor General, disagreed with the rationale for these restrictions, thus he ignored royal directives. Specifically, as opium entered Gia Định from China, not island Southeast Asia, Lê Văn Duyệt denounced Chinese junk passengers for luring local people to smoke opium. As for rice shortages, he thought that cunning Việt or Chinese merchants, who sailed the *đại dịch thuyền*, or government-hired rice shipping junks, were selling to smugglers for a better price than the state's offered in the domestic market.⁸² Until Lê Văn Duyệt's death in 1831, these prohibitions created tense relations between the southern regime and the central court.

⁸¹ Choi Byung Wook, "The Nguyễn Dynasty's Policy", 89–94. Reid, "Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion", 32.

⁸² Opium entered Gia Định from China, not island Southeast Asia, so Lê Văn Duyệt denounced Chinese junk passengers for luring local people to smoke opium. As for rice shortage, he thought that cunning Việt or Chinese merchants who sailed the *đại dịch thuyền*, or government-hired rice shipping junks, were selling to

With Lê Văn Duyệt's death, Minh Mạng's biggest political rival was removed. In 1832, the Central Court dismantled the Gia Định regime, and reorganised it into six provinces under direct control. This drastic measure was met with a drastic response. In 1833, Lê Văn Khôi, the adopted son of Lê Văn Duyệt, incited a popular rebellion: "in less than ten days thousands of people joined the rebel army in the Saigon region alone." They held the motto of "rejecting Nguyễn, avenging Lê Văn Duyệt". In May 1833 the conflagration erupted in Saigon, and the unrest spread over the next three months to capture forts in all six provinces. The Court promptly exercised "savage repression". Particularly in Cholon, the Royal Army quelled and swept through the site to prevent it from turning into a military base. Here, they killed or captured over 1,000 settlers and confiscated their property. Those suspected to have participated had four fingers of their right hand cut off, before being exiled, even after they had surrendered.⁸³

Stricter limitations followed the rebellion's suppression. In 1836, the central court carried out measurements, undertook registration of both land and population, and established the tax rolls. Although ignored in Gia Định, the rest of the country had finished the task.⁸⁴ By doing so, the Court sought to solidify administrative rule over a very fluid area.

From 1837, no Thanh Nhân were allowed in overseas trade. In 1838, no resident member of a Thanh Nhân association was allowed to work in the maritime trade; they were only allowed to trade by river, not sea.⁸⁵ In 1842, Thanh Nhân newcomers could live as *bang* members, but their local-born sons had to become Minh Hương on turning eighteen years old. Effectively, they were turned into Nguyễn subjects and forbidden to wear a Qing hairstyle.

smugglers for a better price than the state's price offered in the domestic market. Choi, "The Nguyễn Dynasty's Policy", 89.

⁸³ Choi, "The Nguyễn Dynasty's Policy", 96.

⁸⁴ Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *Nghiên Cứu Địa Bạ*, 49–50.

⁸⁵ Choi, "The Nguyễn Dynasty's Policy", 94.

Discrimination against the Minh Hương was more covert, but probably persisted for decades after the suppression. Indeed, only one Minh Hương was successful in the Imperial examinations.⁸⁶ More likely, for the first time since the beginning of the frontier settlement, the Minh Hương of Cholon withdrew their loyalty from the Nguyễn ruling family to sustain their own way-of-life, identity, and socio-political position that had been at the core of their support for the suppressed Gia Định regime.

The rebellion and ensuing suppression forced an exodus of refugees from the south to Cambodia, Siam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines.⁸⁷ Shipbuilding suffered immensely, as skilled carpenters and blacksmiths fled to Chanthaburi, where they aided Siam's navy to develop rapidly from the mid-1830s by outclassing Cochinchina's shipbuilding prowess.⁸⁸ Also, Cholon's population fled south and west to Hậu Giang and Cà Mau.⁸⁹ Their confiscated properties were probably redistributed to newly appointed mandarin officials. Hence, Cholon's loss of population created space for new migrants to move in, who, in the aftermath of traumatic violence, had to navigate stricter regulations.⁹⁰

Central regulation might have restricted several aspects of the local way-of-life, but other dimensions continued, albeit cast in new forms. The Minh Hương and Thanh Nhân associations had stronger reasons to shelter tax-evading members. Banned from maritime trade, Thanh Nhân traders registered their junks and firms using the names of their local

⁸⁶ Ibid, 95.

⁸⁷ Li Tana, 'The Water Frontier, an Introduction', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 1–20, 12.

⁸⁸ Li Tana, 'Ships and Shipbuilding in the Mekong Delta, c. 1750-1840', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 119–38, 129.

⁸⁹ Nola Cooke, 'Water World : Chinese and Vietnamese on the Riverine Water Frontier, from Ca Mau to Tonle Sap (c. 1850-1884)', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Lanham, MD; Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 139–40.

⁹⁰ Sakurai, "Eighteenth-Century Chinese Pioneers", 48.

colleagues, wives, or concubines.⁹¹ As occurred after the Tay Son massacres, Cholon society rose from the ashes and flourished in relatively the same way. By the 1840s, although Saigon lost out to Bangkok, as the economic centre for upland trade,⁹² but it was still “the largest Southeast Asian partner of Singapore for the China junk trade.”⁹³ The years between 1841 and 1845 saw the most spectacular growth in the rice trade after the rebellion.⁹⁴ By this time, a new type of commercial interest had appeared: Straits-based, well-established farming syndicates dealt extensively with Saigon-Cholon merchants, the connections of which grew during the first two decades of the accommodating colonial regime.⁹⁵

The suppression of the rebellion had left a deep wound on Cholon’s society; the Plain of Tombs, where many dead from the rebellion were buried, was just a few kilometres away from the emerging town’s core. Central restrictions further drove the free-flowing elements underground, creating a black market in which local officials accepted bribes.⁹⁶ No longer maintaining strong, overt, and proud ties with the central government in Saigon, local associations such as temples directed their affairs inwards. These changes created a new tradition of opaque local leadership.

This period of Cholon’s history highlighted the difficulty of maintaining unity under Minh Mạng’s Confucian state. Anthony Reid attributes it to the lack of religious sentiments that bound Southeast Asians together. This lack made it harder to bridge the possibly widest

⁹¹ Choi, “The Nguyễn Dynasty’s Policy”, 83-84.

⁹² Li, “The Water Frontier, an Introduction”, 11.

⁹³ Reid, “Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion”, 31.

⁹⁴ Li, “The Water Frontier, an Introduction”, 9.

⁹⁵ Carl A. Trocki, ‘The Internationalization of Chinese Revenue Farming Networks’, in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Lanham, MD; Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 164–68.

⁹⁶ Jacob Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs: The Church and the Nguyễn Dynasty in Early Nineteenth-Century Vietnam* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 10.

cultural gap, that between Confucian and Theravada ideas.⁹⁷ Indeed, temples and churches in Cholon provided effective community leadership, while also conformed to the superficially imposed higher level of government. Such duality in governance, one by the formal, centralised regime, and one by local leaders, remained in place in the colonial era.

As *Han* settlers, the Minh Hương in Cholon had one foot in the Confucian system, and one foot in the eclectic frontier commercial world. The fact that the Lê Văn Khôi rebellion started in Cholon suggested that the Minh Hương made a choice in favour of the commercial world, rather than their elite status in the Nguyễn Confucian hierarchy. Losing the support of the Minh Hương in Cholon meant that the court lost one among the several fragile connections it had attained with the southern frontier.

The transformed site circa 1800s–1850s

Between the 1800s and the 1820s, the site of the Minh Hương village came to be known as Cholon, or the ‘Big Market’ in Vietnamese.⁹⁸ The emergence of this colloquial moniker indicated how the settlement eclipsed neighbouring markets and emerged as the major commercial hub in a semi-urban form by the 1850s (Figure 2.5).⁹⁹ This semi-urban form accommodated the emergence of an enduring and distinctive socio-cultural pattern characterised as the Cholon way-of-life.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 225–26.

⁹⁸ Cholon, or Chợ Lớn, literally means Big Market in Vietnamese.

⁹⁹ Reid, “Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion”, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Originally touted by Trịnh Hoài Đức as the Phiên An way of life, the thesis renames it as the Saigon-Cholon way of life to avoid confusion. Trịnh Hoài Đức, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*, 19.

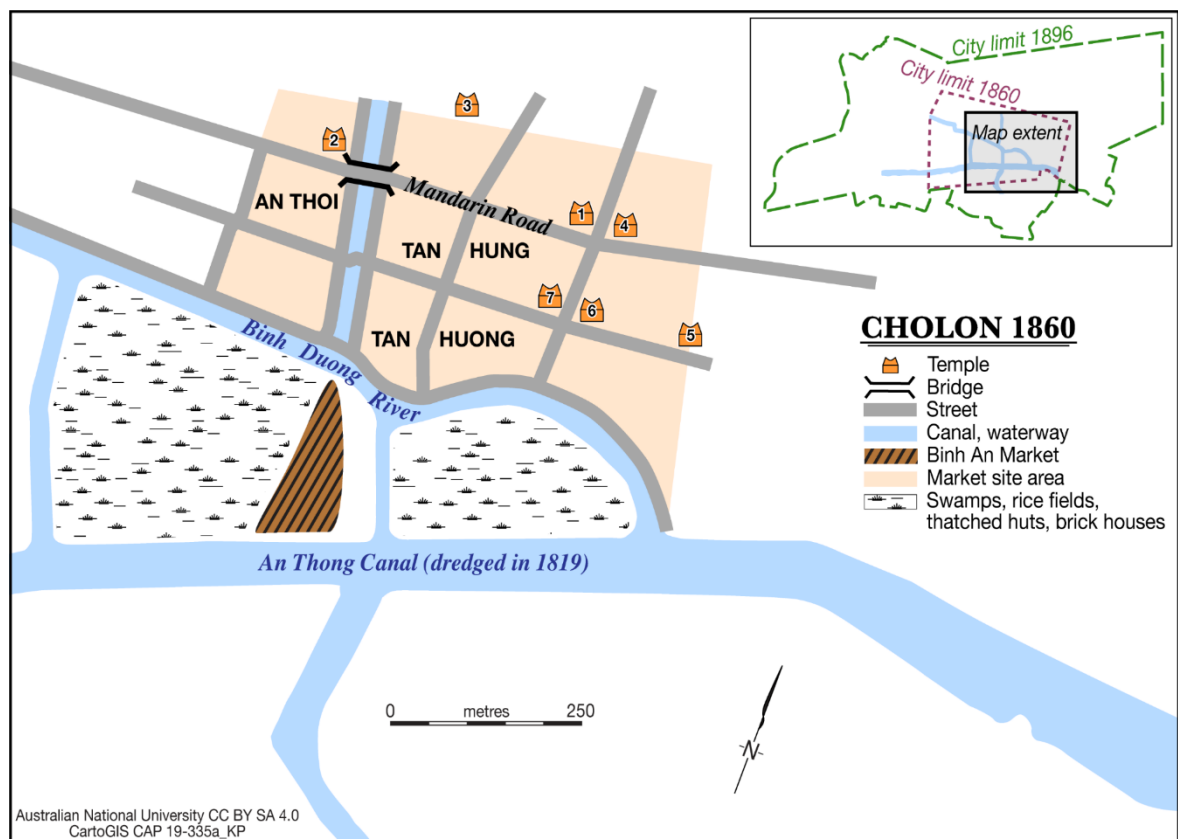


Figure 2.5: Map of Cholon, circa 1858-1860.

Temple numbering is as follows: 1 – Tuệ Thành Cantonese, 2 - Ôn Lăng (Fujianese from Zhangzhou, Fujian), 3 - Hà Chương (Fujianese from Quanzhou, Fujian), 4 - Nghĩa An (Chaozhou), 5 - Quỳnh Phủ (Hainanese), 6 - Tam Sơn (Fujianese from Fuzhou, Fujian), 7 - Minh Hương Gia Thạnh (Minh Hương) (Source: see Appendix 1).

By the 1820s, Cholon had an estimated population of 180,000, of whom 10,000 were Chinese.¹⁰¹ Unlike neighbouring villages that farmed, gardened, and fished, the majority of Cholon people were engaged in commerce and manufacturing, notably the production of palm

¹⁰¹ White recited population estimates from Father Joseph and the viceroy Lê Văn Duyệt. John White, *A Voyage to Cochinchina* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824), 232.

oil, threads, metal works, flour, salt etc..¹⁰² Also, the riverbanks were suitable for wet-rice farming and other cultivation such as areca orchards.¹⁰³

The name Cholon referred to a commercial site (*phố chợ*) that stretched across at least four villages: Tân Hưng, An Thới, An Định, and Tân Hương.¹⁰⁴ As Figure 2.4 illustrates, Tân Hương was likely the original Minh Hương village; it was closest to the canal, along the embankment road where the Minh Hương Gia Thạnh ancestral temple was located. Minh Hương descendants were known to have lived and owned land here.¹⁰⁵

Further inland were Tân Hưng, An Định, and An Thới, which were inhabited by those who came later.¹⁰⁶ Although registered as villages, their physical form departed from a typical rural area;¹⁰⁷ instead, an urban form could be detected.¹⁰⁸ Three spacious paved roads led into the market site: on the left was the Mandarin Road, in the middle was the wide road, and on the right, the embankment road.¹⁰⁹ The roads were traversed by smaller roads to form a grid.¹¹⁰ On this grid, people of different ethnic groups lived in mixed company in houses

¹⁰² Trần Văn Học, *Bản Đồ Gia Định Năm 1815*, 1815, 1815, Virtual Saigon, <http://virtual-saigon.net/Maps/Collection?ID=1135>.

¹⁰³ Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 328.

¹⁰⁴ An Định, An Điền, and Phú Điền were likely involved too. This observation is drawn from the Cantonese temple's stone inscriptions of land deeds, dated 1857–1860. Li Tana and Nguyễn Cẩm Thúy, eds., *Bia chữ Hán trong hội quán người Hoa ở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1996), 262–79. In reference to Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *Nghiên Cứu Địa Bạ*.

¹⁰⁵ Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 262–79.

¹⁰⁶ Since frontier settlements were set up close to waterways, logically, the oldest settlements were next to the water, and the newer ones were further inland. White, *A Voyage*, 233.

¹⁰⁷ Administratively, from 1836, these villages belonged to tổng Tân Phong Thượng, huyện Tân Long, phủ Tân Bình, tỉnh Gia Định. Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *Nghiên Cứu Địa Bạ*, 188.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ In colonial time, these streets were named, respectively: Rue de Cây Mai, Rue des Marins, and Quai Gaudot to Quai de Phuoc Kien.

¹¹⁰ “The streets are regularly laid out, generally intersecting each other at right angles, and some of them are quite spacious.” White, *A Voyage*, 233.

stretching for about three miles.¹¹¹ Across the small creek was a wide bridge with a covered walkway. East of the wide road, there was the Bình An market, where a range of precious goods from both the mountains and the sea were sold.¹¹² The market traded all night. On the wide road, there was one full, clear well, supplying clear drinking water of adjacent economic activities and resident population. Festivals were the liveliest times on these streets, when there was a cacophony of music, lanterns, performances, and a large crowd. This site became known as the Big Market or Cholon.

Some landmarks stood out in this vista, which further distinguished Cholon from other villages. A Christian church stood near the centre, where two Italian missionaries lived, but its location cannot be verified.¹¹³ The Chinese dialect temples marked the site's northern and southern ends. Nestled among these temples were houses, whose construction conveyed different classes of residences: wooden houses with thatched rooves of palm leaves or rice straw; fewer in number were brick houses covered with tiles, some of which were enclosed within a courtyard.¹¹⁴ The most extravagant houses were those with a "hanging chamber, built under the roof-tree, about ten feet wide, extending the whole length of the building, with wooden gratings on each side for air, to which they ascend by ladders." None were taller than one storey.¹¹⁵ These houses were used for both residences and shops, some of which were expanded at the rear to make space for warehousing activities, which opened into winding

¹¹¹ Likely one kilometre. Trịnh Hoài Đức, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí. Tập Hạ, 1820*. (Saigon: Phủ Quốc Vụ Khanh Đặc Trách Văn Hóa, 1972), 99.

¹¹² This location would be on either side of rạch Phố Xếp (Quai de Hội Hiệp and Quai Testard).

¹¹³ White, *A Voyage*, 232.

¹¹⁴ Crawford mentioned "a large proportion of the houses are covered with tiles instead of thatch." So he might have been walking on the main streets. Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 329.

¹¹⁵ White, *A Voyage*, 233.

back alleys slotted in between the street-front rows of dwellings.¹¹⁶ In addition, there were specialised royal-decreed rice warehouses, situated near the bank of the Bình Dương river, equidistant from both Cholon and Saigon.¹¹⁷

The grid of dense housing and construction, the assorted crowd, the myriad goods, the long trading hours, the striking temples, the festival fervour continued to feature in travellers' accounts of Cholon for decades to come. The grid suggested that the combined villages made up a semi-urban layout. The wide covered bridge across the small creek¹¹⁸ was a hefty structure in an area where most bridges were single wooden planks.¹¹⁹ In addition, the embankment road in Tân Hương (the Minh Hương village) ran along Bình Dương River (later the Cholon Canal), a natural creek that often silted.¹²⁰ In 1819, the silting prompted the digging of a man-made canal, the An Thông Canal (later called Arroyo Chinois), which would become Cholon's main waterway. These construction activities represented valuable real estate. The market site was deemed valuable enough for the central state to carry out a range of major public work programs.

Cholon markets traded a slew of exotic and imported goods: porcelain, tea, drugs and medicine, cooking utensils, shoes, and clothing. These goods were sold at the shophouses on the wide road, in the same neighbourhood as the temples. In addition, there were cabinet work, carpentries, construction and metal works for building both ocean junks and smaller river

¹¹⁶ This observation is also drawn from the Cantonese temple's stone inscriptions of land deeds, dated 1857–1860. Li & Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 262–279. In reference to Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *Nghiên Cứu Địa Bq*, 188.

¹¹⁷ White, *A Voyage*, 234.

¹¹⁸ Likely rạch Phở Xếp, a small north-south canal pouring into Cholon canal.

¹¹⁹ White, *A Voyage*, 177. Crawford remarked on the wood planks, but did not note any stone bridge. Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 328.

¹²⁰ The canal was Bình Dương river, later known as Logom canal. Trần Văn Học, *Bản Đồ Gia Định Năm 1815*, 1815, 1815, Virtual Saigon, <http://virtual-saigon.net/Maps/Collection?ID=1135>.

Trịnh Hoài Đức, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*, 83–101.

vessels.¹²¹ These shophouse dwellers likely did not work much in agriculture, because they were engaged full-time in commerce. From 1819, these goods came from Cholon's participation in the trade with China and the new colony of Singapore.¹²² Also, shophouses provided a range of daily supplies and services. The latter comprised confectioners, bakers, tailors, bankers, and money-changers; the majority of whom were identified as ethnic Chinese.¹²³ Likewise, some houses were also rented to visiting merchants who had to stay in town, since cargo negotiation and supply could take up to a few months to complete. For example, a widow leased her house for 300 *quan* for 3 months, or 600 *quan* for the monsoon period or the half year, a period when crews rested up.¹²⁴

In addition to the economic value of market places, Jacob Ramsay pointed out their social significance, "The ordered chaos of the market not only supplied locals with food, it also attracted entertainers, wandering hawkers, fortune-tellers, and spirit mediums; and more than any other public arena, the market was a focal point for the spread of gossip and potentially seditious rumours."¹²⁵ A market was not only a commercial hub; it was also a communications hub. With trading partners from across the sea, people in Cholon gathered not only for the supply of goods but also for regional news, ideas, beliefs, and practices, all of which may be adopted readily into the local lifestyle. No wonder the Central Court in Huế found it harder to control the free flow of outside influences into the south.

This inherent conflict between Cholon's economic role and the Central Court was further intensified by the port-town's close association with rice, while Saigon handled ocean vessels. The Nguyễn's state building went hand-in-hand with Cholon becoming a rice storage

¹²¹ White, *A Voyage*, 278.

¹²² Reid, "Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion", 32.

¹²³ White, *A Voyage*, 261–62.

¹²⁴ White, *A Voyage*, 270.

¹²⁵ Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs*, 23.

area. Several warehouses in Cholon stored and supplied rice for government functions in Saigon. Indeed, rice storage was the hallmark of state development, a crucial component of state building.¹²⁶

A concentration of temples added another layer to the particular nature of Cholon's site development. Two temples worshipped south China's folk deities, Quan Công and Thiên Hậu. Five others served the communities originating from Guangzhou, Chaozhou, Zhangzhou, Quanzhou, and Fuzhou. In addition to the *Minh Hương Gia Thạnh*, a total of eight temples within a three-block grid painted an exceptional scene. John Crawford remarked in 1822 that the Cantonese temple was the most striking building among these temples.¹²⁷ These temples stood apart because, while religious sites were common landmarks, Buddhist and Daoist pagodas were often isolated from the commotion of social life, surrounded by waterways or lush gardens. In Cholon, however, the folk deities and community temples, nestled among houses and shops, were situated right in the middle of the hustle and bustle.

Way-of-life

Consulting Trịnh Hoài Đức's 1820 gazette and John White's 1824 travelogue illustrated Cholon's way-of-life.¹²⁸ Trịnh Hoài Đức's observed that members of Cholon's dense population spoke a variety of different language, because they were engaged in diverse water commerce. As speakers of different tongues, they also preferred goods and practices derived from China, and they lived in brick or wooden houses.¹²⁹ As a 'literatus' living during the

¹²⁶ Reid, *The Lands Below the Winds*, 21-23.

¹²⁷ Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 331.

¹²⁸ Trịnh Hoài Đức, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*, 19.

¹²⁹ Wooden houses were later replaced by clay houses for fire safety, according to land purchase records in Li and Nguyễn, *Bia đá*, 1998.

1810s and 1820s, Trịnh Hoài Đức's account displayed immense pride in the southern way-of-life.¹³⁰

Of Minh Hương descent,¹³¹ Trịnh Hoài Đức elaborated the differences and similarities between the local way-of-life and what he believed to be Chinese customs. For example, most local people, except the upper class, used to go barefoot, but influenced by Chinese custom, the servants of rich households wore leather heels and cloth shoes.¹³² The local people observed the Thanh Minh festival in December, while the Chinese Qingming was in March.¹³³

Moreover, Trịnh Hoài Đức made an interesting distinction between temporary residents, *dân giang hồ* and *dân tứ chánh*. The latter were those registered in a different locality and merely visiting. Being registered meant that they likely owned some land, just not in Cholon. On the other hand, *dân giang hồ* were boat dwellers and engaged in commerce. They did not own any land, and the strength of their economic activities were circumscribed by the capacity of their vessels. Compared to the other group, their origin was obscure. In addition to hawking food on the rivers, they also earned income from running errands for bigger vessel owners, supplying them with the essentials on demand, and transporting people and goods across the river.¹³⁴ The boat was simultaneously their home and means of making a living.

¹³⁰ Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs*, 23.

¹³¹ Trịnh Hoài Đức, *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*, 113–14.

¹³² Ibid, 12.

¹³³ Ibid, 7–13.

¹³⁴ White, *A Voyage*, 209–11.

John White's voyage to the area in 1824 provided an account of how a woman he met in Cholon appeared:¹³⁵

Her visible garments consisted of four robes of different colours: on her feet were Chinese slippers, and her head was encircled with a turban of yellow silk. One of her attendants carried her hat, another her ornamented box, containing betel, &c., a third wielded an enormous fan, and a fourth a paper-umbrella. Several golden bracelets encircled her wrists, and rings of the same metal, in which were precious stones of various colours, were on her fingers, which latter were outdone by the enormous nails growing from them.

John White also discussed how a trans-local actor engaged with local actors. His ocean-going vessel first reached Cần Giở village where they stopped for a few days. From then on, they encountered several groups of people. Their encounters demonstrated the robust initiative of these local actors: they proactively approached the ship; they took the lead in negotiating the sale of merchandise; they searched for agents and interpreters to assist the crew; and they explained the local customs to smooth over social encounters. Providing such assistance for a small fee, the commercialised nature of their activities suggested a regular way of doing business.

Crawfurd, visiting in the 1820s, also noted with pleasure the lively initiatives of Cholon's Minh Huong. On his tour, three families invited him in for feasting and entertainment.¹³⁶ While Crawfurd did not mention any benefits that compelled them to offer

¹³⁵ White, *A Voyage*, 330–31.

¹³⁶ Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy*, 329.

such hospitality, commercial discussions might have occurred during the feasts (similar to how the brokers came to White while his entourage was staying at a contact's house).¹³⁷

Christians often acted as interpreters, on account of their multilingual skills and frequent contacts with Western visitors. In addition to proficiency in the local language and Chinese characters, Portuguese and French, and sometimes Spanish, were the common exchange languages. These interpreters had contacts with Christians in Macao or Luzon. Both John White and John Crawford hired Christian interpreters to assist with the translations.¹³⁸

Traders had business contact with brokers and groups of older women, who approached visiting merchants to negotiate for their merchandise.¹³⁹ Visitors were amazed at, or were taken aback by, their confidence and proactiveness. Without being invited, they came on board incoming vessels before they berthed, to seek to negotiate sales or to provide a goods-sourcing service.¹⁴⁰ These commercial activities preceded any bureaucratic procedure. Hence, local actors engaged with arrivals much earlier and with more gumption than the Imperial State's agents.

Therefore, the local people congregated in semi-urban market sites such as Cholon participated in local trade and overseas commerce. They sold goods in shophouses or at markets in the dry season, and also cultivated gardens or made small crafts in the wet season. The better-off households wore shoes and lived in brick or wooden houses. They adopted many *Han* customs, at times adapting them for local needs. They spoke more than one language; were open to exchanges with outside people, ideas, and goods; and made frequent contact with temporary residents, who stayed in friends' houses, rented rooms, or on boats.

¹³⁷ White, *A Voyage*, 208.

¹³⁸ White, *A Voyage*, 183. Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 348–49.

¹³⁹ Crawford also noted women alone attended the shops Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 329.

Reid, *The Lands Below the Winds*, 163–166.

¹⁴⁰ White, *A Voyage*, 208–10.

Also, the women worked as brokers or small traders; some men joined the army, navy, or avoiding conscription, by seeking employment in manufacturing workshops and ship's crews.¹⁴¹ Thus, Cholon's society was characterised by a highly heterogeneous and mobile way-of-life.

Thriving within a loose framework of the Nguyễn's Confucian state, Cholon's society evolved from being stateless to being trans-local, from volatile settlement to organised operations and networks that transcended state boundaries.

Conclusion

The sites of both the Saigon and Cholon settlements were located on the same strategic location which allowed ready access to the upland, the Mekong Delta, and the sea through a network of waterways. Control of the Đồng Nai-Saigon Rivers was, therefore, the key agenda item shared both by numerous groups of stateless settlers and conflicting troops that moved into the site during the late 1600s.

By the eighteenth century various Ming Loyalists — both settlers and troops, — consolidated the Minh Hương identity through their: (a) attachment to the Saigon and Cholon sites, (b) proactive participation in the regional China trade, and (c) allegiance to the military cause of the Gia Định regime. Thus, the Minh Hương resembled the Peranakans in Java, the Babas in the Straits, and the Mestizos the Philippines in that they intermingled with the newer ethnic Chinese migrants.¹⁴² All of these intermixed groups gained high social status in their respective societies.¹⁴³ A key difference for the Minh Hương group was being the first to lose this status, following the dismantling of the Gia Định regime in the 1830s, while the

¹⁴¹ White, *A Voyage*, 211.

¹⁴² Gungwu Wang, 'Sojourning: The Chinese Experience in Southeast Asia', in *Sojourners and Settlers : Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 57.

¹⁴³ Wang, *Sojourning*, 58–59.

Peranakans, Babas and Mestizos continued to hold major positions until the early twentieth century.

Having evolved as a frontier identity enjoying both relative self-governance and prestige under the Nguyễn Confucian state-building process, the Cholon people and their way-of-life grew in opposition against Minh Mạng's drive for Confucian-styled state centralisation. Meanwhile, Cholon grew from an obscure frontier settlement to a resource-rich market site with a recognisable semi-urban form. The exodus from Cholon in the 1830s, and the continuing semi-underground activities, showed how stateless elements lived on. The frontier era had overlapped with the state-building era before the French Conquest.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Reflecting on Vietnam as a whole, rather than just the south, Anthony Reid considers this period as “quote” Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, 225.

CHAPTER 3 1880: CHOLON'S MUNICIPAL STATUS

Cholon, unlike Saigon, did not bear the brunt of the French Conquest.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, its social fabric remained less disturbed than that of Saigon. The distance between the two towns made Cholon a crucial location for the new regime to expand its nascent influence beyond Saigon's safe haven. In 1880, this led to the establishment of the Cholon Municipality.

A series of issues are raised by the creation of the local state. How was the Municipality of Cholon created and composed? How did the Municipality confront the challenges of governing Cholon? And how did the Municipal Council deal with the tradition of local self-governance and trans-local mobility that characterised Cholon?

These issues are addressed by analysing the municipal records and correspondence surviving from the 1870s and the early 1880s that are available in the National Archive Number Two in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Insights from these archival sources stemming from the founding of the Municipality are supported by those from the literature on the colonial monopolies in Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century. This literature reveals the activities of the Chinese diaspora, which provided crucial assistance to the building of indigenous support through the temple structure to underpin the modern colonial state.

Municipal founding

The expansion of French colonial power from Saigon to Cholon was riddled with problems. This new regime suffered from the inability of its administrators to perceive the nature of Saigon's surrounding area. While early colonial accounts noted Cholon to be a prosperous and lively place, they also harboured suspicions of the crowds of nefarious people gathered there. French administrators realised that the populous markets and quays provided good camouflage for insurgents, who gathered, organised, and equipped themselves with the

¹⁴⁵ Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định*, 359.

abundant resources available on-site. For example, the account of a navy officer, Commander Paulin Vial, recorded an ongoing insurgency.¹⁴⁶

On the 14th of April [1862], the part of the Chinese town [Cholon] south of the canal was burnt during the night, and several rebel-laden boats were not afraid to pass under the fire of our men who were posted on the north bank. Expeditionary columns quickly travelled through the most important neighbouring villages to prevent the enemy from organizing themselves.

This exodus to the countryside might have been a temporary refuge from the Conquest, but Cholon continued to act as a magnet that attracted all sorts of people. Similarly, confronted with the town's apparent unruliness, Captain Lucien de Grammont, the *Thủ Dầu Một* Inspector of Indigenous Affairs, warned that Cholon was a rough place, with a turbulent, agitated mass of coolies and migrants, who needed to be subdued with strong discipline.¹⁴⁷ He perceived that they were led by a community of *congrégation* leaders, whose business acumen was sharp, yet their wealth remained unknown to outsiders. The more alarming aspect of Cholon, for Grammont, was that it was a Chinese place. Seen as 'foreigners' with no attachment to the land, and thus no obvious way of being governed and taxed, the coolies of 'foreign' Cholon were viewed as an extra burden on the authority.

Inherent in these observations was more than just the new state's obscure perceptions. Cholon's defining aspects, such as the canals, the temples, and the seemingly foreign floating population, deviated from how colonial administrators envisioned their task of governing the new colony. Cholon appeared to be unruly not just because it was outside Saigon. Its defining

¹⁴⁶ Paulin Alexandre Vial, *Les Premières Années de la Cochinchine, Colonie Française* (Paris: Challamel aîné, 1874), 148.

¹⁴⁷ Lucien de Grammont, *Onze Mois de Sous-préfecture en Basse-Cochinchine* (Napoléon-Vendée, J. Sory, 1863), 103.

characteristics presented a challenge to governance. The power vacuum after the French Conquest meant that the central authority reverted to indirect rule and weak enforcement, similar to the period that occurred before Minh Mang's reforms. The new French rulers, therefore, shared the same problems faced by Minh Mang in the 1820s: wrestling subordination from a society so used to semi-autonomy. The two separate foundations of the Cholon Municipality in the 1870s represented the French bid at governing an unruly 'foreign' town.

First Municipality, 1871–1876

In the 1870s, the creation of a sustained Municipality involved two separate attempts. The very fact that a municipal status was designated for Cholon signified the importance that the colonial state assigned to the town. It was among the only four large urban areas that had mayors, with the others being Saigon, Hà Nội, and Hải Phòng.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the two separate attempts to establish the Municipality illuminated how the colonial authority sought to rule Cholon. They did so by recognising community leaders, defining the urban territory's boundary and planning public works.

The first Municipality operated from 1872 to 1875.¹⁴⁹ During its tenure, it delineated Cholon's urban boundary. The villages that made up the site of colloquial Cholon attained an official urban status for the first time: its territory was illustrated in a new map drafted in 1874 (Fig. 3.1 and Fig. 3.2). The first Municipality also expanded the territory in all directions except to the east. The eastern outskirts were a telling exception: such expansion would have brought Cholon's border closer to Saigon. The lack of an eastward expansion indicated the colonial state's intention to keep the two towns separate. This objective was consistent with

¹⁴⁸ Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Charles-Marie Le Myre de Vilers, *Les Institutions Civiles de la Cochinchine (1879-1881) : Recueil des Principaux Documents Officiels* (Paris : Émile-Paul, 1908), 48.

how the new state perceived Cholon to be an unruly place. Hence Cholon's governance was going to be different from that of Saigon.



Figure 3.1 Map of Cholon 1874 by V. Roger

Source: Roger, V. 'Plan Général de La Ville de Cholon'. 1874. 1/6000. Belle Indochine.

<http://belleindochine.free.fr/images/Plan/Cholon1874Roger.JPG>.

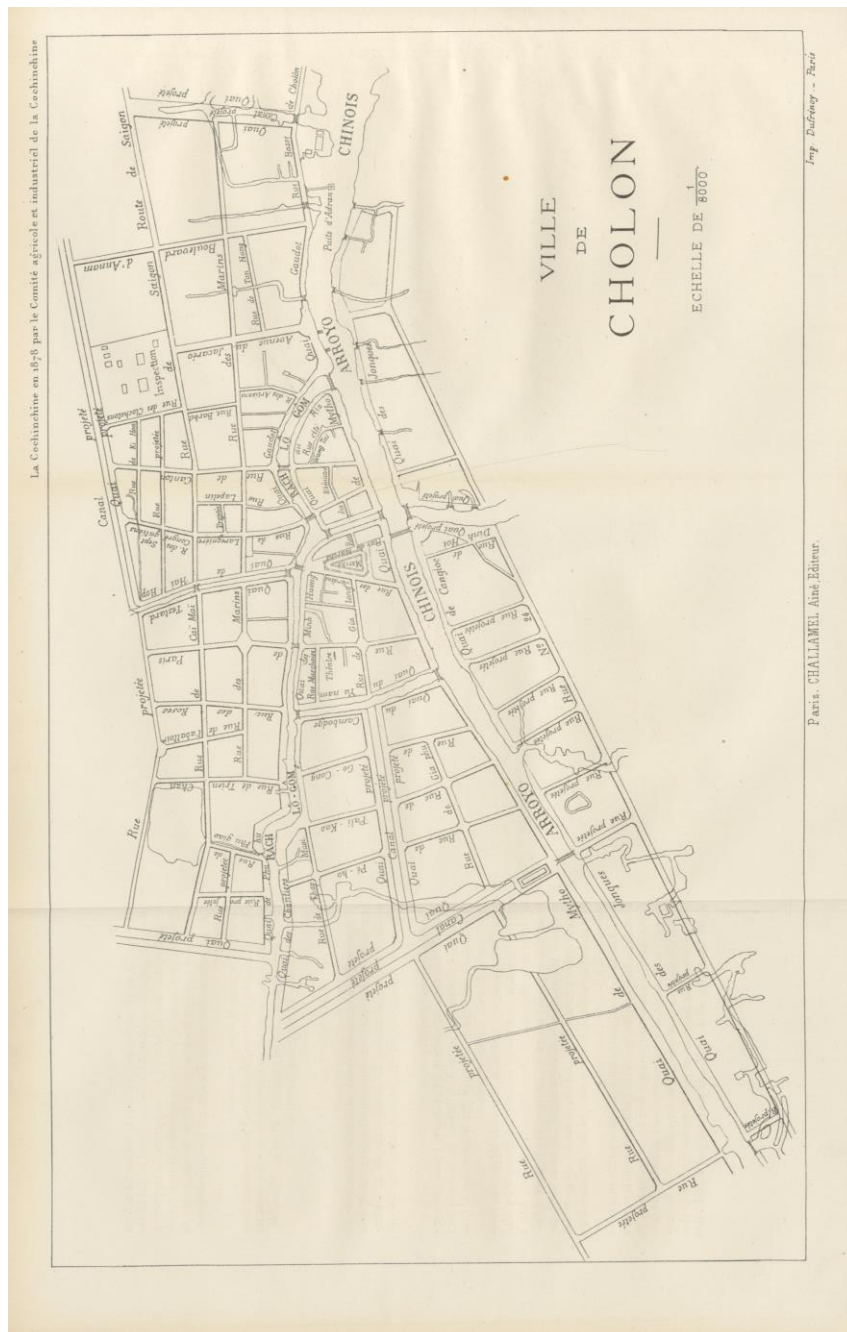


Figure 3.2: Map of Cholon with street names

Source: Le Comité Agricole et Industriel de la Cochinchine, 1/8000e (Paris: Challamel Aîné, 1878).

Also, as of 1875, successive changes made by the Municipal Council to define plots along key transport routes necessitated a new tax system. The Council modified the tax rates to accommodate the new local conditions. The new land tax was to be determined based on local assessment, rather than following, as before, the central government's directives.¹⁵⁰

The resultant land tax system comprised seven urban tax zones and one rural zone. As shown in Table 3.2, these new arrangements reflected the town's varying degrees of commercialisation and range of habitation. The highest tax rates were imposed on the central inner quays and old commercial streets, and the lowest in the western outskirts.

Table 3.1: Tax zones directory established by the first municipal council in 1875
(simplified)

Zone	Rate per square metre (cents)	Location
1	0.25c	Most central inner quays and old commercial streets
2	0.20c	
3	0.10c	Inner quays and streets
4	0.05c	
5	0.02c	Outer quays and inner streets
6	0.01c	
7	0.002c	Newly annexed northern, southern, eastern outskirts
Rural	10 francs per hectare	Western outskirts

Source: 'Travaux de la Commission Chargé de la Mission des Impôts Fonciers Appliqués à la Ville de Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Fonciers de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 1871-1875, National Archives Two in Ho Chi Minh City (Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia II, henceforth TTLTQG2), GOUCOCH ML2/8830.

¹⁵⁰ 'Travaux de la Commission Chargé de la Mission des Impôts Fonciers Appliqués à la Ville de Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Fonciers de la Ville de Cholon 1871-1923, 1875 1871, National Archives Two in Ho Chi Minh City (Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia II, henceforth TTLTQG2), GOUCOCH ML2/8830.

This street tax directory signified how the Municipal Council made sense of the town's physical form and distribution of resources. The administrators identified the street fronts with commercial enterprises and flows of traffic, but ignored the back alleys where warehouses, private homes, and other clandestine activities could be found. These back alleys formed large swathes of Cholon's territory that, despite their urban status, went unseen and untaxed by the colonial state, presumably because they were too chaotic to categorise.

The first Municipal Council also recognised the importance of local elites. Đỗ Hữu Phương, Ban Hap, and Huỳnh Thoại Yên were all active councillors. However, it was Đỗ Hữu Phương who was the instrumental eye-on-the-ground informant determining the new tax rate.¹⁵¹ The new regime only saw Cholon as a governable locality in the 1870s with the emergence of these elites. Such acknowledgement started a particular Cholon convention, in which the contemporary elites and leaders of different ethnicities held council seats and participated in decision making. This convention was not found in Saigon, where only those of French citizenship could sit on the Municipal Council.

Second Municipality 1879

Cholon's first municipal government was short-lived, but it laid down the cornerstones of the urban boundary and tax zones. In 1876 the Municipal Council was suspended for no clear reason. As a testament to the town's growing importance, a decree by the Governor-General re-established the Municipal Council on 20 October 1879. The impetus for the

¹⁵¹ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement), from 1870 to 1879. Huỳnh Thoại Yên, the shipbuilder, joined their ranks in 1876, also during the same year he changed from a rice merchant to shipbuilding, suggesting this change was significant for his elite status. *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1876), 137.

foundation recognised Cholon's growing economy, population, resources, and territory.¹⁵² Cholon was becoming too valuable to be administered like any other locality.

The 1879 decree marked the beginning of a sustained municipal government in Cholon for the next six decades. The town was to be administered by a Municipal Council that was subordinated to the Cochinchina's Director of the Interior. The Council was headed by a President or Mayor for a three-year term. The Mayor would be appointed by the Governor-General from among the French administrative ranks. He would be assisted by three deputies drawn from three ethnic categories, European, Vietnamese, and Chinese, whom he forwarded to the Governor-General for approval. Eleven Council members were composed of representatives from the same three ethnic categories. Among them, the three European councillors were nominated by the Chamber of Commerce from the directors of industrial or commercial firms in Cholon for appointment by the Governor-General. The four Vietnamese councillors and four Chinese councillors were appointed following elections. All councillors had to perform their duties without salary.¹⁵³

A closer look at the Council's composition showed that this was a collaborative organisation involving French administrators and major figures in the society, industry, or commerce. Unlike Saigon Mayors elected from the proprietors of industries or commerce by the French electorate, Cholon Mayors were trained administrators. In 1880, Antony Landes was the Mayor. The rest of the councillors were prominent figures who had emerged in the 1870s, notably Edouard Cornu, Đỗ Hữu Phương, and Ban Hap. Edouard Cornu was a Private Council member and President of the Cochinchina Chamber of Commerce, who also co-owned Cholon's only European-run large rice mill with the firm Spooner & Renard & Cie. Meanwhile, Đỗ Hữu Phương and Ban Hap's deputy positions in the Council were a

¹⁵² Le Myre de Vilers, *Les Institutions Civile*, 48.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

recognition of their command of certain segments of Cholon's Vietnamese and Chinese population.

Among the council members, Bauermeister was the consulate agent for Spain and Italy. Other long-time proprietors who emerged in the mid-1870s included the Vietnamese commercial broker Truong Minh Hanh, the Vietnamese shipbuilder Huỳnh Thoại Yên, and the Chinese wholesaler Yo Sing Tong.¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, many of the Municipality's bureaucratic posts were yet to be filled. Although the Municipality still lacked several functions, the new authority gave due recognition to the local and trans-local influential figures in Cholon's society.

The second Municipal Council was created as part of the establishment of the colonial civil administration, to replace the military regime of the earlier period. This apparent turning point in the history of colonial rule was less momentous on the ground. Gerard Sasges claims that the largest department of the administration, Customs and Monopolies, simply appropriated the pre-existing apparatus of Ban Hap's commercial network and storage of boats and weapons. In the opium monopoly, French law replaced Ban Hap's law, but the operation remained recognisable. The state remained co-dependent on the Chinese to collect almost half of its tax revenue.¹⁵⁵

Applying this overall pattern to the specific case of Cholon, especially when Ban Hap was one of the three mayoral deputies, the appointment of local elites manifested an attempt

¹⁵⁴ Sourced from the annual directories of the 1870s. *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement), from 1870 to 1879.

¹⁵⁵ Gerard Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication: Alcohol and the Making of Colonial Indochina* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 20.

at absorbing their sphere of influence into the Municipality. Tracy Barrett confirms that local elites held much sway in the Council.¹⁵⁶

On the city level, powerful tensions between the colonial administration and local representatives were most apparent. Particularly in the case of Cholon, city mayors tended to view the Chinese far more sympathetically than did their counterparts in the Government General. This phenomenon was due, no doubt, to the fact that the overseas Chinese community played such a socially significant role in ensuring the welfare of Cholon's urban community.

While Sasges and Barrett focus on the Chinese influence, Cholon should be seen more broadly as a ground in which the social spheres of Chinese, Vietnamese, and Minh Hương local elites intersected. The new municipality came to depend on these elites because managing the population in Cholon was a challenging task.

Grappling with ambiguities

The colonial state organized the newly conquered population by dividing them into ethnic categories, of which the two biggest were Vietnamese and Chinese.¹⁵⁷ These simple categories did not reflect the actual complexities of intermarriages, residence, and diasporic networks (see Chapter 2). Instead, the central government prescribed this simplistic categorisation to help themselves make sense of such overlapping complexities.¹⁵⁸ In the early period, these categories were far removed from the reality on the ground, but enforced by the colonial apparatus, the groups were, over time, instilled in this way of thinking and actualised as substantive social distinctions. If the people of the 1860s rarely thought of themselves and

¹⁵⁶ Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 19.

¹⁵⁷ There was also a sizeable minority of Chettians from French Pondicherry. Natasha Pairaudeau, 'Vietnamese Engagement with Tamil Migrants in Colonial Cochinchina', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 5, no. 3 (2010): 1–71, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 2–3.

others as Vietnamese or Chinese in the colonial sense, by the time Cholon Municipality was a reality in the 1880s, they had come to use those terms in a meaningful way, especially in their interactions with the colonial state.

In Cholon's context of diversity, diaspora, and local autonomy, the superimposed ethnic demarcation was even more problematic.¹⁵⁹ The Vietnamese were seen as *indigènes*: they were colonial subjects, and their residence in Cholon was taken as a given. Administratively, they did not have to apply for and pay residence permits like the *étrangers* or foreigners. They paid the lower *indigène* rate of personal tax and were subjected to *corvée* labour. Yet their residence pattern in Cholon, as noted, was no more permanent or fixed than the *étrangers* (Chapter 2). Only a small minority of the so-called *indigènes* was registered; the rest continued to live a mobile floating life along waterways. In Cholon during the 1880s, they were presumably administered/supervised by the chiefs of the town's eight *quartiers*.¹⁶⁰

Dividing the Vietnamese population in Cholon into eight *quartiers* did not entail formal segregation. Living among them were those classified as Chinese. The Chinese were seen as *étrangers*, who paid a higher tax rate but were exempt from *corvée* labour. Seen as subjects of other states, their stay and movement in Cochinchina were assumed to be temporary and constrained by entry passports, residence permits, and travel permits. All this paperwork needed to be regularly renewed, and the five Chinese *congrégations* in Cholon were responsible for processing them.¹⁶¹ By confining Chinese administration to Cholon-based bodies, and requiring constant renewals, the administration further entrenched the

¹⁵⁹ Peters discusses how women of mixed Asian parentage were even more invisible and fluid in terms of displaying, or rather, disguising their identity in Cholon, as compared to the French-Vietnamese *métis*. Erica J. Peters, 'Colonial Cholon and Its "Missing" Métisses, 1859–1919', *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 21 (September 2009), <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue21/peters.htm>.

¹⁶⁰ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1879), 199.

¹⁶¹ Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 12.

temporariness of their presence, despite many of them having lived there for generations. Also, this practice emphasised Cholon's foreignness and the shortcomings of the French assumptions.

Often, this identification process failed to capture the fluidity in how the people actually identified themselves. The identifications were especially blurry when applied to women and children. In 1880, Cholon Mayor, discussing prostitution and child trafficking, reported that among the sixty-six young girls found in Cholon's Chinese brothels, "some [...] came from Vietnamese families, but they had been purchased at a very young age and raised to act Chinese, even to the point of losing their ability to speak Vietnamese." He declared the Vietnamese girls were "very hard to distinguish from the Chinese".¹⁶² Indeed, apart from more stable and visible differences such as foot-binding among Chinese upper-class women, or teeth lacquering among the Vietnamese [women?], administrators often found it hard to distinguish between people in these two categories, especially in cases when they were intent on masking their identity.¹⁶³

Colonial classification, therefore, worked based on the former Nguyễn imperial apparatus to sharpen the currently blurry distinction between a local/Vietnamese and a foreigner/Chinese in Cholon. The term 'foreigner' during both the Nguyễn and French period reflected poorly on how these groups operated. In a bid to overcome this dilemma, as noted in the Introduction, the alternative term 'trans-local' is employed, as opposed to the local to overcome this dilemma. Nevertheless, the trans-local and the local were almost indistinguishable until colonial categorisation propelled the ethnicity-based enforcement of taxation, policing, and immigration control onto the population. However, the limited

¹⁶² Peters, "Colonial Cholon", paragraph 26.

¹⁶³ Erica J. Peters, *Appetites and Aspirations in Vietnam: Food and Drink in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Lanham, Md: AltaMira Press, 2011), 34–35.

effectiveness of these ethnic categories was reflected in how the Mayor struggled to muster enough men for public works projects.

Mobilising the population

In 1879, the *Annual Directory* recorded Cholon town's population at 30,000;¹⁶⁴ a year later in 1880, Mayor Landes counted the population at 36,000 (see Table 3.2).¹⁶⁵ The difference between these numbers suggests that the authority had only a rough idea of the number of people occupying the town's urban area.

Table 3.2 Cholon's population figures 1880

Category	Number
<i>Indigènes</i>	17 460
Chinese	18 607
Homeless/floating	744
TOTAL	36 811
Registered residents in top two tax brackets	996

Source: "Recensement de la Population Indigène et Asiatique." Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon, 1880. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435.

The new Municipal Government counted the population with the express purpose of learning about the labour force that was available for public works projects. Since not all registered residents were available for labour,¹⁶⁶ the count included any able-bodied men who were present in town and could be drafted for *corvée* service; they were called *prestataires*. Indeed, Cholon Mayors consistently valued the *prestataires* numbers more highly than the

¹⁶⁴ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1879), 199.

¹⁶⁵ However, the census at this time were unreliable because of lack of cooperation among the populace for fear of rising taxes. Bernard Rossigneux, 'Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880', Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939 (Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

¹⁶⁶ Only male residents were registered.

actual population count.¹⁶⁷ By September 1880, this number was estimated at 3,679 Vietnamese and 17,970 Chinese. This estimate included one-fifth of the *indigènes* and most of the Chinese, suggesting that the Municipality saw the latter group as its major labour source.

The Mayor admitted that this estimate was far from the actual number. The number of *indigènes* should have been higher, but many of them were absent; they went to work on ships, while their families stayed in Cholon. The number of Chinese was probably higher. It was obtained from the *congrégations*, who kept the records of residence and travel permits. Many of these permit-holders travelled to the provinces instead of staying in town. This estimate was further complicated by the fact that the *congrégations* were known to shield members away from the prying eyes of the authorities.¹⁶⁸

Admitting that the population count did not reveal a good picture of labour availability, the Mayor found it necessary to include the floating population.¹⁶⁹ Due to them being non-registered, these floating people were definitely more numerous than the counts revealed. Their number also fluctuated seasonally: they increased during peak rice harvest season and decreased when there were fewer opportunities for earning a living in Cholon during the low season, natural disasters and times of plague.

¹⁶⁷ As claimed by Mayor Landes in 1880 and Mayor Rossigneux in 1896.

Mayor of Cholon to Director of the Interior, 'Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon', 15 September 1880, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435. Rossigneux, 'Rapport'.

¹⁶⁸ Mayor of Cholon to Director of the Interior, 'Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon', 15 September 1880, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435.

¹⁶⁹ The actual term that the Mayor used was *sans domicile*. Antony Landes, 'Recensement de la Population Indigene et Asiatique', Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon, 1880, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435.

The population figure, therefore, confirms how the Municipal Government saw Cholon during this early colonial period: a town full of sojourners, outsiders, and foreigners living a makeshift life that defied registration, but who could be mobilised for labour duty. The authorities must have been perplexed, for there was little mechanism in place for them to tax, muster, or keep track of such mobile and elusive people.

Planning public works

Mobilising the population was crucial for several public works projects planned by the Municipality. In 1880, its key agenda was to expand the town westwards.

The Mayor did not fully explain why eastwards development, which would expand Cholon's territory to border Saigon, was ignored. The usual reason was that this boggy area would be costly for land reclamation. Yet westwards development equally required the reclamation of wet rice fields and marshes, so the actual rationale was not purely geographical. Also, the crowded villages living along the eastward routes formed an appealing agglomeration for any profitable business. In other words, it would have made more sense if a revenue-minded Municipality had expanded eastward to Saigon. The expansion further away from Saigon suggested that the Municipality wanted to leave the area in between as a buffer zone, to keep Cholon separate from Saigon to avoid the mixing of two very different groups of people.

In 1880, the Mayor planned two provincial road projects that would connect the rural outskirts to Cholon's urban centre.¹⁷⁰ The two major roads would form the quays running along the Lò Gốm canal and the Arroyo Chinois, forming a grid around the Central Market,

¹⁷⁰ From the Mayor of Cholon to the Director of the Interior, 15/09/1880. Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, Des Écoles, Des Moyens de Transports de La Ville de Cho Lon, 1880. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435.

(formerly known as Bình An market). In the middle of this grid was Rue de Gia Long (Fig. 3.3).

This plan showed that in 1880 the islet embanked by Quai des Minh Hương was a market site with few residences. The old urban area was limited within the Lò Gốm canal, Rue de Paris, and the islet of Quai au Riz (Fig. 3.2).¹⁷¹ On this islet, the entire area from the Central Market to the west was covered in rice fields, mangroves, and a scattering of thatched huts and brick houses. Under the tax zone regime, these immediate outskirts were still classified as rural land; the Municipality was beginning to change the classification to urban.

In summary, Cholon was a ‘conquered ground’ but not a colonised one. It was a ground in which colonial authorities found themselves making concessions and exceptions to their own regulations. In Cholon, the absolute and capricious colonial power was challenged by the vibrant presence and productive agency of local and trans-local communities. Cholon was not just governed by an imperial state; the new authority was learning to work with Cholon’s local disposition. A formidable barrier to the total supremacy of imperial power was held by the strength of the local and trans-local elites.

¹⁷¹ Originally the Bình Dương river in Nguyễn time. The Bình Dương river silted in the 1890s, so the Arroyo Chinois (called An Thông canal) was dug to make way for crowding vessels. The digging created two river islets, banked by Quai des Minh Hương and Quai au Riz in the north, and Quai de Mytho in the south (Figure 3.2: Map of Cholon 1880). List of principle businesses in the Town of Cholon. *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1880), 199.

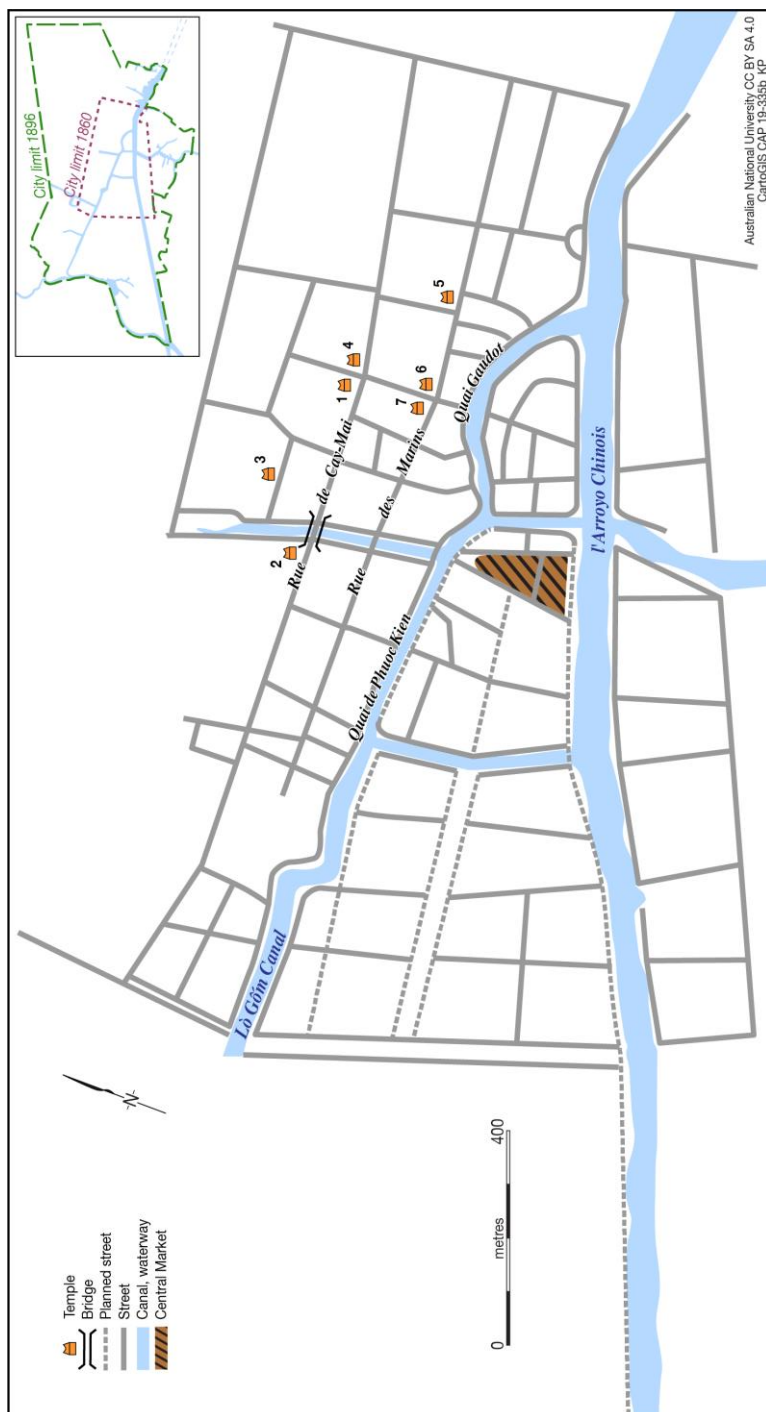


Figure 3.3: Map of Cholon, 1880

Sources: see *Appendix 1*

Co-dependency on elites

Saigon-Cholon's populace was the first in Cochin China to experience French colonisation. As noted, the Chinese, Indian, mixed-race and others from the Asian diaspora in this area had unfettered access to the commercial spoils in the power vacuum after the regime change. Hence, they were most adept at taking advantage of the changing times.¹⁷² As many of these people were no strangers to this area, calling them 'foreigners', as the Nguyễn and the French imperial states did, overlooked their deep involvement in local life.

Moreover, not just the so-called 'foreigners' were adept at navigating changing circumstances. Anyone who had gone through the socio-political shift from frontier autonomy to Confucian centralising reforms between the 1800s and 1850s would have learnt to adapt to increasing state intrusion. Under the new French regime, the reason for newcomers benefitting elder residents might have been that the latter had first to reconcile existing loyalties with the new collaborative opportunities. Yet the major figures, who had emerged by 1880, had been doing business in the country since the 1840s, two decades before colonisation.¹⁷³ Their local involvement had a longer history than the newly arrived cohort of colonists, military officers, and administrators.

As the colonial state simplified society into simple groupings, they were trying to gain a better grasp of a society that was much more complex than their categorisation.¹⁷⁴ Operating on the basis of such simple ethnic groupings, the Municipal Council promptly realised the limited command their directives wielded, without the support of local elites. This could be gleaned from the Mayor's frustration in mustering men for night patrols.

¹⁷² Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 13. Peters, *Appetites and Aspirations*, 185.

¹⁷³ Trocki notes "resilience of deep-seated Chinese business networks constructed across SEA and southern China". Carl A. Trocki, 'The Internationalization of Chinese Revenue Farming Networks', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Lanham, MD; Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 159. Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 15.

¹⁷⁴ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 46–47.

Cholon's night patrol was decreed in November 1879, shortly after the founding of the Municipality, as an alternative form of conscripted labour. The decree required non-*indigènes* Asian men (Chinese, Malays, and Chettians) to go on regular night watches. Less than a year later, however, the Mayor was ready to abolish it as an ineffective measure.¹⁷⁵

Night watches were subsequently manned mostly by Vietnamese men, many of whom found the duty increasingly taxing. Though Cholon was not segregated, Chinese residents were more likely to own property or lived in the urban centre.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Vietnamese households tended to congregate on the outskirts, the streets of which remained unlit. Thus, the well-lit inner streets that the Vietnamese men patrolled were often too far away from their homes, making the nightly return trip dangerous. The situation worsened when the *quartier* chiefs often played favourites, forcing some men to serve more than their due. Consequently, more and more men neglected this duty.

The reason why Vietnamese men were obliged to patrol far away from their usual neighbourhood was that Chinese men had not fully complied with their obligations.¹⁷⁷ Reluctantly, the Cantonese temple provided six watchmen; their local influence was again confirmed, as this act prompted other temples to send some men of their own. Unfortunately, their total number was still much lower than the eighty-eight Vietnamese watchmen. Consequently, the Mayor considered terminating the night patrol; he reasoned that a more effective way to solicit municipal labour was to add an extra day to the duration of the *corvée*.¹⁷⁸ Since all *étrangers* were exempt from the *corvée*, this solution essentially relieved the Chinese from such an obligation. In resolving this minor dispute,

¹⁷⁵ Mayor of Cholon to Director of the Interior, 'Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon', 15 September 1880, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435.

¹⁷⁶ According to the several real estate purchases made by the Cantonese temples during the conquest 1858–1860. Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 262–79.

¹⁷⁷ The Malay and Chettian men were not mentioned.

¹⁷⁸ Was the night watch stopped or not? Mayor Rossigneux in 1896 reported night watches for the weeks leading up to Lunar New Year, as it was the time of the year with the highest rate of crimes. Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896..

the Mayor chose an administrative compromise that placed a greater burden on the *indigènes*, rather than enforcing municipal regulations on the Chinese.

The case of the night patrol suggests an overlapping between governance and influence. The Municipality was grappling with a new jurisdiction with a long history of self-governance. It was unable to enforce several of its own regulations against the authority of the *congrégations*, and especially, the Cantonese. In matters of local governance, the town enforced its regulations only to the point where the *congrégations* pushed back. The negotiation between the local state and the *congrégations* often ended with the former allowing for the latter's partial non-compliance.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, accommodating a certain degree of exemption from common law characterised how the local state dealt with foreign self-governing associations.

Moreover, while Cholon's neighbourhoods contained people from a mix of backgrounds, colonial ethnic classification had sought to rearrange their social dynamics. Instead of considering themselves to be from the same neighbourhood, they were now expected to comply with a law that distinguished them according to their separate ethnic identification. This special interpretation of the law aggravated the *indigènes* in town, who found themselves having to do more than their fair share of public duty. With the addition of favouritism among the *quartier* chiefs, the Vietnamese residents found their interests were not protected by the new authority, while some of their neighbours were now able to use their *étranger* status to gain protection through the *congrégations*.

Acts of simplification by the local state, therefore, created a new pattern of social grouping. Not only did the state enforce its functions, but also, in order to work with them, people had to modify their behaviour and patterns of socialisation.

¹⁷⁹ Cherry, "Down and Out," 123.

Moreover, state simplification of the mixed population into clear-cut ethnic categories was intended to improve its ‘legibility’ in understanding the conquered society.¹⁸⁰ Such simplification was useful for administrative purposes but much less helpful for enabling the local state to muster the population. Inevitably the state had to rely on the collaboration of local elites, who commanded segments of the population. This reliance, in turn, enabled the emergence of prominent local figures and factions, who mutually depended on the new colonial apparatus to attain the social status unavailable to them under the former Nguyễn regime. Their influence was manifested through the temple associations.

Temples in Cholon were more than just places of worship. Tracy Barrett’s research describes how the seven dialect-based temples were authorised to manage their respective Chinese populations.¹⁸¹ The Cantonese temple demonstrated resilience during hard times by accumulating several real-estate properties during the French Conquest.¹⁸² It was unclear whether such an accumulation was for safekeeping, allowing the original owners to reclaim them, or they were final sales, which made the temple a major landowner in town.

More permanent than most structures in Cholon, the temples also provided leadership and patronage in the form of socio-political representation. The state recognised the reach of the temple bodies by incorporating them into the administrative hierarchy. This local influence can be seen in case studies of the Nghĩa Nhuận and Hà Chương temples.

¹⁸⁰ Similarly to standardised urban planning or the creation of surnames, a state imposed straight-lined, clear-cut forms of categorisation onto its population to better govern it. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 53–71.

¹⁸¹ Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 25–29.

¹⁸² Based on the several real estate purchases they made during the conquest from 1858–1860. Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 262–79.

The Nghĩa Nhuận temple

The Nghĩa Nhuận temple was established in the early 1870s. It was one of the temples established by the Minh Hương people, the most notable and oldest of which was the Minh Hương Gia Thành temple. Like other Minh Hương and Chinese temples, Nghĩa Nhuận worshipped the god *Quan Công*. It was maintained by income from leasing urban properties. Unlike Chinese temples, Nghĩa Nhuận was smaller in size and donations from members never reached the generous sums received by the bigger Cantonese or Fujianese temples.¹⁸³

The multitude of Minh Hương temples were not dialect-based temples, unlike the *congrégations*. These temples were better understood as headquarters or bases for separate social circles of kinship and fictive kinship. Having lost their elite status in the 1830s, the Minh Hương term now was an indication of their traces of Chinese kinship, no matter how far removed a person was from a China-born relative.¹⁸⁴ Their variety indicated the range of origins and ethnicities encompassed in the Minh Hương identity. This hybrid identity remained particularly well-regarded in Cholon's society. Under the colonial ethnic classification, the Minh Hương people were lumped into the Vietnamese, but this simplification did not wipe them from official records.¹⁸⁵ The Minh Hương category continued to appear in the census, irregularly but persistently, as late as the 1930s.

Nghĩa Nhuận stood out from the multitude of Minh Hương temples, because it was patronised by the powerful Đỗ Hữu Phương family. While not being major donors, the family was involved with temple life over several decades.¹⁸⁶ They held sumptuous Lunar New Year's banquets on the

¹⁸³ Le Van Luu, *Pagodes Chinoises et Annamites de Cholon* (Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinoise, 1931), 76.

¹⁸⁴ In the early 19th century, the Minh Hương Gia Thành temple originally protested against being grouped together with the more recent Thanh Hà immigrants who had no Vietnamese matrilineage; but from 1829, Minh Mạng redefined the Minh Hương as the descendants of Chinese fathers and Vietnamese mothers (i.e. however their relation to the Minh Hương temple). Wheeler, "Interests, Institutions, and Identity," 157–58.

¹⁸⁵ Cooke, "Water World," 140.

¹⁸⁶ The wife of Đỗ Hữu Phương was credited on the inscriptions of 1879, 1894, 1906. Li & Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 485–96. A son of Đỗ Hữu Phương sat on the temple's director board in the 1920s. Le Van Luu, *Pagodes*, 77.

temple grounds, hosting a blend of Vietnamese, Chinese, and European guests with a mixed menu of Vietnamese and Chinese cuisines.¹⁸⁷

Possibly, the family patronised the temple in order to substantiate their Minh Hương identity. Đỗ Hữu Phương was known as an Vietnamese, but he was colloquially known as a Minh Hương born in Chợ Quán. In the confusion of the French Conquest, and the inherent ambiguity of the Minh Hương title, there was a chance that Đỗ Hữu Phương did not have such ancestry. However, as the Minh Hương heritage was still held in high social regard in Cholon, Do's family sought to deepen their belonging to the urban area, and especially to the Nghĩa Nhuận circle, to justify his family's prominent rise in collaborating with the colonial regime.

Who were the people with whom Đỗ Hữu Phương wanted to be associated? A key organizer of Nghĩa Nhuận renovation in 1879 was Nguyễn Như Cương.¹⁸⁸ He was a Minh Hương man of some means and audacity: he rallied his associates to bid for Cochinchina's alcohol monopoly.¹⁸⁹ They formed the *Club for Annamese Merchants and Proprietors*. Their actions for this club suggested they were among the relatively wealthy, but not the richest, in Cholon.

To register for the club's founding, Nguyễn Như Cương paid a sizeable deposit of 1000 *piastres*.¹⁹⁰ The club was located in a two-storey building at 103 Quai de My Tho, opposite the Central

¹⁸⁷ Pierre Barreton et al., *Cities of Nineteenth Century Colonial Vietnam: Hanoi, Saigon, Hue and the Champa ruins*, trans. E. J. Walter (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1999), 81.

¹⁸⁸ List of directors and donors for Nghĩa Nhuận temple, 1879. Li & Nguyễn, *Bìa chữ Hán*, 481.

¹⁸⁹ 'Cercle des Propriétaires Annamites', Dossier Relatif au Règlement en Intérieur et Activités du Cercle des Commerçants et Propriétaires Annamites à Cholon (1875-1894), 1884-1886, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/3594. 'Réclamation de Nguyen Nhu Cang', Dossier Relatif au Règlement en Intérieur et Activités du Cercle des Commerçants et Propriétaires Annamites à Cholon (1875-1894), 15 September 1886, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/3594. Sasges notes "by 1884 two Vietnamese, Le Van Nhiem and Nguyen Thu Cang, had been granted seventeen out of twenty-two provincial farms." Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 20.

¹⁹⁰ This amount was an adequate sum for a plot of property near Saigon. For example, see the land sale advertisements in *Gia Định Báo*. "Yết Thị." *Gia Định Báo*, January 1, 1876, sec. Phần tạp vụ, 3.

Market. In the town where most premises were one storey, this was a substantial building at a prime address.¹⁹¹

How could the club have afforded it? The club members were Cholon-based business proprietors and fish merchants. Unlike their clubhouse, most of them held addresses in Rue de Gocong and Rue de Palikao.¹⁹² Since these two roads flanked a block, they were likely neighbours and partners of the same trade association that shared the same pool of capital. This area was part of the new annex to the municipal territory, classified since 1875 as rural land, where Đỗ Hữu Phương made an excursion to delineate its low tax rate.¹⁹³ Incidentally, this was also the location of Nghĩa Nhuận temple, thus confirming the close connection between this Vietnamese merchant group with the temple and Đỗ Hữu Phương's Minh Hương social circle. Nguyễn Như Cương and his associates were definitely invited to Phương's banquets on the temple ground.

In short, one major group of Phương's supporters was a club of merchants on the urban fringe. They were better off than the ambulant traders, who could not afford a shop or market space, but their commercial strength appeared to be average. Judging from the nature of their businesses, only Nguyễn Như Cương could be seen as a rich merchant.¹⁹⁴ In fact, the clubhouse on Quai de Mytho

¹⁹¹ Owners on this road paid premium rates for their properties from 1875. 'Tarifs des Rentes Tenant Lieu d'Impôt Foncier pour la Ville de Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Fonciers de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 6 July 1875, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/8830.

¹⁹² 'Liste Nominative des Membres Fondateurs du Cercle des Propriétaires Annamites, Cholon', Dossier Relatif au Règlement en Intérieur et Activités du Cercle des Commerçants et Propriétaires Annamites à Cholon (1875-1894), 1884, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/3594.

¹⁹³ 'Municipal Meetings. Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Mission des Impôts Fonciers Appliqués à la Ville de Cholon.', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Fonciers de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 3 – 11 June 1875, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/8830.

¹⁹⁴ Many of them were fish merchants selling at Quai de Hội Hiệp. This market was reported to be dilapidated by 1880. It was possible they did not have enough capital to rent a space at the Central Market. 'Liste Nominative des Membres

was likely a lavish expenditure, a grand gesture to flaunt a degree of wealth they probably did not possess.

A year after its establishment, the club was charged with illegal gambling and closed down. Due to this blow, Nguyễn Như Cương lost the club property and went bankrupt. His deposit and the property rent were paid on credit, so his wife was held to ransom by creditors. He blamed the Chinese for making false gambling accusations against the club and himself, but he did not make clear exactly which Chinese group was involved.¹⁹⁵

Forming a merchant club and splurging on a central property rental were all actions to establish a highly visible social and commercial presence. Nguyễn Như Cương's group was likely trying to use the visibility to attract more associates or investment, but at the same time, they were also inviting the scrutiny of their opponents. Who were the Chinese suspected of sabotaging the Nghĩa Nhuận's venture? Their competitors could have been those under the patronage of Ban Hap, the regionally famous head of the Hà Chương Fujianese temple.

The Hà Chương temple

The Hà Chương temple originally served Fujianese men from Zhangzhou county in China's Fujian province. There were two other Fujianese groups from Fujian province in Cholon: Tam Son temple for men from Fuzhou county, and On Lang temple for men from Quanzhou county. Originally, the new colonial state gave all three temples the administrative authority to vouch for the

Fondateurs du Cercle des Propriétaires Annamites, Cholon', Dossier Relatif au Règlement en Intérieur et Activités du Cercle des Commerçants et Propriétaires Annamites à Cholon (1875-1894), 1884, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/3594.

¹⁹⁵ 'Réclamation de Nguyen Nhu Cang', Dossier Relatif au Règlement en Intérieur et Activités du Cercle des Commerçants et Propriétaires Annamites à Cholon (1875-1894), 15 September 1886, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/3594.

behaviour of their members. By 1880, however, only Hà Chương retained this right as the official Fujianese *congrégation*.¹⁹⁶

The consequences of withdrawing administrative entitlement from On Lang and Tam Son obliged the men from these two groups to join Hà Chương, if they wanted to stay in the Colony. This was a setback especially for the On Lang group. While Tam Son temple had relatively few members, On Lang was one of the biggest Chinese associations in Cholon; their donations and renovations were among the most lavish. They must have commanded significant leverage in Cholon's society before losing their administrative authority to the Hà Chương.

The merging of membership tipped the balance in Hà Chương's favour in the ongoing rivalry between the two major temples. Hà Chương's successes was due likely to their chief, Ban Hap, the prominent Straits-born Fujianese merchant. Ban Hap's ambition to form an international opium monopoly during the late 1870s and command of the Cochin China's opium farm has been well documented.¹⁹⁷ The life and work of Ban Hap and his associates were examples of the highly mobile trans-local people who comprised a large part of Cholon's social fabric.

Cholon Municipality's acquiescence in the authority of temple associations could be interpreted as the local state's recognition of trans-local elite power, whose influence reached across the colonial boundary. Their rise to regional influence had been long in the making. Indeed, the period between the 1840s and 1870s saw the emergence of revenue farming syndicates around the various capital cities in the region, in which the local economy's mainstays of opium, alcohol, gambling, prostitution, and pawn brokering were all controlled by the same trio of Straits-born

¹⁹⁶ Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 225.

¹⁹⁷ Sasges notes "by 1884 two Vietnamese, Le Van Nhiem and Nguyen Thu Cang, had been granted seventeen out of twenty-two provincial farms." Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 20–27. Carl A. Trocki, 'Boundaries and Transgressions: Chinese Enterprise in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Southeast Asia,' in *Underground Empires: Culture, Capitalism and Identity*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini (New York: Routledge, 1997), 61–85. Trocki, "Internationalization," 164–67.

merchants.¹⁹⁸ Ban Hap and his associates, the brothers Tan Keng Ho and Tan Keng Sing, were at the head of these syndicates. The culmination of this consolidation process had occurred in 1879. In a rapid international expansion of Chinese capital, Ban Hap had unified a coalition of major Chinese opium-farming syndicates.¹⁹⁹

This consolidation of trans-local Chinese capital derived from revenue farming posed an immense challenge for both the colonial state and the Municipality.²⁰⁰ Local Minh Hương merchants in Cholon, such as Nguyễn Như Cương, found themselves up against a much stronger opponent with regional backing. For the colonial state, Ban Hap and his loose network of associates wielded the sort of effective control it had never exercised, but wished to exercise.²⁰¹

The French administration saw this economic reality quite clearly. Barrett argues that the revision of Chinese immigration policy in 1871 was not because of the need for Chinese labour, but because the French administration wanted to “forge its own relationship with the powerful and well-connected Chinese merchants and businessmen. This is not surprising because their businesses and networks had been, in varying degrees, a critical component of the economic stability of the Mekong Delta.”²⁰² This was the uncomfortable and uncontrollable situation within which the Municipality was founded when Ban Hap’s power reached its peak of influence in 1880.

In Cholon’s local context, Ban Hap’s influence was manifested in monopolising authoritative entitlements for his social circle. Put it another way, behind an apparently arbitrary act of administrative simplification was an appropriation by Ban Hap’s circle against a rival Fujianese group. Incidentally, Ban Hap’s Straits Chinese Club on Rue de Paris²⁰³ could be juxtaposed to

¹⁹⁸ Trocki, “Internationalization,” 164–65.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 166–69.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 168.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 14–15.

²⁰³ Salmon and Tà, “Wang Annan Riji,” 80.

Nguyễn Như Cương's Vietnamese Merchants Club on Quai de Mytho, suggesting that the saboteurs of the Nghĩa Nhuận's bid were, most likely, Ban Hap's associates.

Despite Hà Chương's hegemonic influence, however, the non-authoritative temples remained socially relevant. While the Tam Son Fuzhou men were compelled to join the hegemonic Fujianese *congrégation*, their women, free of such an obligation, still patronised their Vietnamese temple. Bearing Vietnamese-sounding names, these women had Fuzhou heritage or had married into Fuzhou families.²⁰⁴ These devoted patrons formed a *nữ hội*, or a women's association.

The active women's association indicated that the temple's social significance meant much more than being just a base for Fuzhou men. Among the deities worshipped was *Bà Chúa Thai Sanh*, the goddess of childbirth and child-rearing. Hence, the temple's altars constantly received prayers or thanks from female patrons from all walks of life. The Goddess' annual festival was celebrated for three days, with feasts and the occasional theatre performance. During this time, a delegation of the association knocked on the doors of affluent women to raise cash donations in honour of the goddess.²⁰⁵ Unfortunately, since women were not registered on the tax role, the administrative classification neglected a significant portion of the population.

Conclusion

In 1880 the local state sought to govern Cholon. The overriding colonial state had limited knowledge of Cholon's population and social fabric. In the eyes of the colonial administrators Cholon appeared to be an alien and unassimilated place. Consequently, the Municipality was left to grapple with Cholon's inherent social and ethnic ambiguities with limited tools: maps of the urban territory, public works planning, and a population census. More importantly, the Municipal Council depended upon a handful of supportive elites, who commanded segments of the population through

²⁰⁴ Li & Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 171–72. Le Van Luu, *Pagodes*, 63–64.

²⁰⁵ Le Van Luu, *Pagodes*, 63–64.

their associated temples. In turn, these temples gained both administrative and economic authority that allowed them to monopolise certain areas of Cholon's economy. Such co-dependency between the Municipal Council and the temples characterised Cholon's nascent governance in 1880.

CHAPTER 4 1896: INDUSTRIAL EMERGENCE OF THE WESTERN AREA

Cholon Municipality was created to strengthen the role of the state in this particularly viable urban area. Afterwards, the Municipality completed extensive public works that created space for urban development that further raised Cholon's economic value to the Colony.

In this chapter, attention is focused on a series of issues that occurred in Cholon during the economic boom of 1896. How did the Municipality govern the growing town? Specifically, how did public works development transform Cholon's western outskirts into an industrial area? How did this expansion fortify the rise of a new class of urban elite?

Several government publications stemming from the 1880s and 1890s are drawn upon to address these issues. These annual bulletins and directories compiled extensive lists of principal firms in both industry and commerce. Cross-referencing these lists over these two decades offers a penetrating insight into the trajectories of certain merchants, who emerged into prominence within Cholon's economic sphere. Also, extensive use is made of the comprehensive report to the Municipal Council by Bernard Rossigneux, Cholon's mayor in 1896. Printed and bound as a booklet, the report was published in a much better condition than many contemporary official documents. Such a high-quality publication suggested that it was intended for wide circulation within government departments and at official meetings. Over the following decades, this report appeared in several folders concerning major municipal developments, serving as the key reference for understanding the progress of Cholon's urbanisation.

Municipal governance under pressure

In 1896, Bernard Rossigneux renewed his mayorship for another three-year term. Rossigneux was one of the two longest-serving mayors in Cholon (the other was Frédéric Drouhet in the 1900s). His report to the Municipal Council highlighted the resources that Cholon currently held, to strengthen his appeal to the Colony for more support. Rossigneux asserted that Cholon had grown to possess

great value, and the Municipality had achieved commendable public works, but it was overwhelmed in responding to the urban area's burgeoning growth.

Coping with population increase

By 1896, Cholon's population was estimated at 120,000 permanent residents, with an additional 20,000 sojourners during rice season (Table 4.1),²⁰⁶ almost tripling the figure of between 36,000 and 45,000 people in 1880. Despite being called 'the Chinese town', people classified as Vietnamese still made up the majority of Cholon's population. They numbered roughly 80,000, double the number of Chinese people.

As with most population counts during this time, the number of people present must have been higher than the total of 140,000. Many men did not carry identity cards or pay taxes, as shown from the numerous arrests and expulsions reported in the government mouthpiece, *Gia Định Báo*, every week. Women were not subjected to tax, so they carried no card either.

Table 4.1 Cholon's population in 1897

	Males	Females	TOTAL
French	74	61	135
Foreign Europeans	19	6	23
Vietnamese	32,062	47,999	80,061
Cambodians	4	N/A	4
Chinese	27,356	14,202	41,558
Indians	109	23	132
Tagals	2	N/A	2
Japanese	1	5	6
Malays	31	3	34
TOTAL	59,658	62,299	121,937

Source: Simplified from Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie: Cochinchine et Cambodge (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897, 566).

²⁰⁶ Bernard Rossigneux, 'Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880', Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939 (Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

Reflecting this new development, the number of *quartiers* had increased from eight to fourteen. Reporting to the mayor and the police, the elected chiefs calculated and collected taxes on individuals, boats, and *corvée* labourers; they also managed legal and emergency matters. A continuation from the 1880s was the duty of organising night rounds before Lunar New Year. Presumably, this was when theft was most common, and traffic in and out of town was most intense. For the chiefs, this task was a lot of work for no pay, except 12 piastres for office expenses.²⁰⁷

The mayor was particularly vexed by the autonomy exercised by the Chinese *congrégations*. While the mayor appointed the Vietnamese *quartier* chiefs, central administration appointed the *congrégation* heads. Hence, the mayor was only informed of the names of the incumbents by reading the official bulletin, *Le Journal Officiel*. There were still only five *congrégations* despite the marked increase in population and immigration, so each of them administered many more people than before.

Managing a growing town²⁰⁸

The population upsurge placed an enormous pressure on municipal services. These services included lighting, waste management, water supply, road maintenance, fire safety, hospitals and schools.

The urban centre was well-lit at night. Four hundred oil lamps were maintained by the town,²⁰⁹ while the shops and boats hung out their own lanterns.²¹⁰ Meanwhile, lighting was sparse in the outskirts, as the town struggled with rising oil prices that were increased by Chinese syndicates and import duties. An exception was the Bình Tây quays, where the rice mills and shops installed candled lamps, so they could load, unload, and mill overnight. This was one example of the self-

²⁰⁷ The mayor did not specify 12 piastres per day or per year. Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896.

²⁰⁸ Compiled from the Mayor's report 1896, unless otherwise noted. Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Pierre Barreton et al., *Cities of Nineteenth Century Colonial Vietnam: Hanoi, Saigon, Hue and the Champa ruins*, trans. E.J. Walter (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1999), 61.

sufficient private enterprises that contributed to making the city more liveable. Even then, a common practice was to bring along a lantern when one had to walk at night.²¹¹

The town was considering the option of electric lighting, for which it had solicited reasonable offers from providers for the town centre, where the quay traffic was highest. This would make it possible for night-time loading and unloading, which in turn relieved the congestion and shortened the wait for junks. Also, electric lighting would aid the police in catching thieves, since Cholon was a dangerous place to walk at night. Overall, changing to electric lighting would make the quays more efficient and safer. Nevertheless, the central government refused to support their provision on the pretext that Saigon did not have electric lighting.

In terms of collecting and processing waste, in the most populous areas, the town installed free public booths for junks and travelling merchants. A more selective service was provided by a contractor, who took charge of the waste from roads, railways, municipal buildings, and some individual houses. The contractor collected the full *tinettes* (buckets) and emptied them at Chinese market gardens on the outskirts, where the waste was then used as natural fertilisers. Nevertheless, the mayor deemed this practice too unsanitary. Instead, the contractor was required to carry the *tinettes* to the dumping ground on the northern outskirts and process the waste into a form of odourless fertilisers to sell to the market gardeners.

No service was needed to supply the city with drinking water thanks to a clean and abundant underground stream that ran across the city from Arroyo Chinois to Rue de Cây Mai.²¹² This stream had been full since the 1800s and had been reinforced by solid masonry that prevented infiltration from extraneous sources. The well supplied sufficient drinking water for the entire Municipality.

²¹¹ Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa*, 152.

²¹² The water underneath Cholon was known to be clear and abundant, and for a while, Saigon also drew from the supply. But to my knowledge, the water was not tested until the late 1890s. Trần Hữu Quang, *Hạ Tầng Đô Thị*, 145.

As for road maintenance, the Municipality was rigorously enforcing alignment regulations. All new urban constructions had to be uniformly aligned to ensure pavements were of regular width.²¹³ Moreover, pavements and gutters were maintained on all streets inside the old centre: an area bounded by Avenue Jaccaréo, Rue de Cây Mai, and the quays of Hội Hiệp, Lò Gốm, Yunnan, and Mytho. Apart from Rue de Cây Mai and Quai de Mytho, this area was under the Colony's charge and, therefore, was paved with bricks; the other pavements were surfaced with compressed cement tiles from France. An exception was Rue de Cây Mai's pavement, which was laid in ceramic stoneware tiles. These ceramic tiles might have been a legacy from the Nguyễn era, as Rue de Cây Mai was part of the mandarin road network. The mayor deemed these cement and ceramic tiles to be better than the colony-built brick pavements: the former was more hard-wearing and cleaner than the latter, because bricks crumbled easily and formed crannies that held both dirt and contaminated water. Also, the town replaced the paved stonework with crushed granite on the most frequented streets.²¹⁴

The town had its own firefighting squad, comprising ex-infantrymen known as skirmishers, police agents and railway workers. In the event of fire, the chiefs of the affected *quartier* provided a number of men to assist the manoeuvring and priming of the pumps.²¹⁵ Also, the Cantonese temple maintained its own fire rescue team and equipment,²¹⁶ again confirming their autonomy in providing community services.

²¹³ In 1895-1896, there were at least ten instances of authorising proprietors to build or rebuild their buildings, each with a requirement of uniform pavement alignment. For example, see 'Arrêté autorisant la nommée Pham Thi Long à construire une maison en bois et tuiles dans le terrain no.141, situé à Cholon, rue Cai mai. 1 April 1896', in *Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française. Année 1896.*, vol. 4 (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 337.

²¹⁴ The mayor elaborated on the different materials for paving because, the inferior brick paving was found on some streets in Saigon and the vicinity. Trần Hữu Quang, *Hạ Tầng Đô Thị*, 31–34.

²¹⁵ Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896.

²¹⁶ The Cantonese fire team was costly to maintain. They commemorated this achievement in 1898 with an inscription. Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 291–96.

Overall, the Municipal Government coped well with the increasing demands for lighting, waste management, water supply, road maintenance, and fire safety, all of which were underpinning the town's economic growth. However, hospitals and public schools came under strain from the increased demand. In 1896, there was one municipal school for boys, one Catholic school for girls (maintained by the Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres), and one municipal hospital. These facilities were far from sufficient for a town of over one hundred thousand. Both hospitals and schools, therefore, required more detailed attention along with transport, because they were indicative of the strains and stresses stemming from Cholon's accelerated growth.

Hospitals

In 1896 there were only two hospitals serving a crowded and growing area: the Cholon Municipal Hospital, and the Chợ Quán Indigenous Colonial Hospital.²¹⁷ While the latter was technically under colonial control, it also shared the burden of municipal patients. Many of these patients were injured labourers, prostitutes diagnosed with venereal diseases, and victims of epidemics. Thus, population growth generated extra demands on the Municipal Hospital, which was operating at full capacity.

Constructed and funded with the municipal budget, the Hospital was located on Boulevard de Tongkéou, in the northern outskirts, just beyond the Saigon-Mytho railway station (see Fig. 4.2). It had a dispensary treating an average of sixty women at each session, who were mostly prostitutes. In addition, there were three rooms for men and some isolation lodges for infectious cases. These rooms also treated an average of sixty patients, but this number could increase considerably during epidemics. Thus, the Cholon Municipal Hospital catered for an average of 120 patients.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ There was also possibly private medical care funded by Chinese and Indian *congrégations* for their members.

²¹⁸ The source did not specify if the number of patients were per day or not. It was likely counted at the time of discussion, which was 1895. Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, "Réorganisation de l'Hôpital de Chợ Quán," in *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session extraordinaire de 1895* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1895), 165–71.



Figure 4.1 Streets in Cholon' s centre, 1896.

Source: Extracted from 'Extrait de Carte de la Ville de Cholon. Projet d'Exécution. Prolongement dans Cholon jusqu'au Marché de Binh Tay du Tramway de Saigon à Cholon par la Route Basse'. 1/5000. Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l'Électrification du Tramway Saigon – Cholon (Route Basse) (1882-1913). Saigon: Compagnie Française de Tramways (Indochine), 16 July 1912. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386.

Cholon's growing industrial activities generated a higher risk of injury. Consequently, operations at the Hospital were very frequent. On average, there were three thigh amputations every two months. The Chief Physician considered this number to be unprecedented, except during wars and disasters. This higher number was the result of many Chinese men either getting injured in brawls between *congrégations*, or from working in the rice mills. The injured were collected by the police and generally transported to the Municipal Hospital, but some also went to the Chợ Quán Hospital.²¹⁹

Most patients paid for their own nourishment. This included food, albumin water, tea, and refreshing drinks, costing a patient a total of 12 piastres per day.²²⁰ In addition, a treatment fee of 0.25 piastres was charged per day. Where necessary, the Municipality provided milk, wine, sugar, ice, tableware, and kitchen equipment.²²¹

The *congrégations* paid for the food and treatment of their members for a period up to seventeen days. Chinese and Japanese patients did not often stay for long; the women were checked out by their families, because they were uncomfortable with sharing the ward with prostitutes.²²² Meanwhile, free treatment was offered to Vietnamese police agents, railroad workers, and municipal employees and their average stay was twenty-three days. This corresponded with the observation that most Vietnamese patients stayed for a longer period in the dispensary.

²¹⁹ Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, 'Réorganisation de l'Hôpital de Chợ Quán', in *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session extraordinaire de 1895* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1895), 165–71.

²²⁰ Rossigneux, "Rapport", 1896.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ministère des Colonies, 'Annales d'Hygiène et de Médecin Coloniales', Dossier Relatif à la Création d'Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), September 1903, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

Payments were detailed because the Hospital was most concerned about provincial patients being unable to cover the cost themselves. Many had come from the Western Area, which was renowned source of epidemics because its booming economy generated huge traffic movements of both people and goods. Having come from other provinces, many travellers were sick on their arrival in the town. They were picked up by the police from the streets, or by boatmen from rice barges, and dropped off at the Hospital's door. Administratively, provincial patients should have been sent to Chợ Quán Hospital. However, being further away on the east side of Cholon's urban area, Chợ Quán was not their first option. In addition, for those who could not afford their own treatment, it had to be paid for by their home province, and many times this was refused. This was a particular grievance of Mayor Rossigneux, who griped about the fact that Chợ Quán, while treating fewer patients, had double the staff and budget, all funded by the Colony. While this growing demand for hospital treatment remained relatively under control, the schools acutely felt the burden of Cholon's swelling population.

Schools

In 1896, over-enrolment, coupled with decreased funding, were placing a huge burden on the municipal schools. The lack of classrooms and teachers led to some classes being taught in makeshift thatched huts on the school grounds. To cope with the strain, the mayor urged the Colonial Government to pay for the European teachers, so that it could increase the number of non-European personnel and build more classrooms.

There were separate schools for boys and girls.²²³ The Municipality funded only the boys' school. Monsieur and Madame Giroux headed the school with three professors, seven teachers, and two tutors, all bearing non-French names. They taught a total of 414 boys, 15 per cent of whom were Chinese. About one-third of the student body comprised provincial students, the majority of whom

²²³ In addition, there may have been private schools not listed among these municipal functions.

lived with their families in Cholon, and the rest stayed with relatives or friends in town to pursue their studies.²²⁴

A decline in funds for schools had stemmed from the Colony withdrawing its support since the creation of the Municipality in 1879. This reduced colonial support left the new Municipal Council to shoulder the burden of financing an increased educational budget. The majority of these expenses were incurred in purchasing land, building facilities, and paying the salaries of European teachers. Meanwhile, scholarships for provincial students were terminated. Another loss was an adult French language course. This course had been attended by mostly Chinese French-speakers in Cholon, who wanted to work in trade.²²⁵

The girls' school, named Sainte Enfance de Cholon, was managed by the sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres. With branches across Cochinchina, Saint Paul de Chartres was a Catholic charity organisation, whose Sisters maintained orphanages, worked as nurses in hospitals, provided medical care for pregnant women and a Catholic education for girls. The Cholon's orphanage, medical ward, and girls' school had been a constant presence on Rue de Paris for more than two decades. They had evolved from a charity that sheltered poor Chinese migrants and orphaned girls into a fully-fledged school for girls that also dispensed medical service for sick women and children.

The overwhelmed condition of the hospitals and schools suggests that they were not on the top of the budget list. Instead, there was much detail in the Municipality's accounts for road maintenance and lighting, which indicated the priority was placed upon building communication routes for trams, roads, and canals rather than education.

²²⁴ *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge*, 1897, 405–407.

²²⁵ Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896.

Trams

The Municipality allowed two French-owned tramway companies to connect Cholon's eastern outskirts to Saigon: the Route Haute tram and the Route Basse tram; their purpose was to offer an alternative to travelling between Saigon and Cholon by boat. Case studies of both tramway systems are used below to illustrate the unsuccessful process of seeking to extend a tramway to change the port-town's structure.

The Route Haute Tramway

The Route Haute Tramway, operated by Société Général de Tramway à Vapeur, ran along Rue des Marins and terminated at Inspection, where the Town Hall and several other government buildings were located. Hence, this tramway served, among others, bureaucrats and the soldiers. In 1896, the Route Haute tramway seemed to be more competitive than its rival, the Route Basse tram, by offering lower fares.²²⁶

In 1896 the discussion of the Route Haute tram extension in 1896 provided a case of how both the different levels of government and the French enterprises responded to Cholon's strong growth. Also, it showed how the government and the enterprises were trying to find ways to impose a linear organisation onto the seemingly chaotic nature of Cholon's public space. Not only was the tramway company involved, but also the Colonial Council, the Mayor of Cholon, and the Director of Public Works. All had to be involved, when a Special Inquiry Commission was formed to investigate a proposal for extending the tramway.²²⁷

²²⁶ Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, 'Attribution d'une garantie d'intérêt de 20,000 francs à la Compagnie française de tramway à vapeur (route Basse)', in *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session extraordinaire de 1895* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1895), 33–61.

²²⁷ The following discussion on the tramway was extracted from the Conseil Colonial's meeting note, unless otherwise noted. Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, 'Projet de pénétration du tramway de la Route Haute dans Cholon et de raccordement avec le chemin de fer de Mytho', in *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session extraordinaire de 1895* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1895), 38–43.

In the past, the tramway company had made two requests to the Colonial Council for an extension and a guarantee of interest. This guarantee was a subsidy provided by the central government to local private enterprises in the form of a long-term investment. On behalf of the Colony, the Colonial Council had the power to discuss and vote on how they could use the colonial budget to subsidise a company's growth. Financial participation promised to bring the government a share of the profits. Simultaneously, the company was required to obtain permission to carry out the project in compliance with government regulations.

On 11 May 1896, the Route Haute tramway company formally requested both a guarantee of interest and permission to extend the line through the busy urban centre to reach the Western Area and terminate at the outer Lò Gốm Canal. This extension would enable the tram to carry not only passengers but the contents of rice wagons to the loading docks. The new terminal at Lò Gốm Canal would then be connected to the Saigon-Mytho railway on the northern outskirts (Fig. 4.2). Apparently, this proposal was aimed at creating an alternative rice shipping route, going by land and rail, to compete with the current Chinese-dominated shipping barges and longboats (*chaloupes*).

The company vouched for their proposed safety measures: the tram would travel at a speed lower than 10kph between stops placed at major intersections. The widening of Rue des Marins by 3 metres would accommodate any possible mistakes by drivers. In addition, the company highlighted that the tram was a cheaper choice not only for moving freight but also passengers:

The traveller who paid 3 cents to go from Saigon to the current station of Cholon is then obliged to pay 10 cents for a vehicle to go to the market area, 15 cents to go to Bình Tây and 20 cents to go to Bình Đông's warehouses or factories, while the new tram could drop them near all these locations for 1, 2, or 3 cents.

The extension was supported by the Cholon Mayor and the Special Inquiry Commission but met strong opposition in the Colonial Council. The naysayers were mostly concerned with safety.

The layout of streets and canals in Cholon did not allow sufficient space for a tramway to pass through them.²²⁸ Traffic was quite intense on the proposed passage through Rue des Marins for a few hundred metres. After all, it was one of the most populous streets in Cholon. Moreover, one councillor was convinced that the people had no idea how to behave around an urban tramway. Unlike European cities, where the people spent their lives indoors, he observed, Cholon inhabitants lived mostly on the streets. More public education of both the Vietnamese and Chinese was needed, he urged, because they were strangers to steam-powered trams. Many accidents had occurred along the other tramway, and the Council should be responsible for ensuring the safety of all people in the Colony.

On the other hand, the supporters of the tramway extension pointed out that the number of accidents so far was too few to conclude that the tram was an actual public danger. The Director of Public Works agreed, observing that the adults and children had taken enough caution to avoid vehicles on the streets, so they would not put themselves in danger from the tram, as long as its speed did not exceed 10kph.

Moreover, the proposed three-metre street widening was seen by some to be too narrow. Instead, a five-metre widening should allow adequate space for the pavements, which most people would occupy. Meanwhile, others calculated that a three-metre widening was sufficient for the tram to run on the middle axis of the street, leaving a passage on each side to allow the movement of other vehicles. This would also leave space for future buildings. They pointed out that the five-metre widening would dispossess proprietors who owned properties along the proposed course. This would incur higher costs for the project's compensation.

The discussions on tram safety suggested that the colonial government saw tram construction not just as a public works project, but also as an educational project. They were introducing modern

²²⁸ Currently 12 metres wide including 8.40 metres of pavement.

transport technology to a populace who were deemed to be strangers to such technology, even though both tramway systems had been operating for a decade. From another perspective, the concern about the behaviour of residents stemmed ~~arguably~~ from the very different way-of-life the French colonists experienced in Cholon. Living on the street was a phenomenon that outlasted the colonial regime. Cholon's centre was clearly not built to a linear plan. The colonial government realised that the sheer presence of the crowd and their activities posed a huge challenge to re-designing the town to match the prevailing ideas of modern urbanism in which people lived on regularly aligned streets and worked a safe distance away from moving vehicles.

The higher costs involved in Cholon's tramway construction raised the question of the guarantee of interest. Some councillors argued that the higher cost overall could not be justified merely to allow a few Chinese to travel a little more cheaply. They saw little value in ensuring the safety or the economic interests of these 'foreign Asians', who should be the Colony's concern. While other councillors predicted low returns on the project, the Director of Public Works again gave his support. He pointed out that a refusal would mean that the Council might forego considerable profits in later years. Non-participation was only viable for the early years of the tramway's operation, when it was unclear how successful these public works would become. By 1896, the profit was 54 per cent, and by 1911 was expected to rise to more than 120 per cent. Now that the tramway's benefits had been proven, the Director thought the Council should change its stance and provide a guarantee.

On these grounds, the Colonial Council approved the extension on 18 December 1896, with a widening of five metres on Rue des Marins between Avenue Jaccaré and Quai de Hội Hiệp. This stretch would take them into the old centre, where long-standing landowners such as the temples held rental lodgements (see Chapter 2). The increased cost was estimated at 28,000 piastres, mainly the result of extra technical modifications, and full compensation for affected properties. Overall, the

Colonial Council voted for the guarantee of interest and, despite the extra expense, sought to ensure safety and grant compensation. This decision diverged from the Council's past reluctance to engage in extra outlays. The change on this occasion reflected a new level of faith within the Colonial Council in the perceived profitability of urban tramways.

The opinion that the high costs were unjustified when they benefitted the Chinese foreigners was interesting, because it illustrated that some saw Cholon as a foreign place unworthy of colonial investment. Such lukewarm support from some members of the Colonial Council explained why Mayor Rossigneux felt compelled to detail Cholon's value in his 1896 report. Considerations of added value might also explain why most major public works were developed on the outskirts rather than in the densely populated older urban centre, which promised the most immediate lucrative returns. Compensation costs, together with colonial values of race and citizenship, meant that some colonists saw little value in changing the pre-existing substructure of what they perceived to be a 'foreigners' town.

Nevertheless, the discussion also showed that the central government respected urban private ownership by factoring in compensation for proprietors, in addition to allowing urban annexation of rural land, as occurred in the Bình Đông expansion. Giving priority to urban areas where state power was supposedly stronger, however, did not mean that the colonial council had full control over it. As one of many plans to create alternative freight routes, the Route Haute tram extension was eventually not implemented (until it was replaced by the Galliéni electric plan).²²⁹ Nevertheless, this case study provides important insights into the protracted nature of urban development in Cholon.

²²⁹ The plan's failure illustrated Sasges's observation of how the central government had weak control and bureaucratic rationality before 1897. Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 13.

The Route Basse Tramway

The Route Basse Tramway was established eight years after its competitor by La Compagnie Francaise des Tramways. It ran along the north bank of Arroyo Chinois, where it ran past several markets, the Chợ Quán hospital, gardens, villages of stilt huts and thatched huts, to terminate some distance away from the Central Market (Fig. 4.2). Hence, this tram served a more diverse set of passengers, who traded at markets, and visited rural areas between Saigon and Cholon. Due to its proximity to the waterways, the rail line was sometimes flooded during the wet season, which was perceived by administrators as a safety hazard.

In 1896, the area's terrain was deemed to be too dangerous and inconvenient for a tram to operate. Nevertheless, the company argued that its project's value outweighed that of their competitor. The tram served the real needs of a population that the Route Haute tram could not serve. This was the pressing need to integrate the various 'agglomerations', or village groupings and market-places scattered along the Arroyo Chinois, forming an almost continuous suburban strip between Saigon and Cholon. Figure 4.2 shows that this strip belonged to Tân Hòa, of Cholon Arrondissement, where Chợ Quán hospital and market were located.

In 1896, this was both an area and a population that the Colonial Council did not prioritise. Many members on the Council held very low opinions of the Tân Hòa suburban strip, because this area was perennially flooded by overflows from the Arroyo Chinois and drainage from the marshy Plain of Tombs. Some even lamented that no habitation should be allowed in this so-called swamp.²³⁰ This was in spite of the fact that the villages were populous with a string of markets and

²³⁰ Gaston Leriche, 'Centralisation', *Le Mékong*, 1 April 1897. ANOM, INDO GGI 5737.

workshops between Cholon and Saigon.²³¹ The low value ascribed to this suburb was one of the main reasons why the Council still preferred to keep Saigon and Cholon separate.

The difference in the operation and discussions of the two tramways indicated how the public works projects were creating a new living experience in Cholon. The Route Basse tram, following the canal course, was exposed to the old waterborne way-of-life, while its land-based technology was not designed for the real-life scenario of flooding. It added an alternative transport route for common passengers and the market-goers to travel between towns. Also incentivised by this growth was the Route Haute tram, which served a new class of passengers. Installed on an old road further away from the water, the tram provided economical trips for the army, and the nascent bureaucratic class, who were enjoying the first fruit from their planning efforts.

Moreover, both trams shared an ambition to extend the service to the western outskirts where they could capture a share of the lucrative rice shipping business. However, both tramway systems were unable to extend beyond their current terminals, which remained on the urban centre's border (Fig. 4.2). This illustrated the pattern in which public works were established in areas around the old centre, but never replaced it. In addition, the Colonial Council and transport companies were also unable to resolve the challenge of building land transport in a town built around waterways. Cholon's pre-colonial substructure remained impenetrable.

Another continuation from the former era, despite rigorous government intervention, was the Chinese domination in the rice trade. The development of the Western Area particularly benefitted large ethnic Chinese rice merchants, who invested foreign capital into steam-powered rice mills and

²³¹ A vivid description of the Tân Hòa/Chợ Quán area can be found in the 1885 memoir of Trương Vĩnh Ký, who strolled from Saigon to Cholon to compare the changes in this region between the first and the third decade of French rule. His scant description of inner Cholon contrasted with the abundant and nostalgic ruminations of the suburban villages. Trương Vĩnh Ký, *Souvenirs historiques sur Saigon et ses environs* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1885).

ran them with trans-local syndicates. Their activities heralded the industrialisation of the rice sector within the Western Area.

Western Area of Bình Tây and Bình Đông

One of the first tasks addressed by the Municipality in taking office was to engage in planning the development of Cholon's outskirts. By 1896, Cholon's Western Area had been transformed by several municipal public works into a linear layout, comprising long, extended, horizontal, straight-lined boulevards and canals to connect with the outer Lò Gốm Canal, which marked the town centre's western limit (Fig. 4.2).

Officially known as Bình Tây and Bình Đông, the newly developed Western Area was attracting considerable public and private interest. Much of the Municipality's budget had been expended on draining the rice fields and mangroves. In Bình Tây, the quays were extended along the inner Lò Gốm canal to channel the traffic from the brick kilns and the abattoirs. The Lanessan Basin was encircled to provide a holding bay for river vessels. The Basin opened into the Bonnard canal, a new route between the outer Lò Gốm canal, the inner quays and the Arroyo Chinois. The quays on both banks of the Arroyo Chinois had extended avenues. A clear pattern emerged: the new quays, waterways, and roads all paralleled Arroyo Chinois to connect the outer Lò Gốm Canal with the centre. The confluence of the outer Lò Gốm Canal and the Arroyo Chinois became a major intersection between Cholon's traffic and the flows to the immediate neighbouring province.

In 1896 the Western Area was still expanding with Bình Đông becoming an extension of the Bình Tây area. Annexed to Cholon in March 1896, the incorporation of Bình Đông was the result of sustained effort by the indefatigable Bernard Rossigneux, Mayor of Cholon. Initially, Bình Đông was

part of Cholon Arrondissement.²³² The mayor had been eyeing the burgeoning village, where, already, new foundries and shops were popping up. To attract more inhabitants, the village notables had established an open-air market, which posed a serious competition to the existing Bình Tây market. A market hall, a pawnshop, and a steam-powered rice mill were also being planned. Consequently, Rossigneux's annexation of this emerging agglomeration extended Cholon's territory and value as an urban area.²³³

Cholon's particular development pattern illustrates Gerard Sasges' observation of how state systems expanded along the Colony's "transportation corridors, most particularly its rivers, canals, and coastlines."²³⁴ Moreover, since Sasges argued that the new communication routes symbolised the increasing reach of state power,²³⁵ the way the municipal government extended public works to Bình Đông mirrored the same pattern of the Nguyễn era's establishment of state power. Rather than creating brand new settlements, the town developed by appropriating pre-existing prosperous settlements. The Arroyo Chinois, paralleled by new routes, had been a public works project under the Nguyễn state (Chapter 2). Thus, seemingly a new development, the Western Area actually enhanced the pre-existing commercial economic pathways. These pathways centred upon the shipping routes of the Lò Gốm Canal and the Arroyo Chinois.

The new roads and quays imposed a centralised layout on the transport network. Converging on Cholon's Central Market, this new layout accommodated the more efficient movement of

²³² Cholon *arrondissement* and Cholon town shared the same name and winding borders, but two different administrations. The district was governed by an Administrator of Indigenous Affairs, similarly to other provincial governments. On the other hand, the town was administered by the municipal council headed by the mayor.

²³³ Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, 'Demande d'annexion au territoire de la ville d'une partie du village de Bình Đông, présentée par M. Rossigneux', in *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session extraordinaire de 1895* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1895), 228–29.

²³⁴ Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 73.

²³⁵ Ibid, 75.

commodities and people.²³⁶ This greater expenditure on transport infrastructure, as compared to the meagre provision of schools and hospitals, was to develop economic activities that generated taxable income and boosted revenues.

Economic boom

In 1896, Cholon was experiencing an economic boom, incentivised by public works development and the industrialisation of the rice sector. The Municipality was trying to profit from the profusion of activities by imposing municipal taxes on market rents, mont-de-piété, abattoirs, and ferry.²³⁷ In achieving this outcome, the government had become more informed about the economic activities of the urban area's population.

Much could be learned from the lists of principal enterprises in Saigon and Cholon from the annual directories (Appendix 2).²³⁸ These lists sorted business owners and their addresses into groups of trades or industries. The lists are definitely not exhaustive: only major firms with sufficient capital to maintain a fixed address in a heavily taxed area were recorded. Presumably, their managers were savvy enough to deal with the necessary administrative obligations such as registration, taxation, and licensing. Nevertheless, the listings indicated that the Municipality had gained sufficient information to record more than 900 firms operating in Cholon.

The spatial distribution of commercial enterprises can be derived from these lists. The *Revised List of Principal Enterprises 1897* (Appendix 2)²³⁹ recorded firms in four sections of Cholon: the Western Area, the outskirts, the old centre—which was the original market site—and the new centre that had been developed since the 1870s. Overall, the list showed that the further away one moved

²³⁶ Inspired by Scott on the reformed road networks of Paris the road networks: “align highways, canals, and ultimately rail lines to radiate out from Paris like the spokes of a wheel.” Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 75.

²³⁷ Rossigneux, ‘Rapport’, 1896.

²³⁸ ‘Liste des Principaux industriels et commerçants de la Ville de Cholon’, in *Annuaire de l’Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 548–62.

²³⁹ Ibid.

from the centre's multifarious economic activities, the specialisation on particular trades in specific areas became more common. When the Western Area was reached there was a concentration almost entirely on rice.

Rice milling industrialisation in the western outskirts

Previous research has shown the importance of the rice trade. Sasges has shown that rice was the single major focus of Indochina's economy, which was not as diversified as other Southeast Asian economies. Cholon's Chinese enterprises dominated this sector; there were no niches for French enterprises to enter the market.²⁴⁰

Cholon had been situated at the centre of this important trade for more than a century. Minh Huong merchants were entrusted with supplying rice for Nguyễn troops during the Gia Định regime. In the Nguyễn era, royal rice storage was located not in Saigon, but on Cholon's eastern outskirts. One of the key contentions between the imperial court in Huế and the Gia Định regime concerned rice: should it be exported to lucrative overseas markets, or supplied to the rice-poor central and northern parts of the country? (see Chapter 2). Some decades later, the French Conquest blocked rice supplies, resulting in famine across six provinces. Since Straits Fujianese merchants had been involved in Cholon's rice trade from the 1840s, they were able to build up the regional opium monopoly by the 1870s.²⁴¹ Sasges has noted the synergy between rice and alcohol monopoly.²⁴² As paddy was a common form of payment, this enabled merchants dealing in rice to accumulate the necessary capital to enter other sectors such as alcohol. Although Cholon was not an intensive rice-producing area, its long tradition of storing, shipping, and brokering of rice had been crucial to its value as a commercial centre.

²⁴⁰ Gerard Sasges, 'Scaling the Commanding Heights: The Colonial Conglomerates and the Changing Political Economy of French Indochina', *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 5 (2015): 1485–1525, 1499.

²⁴¹ See Chapter 3 on Ban Hap and the Straits Fujianeses' activities in Cochinchina.

²⁴² Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 82.

Most of the so-called rice on the market before the advent of machined mills was unmilled paddy. Paddy was cheap and plentiful;²⁴³ In the domestic market, households milled their own grain using a mortar and pestle for milling.²⁴⁴ In addition, there were a wide range of small-scale commercial manual millers located on the inner and outer quays.²⁴⁵

On the other hand, large-scale, steam-powered milling was only profitable when it served overseas markets. From the early 1870s, the firm Spooner & Renard et Cie operated the first large rice mill in Cholon.²⁴⁶ By 1896, Edouard Cornu had taken over the business, which was renamed as *Rizerie à vapeur de Cholon* (Table 4.2). It was followed by a Chinese-owned mill, Guandhin et Cie, but they did not last long after 1878.²⁴⁷ Guandhin's rice milling business was short-lived, because it was cheaper to export paddy to Hong Kong, which was then husked in the city's mills.

After 1880, the colonial government gradually raised protectionist tariffs on paddy exports to protect colonial French mills. Trade protectionism was prevalent among colonists, especially among the members of the Saigon Chamber of Commerce.²⁴⁸ Seeing that Edouard Cornu of the first rice mill in Cholon was the President of the Chamber in the 1870s, it was not a surprise that he and his associates were campaigning for regulations to curb dominance by others in the rice industry.

²⁴³ Tana Li, 'Saigon's Rice Exports and Chinese Rice Merchants in Hong Kong, 1870s–1920s' (Hong Kong, 2016).

²⁴⁴ White, *Voyage*, 203–204. As late as the 1930s, several households in Cholon's outskirts were found to own a home rice miller. 'Réponses Aux Enquêtes N° 2 Sur l'Habitat des Indigènes', 1938, FR ANOM 130COL88/FM/GUERNUT//88.

²⁴⁵ See, for example, the list of principal commercial activities in the annual directory of 1888. *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1888), 492–93.

²⁴⁶ Étienne Denis, *Bordeaux et la Cochinchine Sous la Restauration et le Second Empire* (Bordeaux: Delmas, 1965), 237–38. Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, 'Tableaux de population, de culture, de commerce et de navigation', 1871, 291.

²⁴⁷ Denis, *Bordeaux*, 237–38. Citing Charles Robequain, *The Economic Development of French Indo-China* (London; New York; Oxford University Press, 1944), 276, in Li, "Saigon's Rice Exports".

²⁴⁸ Li, "Saigon's Rice Exports," 3.

Their efforts were soon challenged when Chinese and German firms began to set up machine-driven mills in Cholon during the 1890s.²⁴⁹ Among them, the Seng Guan and Nha Cheong Seng mills were among the first Chinese-owned large mills, located on Quai des Jonques (Fig. 4.2). By 1896 Seng Guan had been managed by Ngo Sine Hoane for nine years, whereas Nha Cheong Seng had been in operation for six years.²⁵⁰

The year 1896 was a big year for Cholon's rice industry. The Orient burnt down soon after it started operation; this was owned by the German firm Speidel & Cie that had been also operating the Union mill for some years.²⁵¹ Up against the German firm were two other mills that had been operating for over a decade: Nam Lung run by the Hong Kong Cantonese firm Man Cheung Yuen, and Ban Joo Guan run by the Singaporean Fujianese group Ban Soon An (Table 4.2). These were the biggest mills in Cholon, and most likely, in Indochina.

These large steam-driven mills needed a huge amount of paddy to operate. For example, the smallest among them, Seng Guan, produced 5000 piculs of rice daily from 6800 piculs of paddy; the output was 75 per cent of the input. The larger mills were not as efficient, but they had bigger capacity. The largest one, Nam Lung, produced 13,000 piculs of rice daily from 21,000 piculs of paddy, a ratio of 61 per cent.²⁵² This might have explained why smaller millers still had a market alongside bigger ones. As they handled smaller amount of paddy, they were able to operate with

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ngo Sine Hoan et Cie was on the list of principal merchants in Cholon. Ngo Sine Hoan was likely also known as Ngo Chung Hoan who ran the mill Seng Guan (Ban Teck Guan) in 1897. *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1888), 501. Bernard Rossigneux, 'Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880', Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939 (Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

²⁵¹ Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896.

²⁵² The output included two types of rice, cargo and white rice. White rice was the most desirable commodity, accounting for only half of the actual output. Rossigneux, 'Rapport' 1896. Description of rice milling process: Louis Imbert, *La Cochinchine au Seuil du XXe Siècle* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie J. Durand, 1900), 14–15.

higher levels of efficiency to cater for specific domestic needs. Nevertheless, in the Colonial Council's eyes, these small manual mills were insignificant compared with the larger steam-driven mills that contributed considerably to traffic at Saigon customs and through the port.

The ownership of the large mills justified the Colonial Council's trade protectionism. As Cochinchina was a younger colony in the region, "until the early 20th century, many rice mills in Cholon were the extensions of big companies located in Hong Kong, Singapore or China [...] it was rare for important businesses to be set up in the colony."²⁵³ From the 1890s, Cholon's rice industry was gradually occupied by trans-local capital and management from firms in the neighbouring states, whose regional networks started to dwarf the pre-existing, but smaller-scale, local firms.

These trans-local capital and business networks operated in a way that : "in each place there was a separate company, often managed by local partners, and international connections were limited to infusion of capital from outside and the involvement of external managers, at least enough so that they could protect their investments and repatriate their profits."²⁵⁴ For example, the Nam Lung mill, owned by the local firm Man Cheung Yuen, had both Lru Lưc and Un Lai Chuen 阮荔邨 as its directors. Lru Lưc had been a prominent commercial broker, or *négociant*, since at least 1890,²⁵⁵ during which time he served on the Municipal Council, together with another relative, Lru Gia Du.²⁵⁶ The Man Cheung Yuen firm was a subsidiary of the Hong Kong-based parent company Kung Yuen 公源. The Kung Yuen company was founded by Un Chung Wo 阮寵和 and Lau Ping in the

²⁵³ Li, "Saigon's Rice Exports," 4–8.

²⁵⁴ Carl A. Trocki, 'The Internationalization of Chinese Revenue Farming Networks', in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Tana Li (Lanham, MD;Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004), 169.

²⁵⁵ *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge*, 1890, 539.

²⁵⁶ Li, "Saigon's Rice Exports".

late 1880s as a rice export-import business,²⁵⁷ but by 1893 they had accumulated sufficient capital for Man Cheung Yuen to build the steam-driven mill Nam Lung in Cholon.

The parent firm Kung Yuen also owned another subsidiary, the Po On Marine & Fire Insurance & Godown Company 普安公司華商燕梳行 (Table 4.2), which provided specialised services for Man Cheng Yuen. This shipping subsidiary was up against fierce competition from the firm Tzai On 濟安. Belonging to a predominantly Chaozhou group, Tzai On ran the Siam – Saigon – Hong Kong Line, which competed ‘neck-and-neck’ with Man Cheung Yuen’s Po On shipping.²⁵⁸

Man Cheung Yuen’s biggest competitor, however, was the Ban Joo Guan mill, built and run by the Ban Soon An firm. This Singaporean Fujianese syndicate also ran several subsidiaries: two steamer lines Shan and Bun Hin, and the insurance companies Man On and Khean Guan (Table 4.2). Also, they had shares in Po On Insurance, a subsidiary of their rival Man Cheung Yuen.²⁵⁹ Indeed, having foreseen competition, Man Cheung Yuen and Ban Soon An settled on a compromise with Ban Soon An’s leading associates by buying \$75,000 worth of shares from the other firm.²⁶⁰ In addition, Ban Soon An’s manager Ong Ka Tiong transferred an amount of \$312,000 Hong Kong dollars to Un Lai Chuen, a manager of Man Cheung Yuen.²⁶¹ This transaction could have been related to Ban Soon An’s involvement in Po On Shipping. Despite their apparent competitiveness, these dealings show that the merchants were also collaborating to manipulate the rice industry for their benefit. This was part of a larger pattern from the 1880s to the 1900s, of the successful

²⁵⁷ Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 57405.

²⁵⁸ Li, ‘Saigon’s Rice Exports,’ 8.

²⁵⁹ The Directory & Chronicle for China, Japan, Corea, Indo-China, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Netherlands India, Borneo, the Philippines, &c (Hongkong: The Hongkong Daily Press Office, 1899), 398.

²⁶⁰ Li, ‘Saigon’s Rice Exports,’ 5.

²⁶¹ Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 37505.

internationalisation of Chinese capital; “despite attempts to control the Chinese economy, it expanded to both the concern and profit of the various colonial establishments”.²⁶²

Table 4.2 Rice mills and associates in Cholon 1896

No.	Rice mill	Firm & Leadership	Operation	Associates
1	Rizerie à vapeur de Cholon	Edouard Cornu, director	In the early 1870s ²⁶³	Andrew Spooner, Renard [former]
2	Seng Quan/ Thanh Nguyen	Firm: Ban Guan et Cie Managers: Ngô Chung Hoan [Ngo Chin Guan/Ngo Sine Hoane?] & Tạ Mã Diên	Cargo rice until 1886, then white rice	Shareholders including Li Cheung, Ong Ka Tiong
3	Orient	Speidel & Cie	Burnt in 1896 soon after operation started. Under construction	French, Chinese, German shareholders
4	Union	Speidel & Cie		French, Chinese, German shareholders
5	Nha Cheong Seng ²⁶⁴	Firm: Kien Hong Seng Manager: Khuru Tiết/ Khoo Tech Pye/ Khuru Ung Truỵen/Khuu Ang Thuan	Constructed in 1886, then white rice	A combination of several smaller mills.
6	Nam Lung 南隆 Nam Long	Firm: Man Cheong Yuen/ Vạn Xương Nguyên/萬昌源 Director: Lưu Lực, Un Lai Chuen 阮荔邨 Parent firm: Kung Yuen rice firm 公源米行, Hong Kong	From 1895	Po On Marine & Fire Insurance & Godown Company 普安公司華商燕梳行, HK. Directors included Un Choi Oi, Lau Yat Tsun 劉日泉. Shareholders included Li Cheung, Lau Wai Chun, Luu Gia Du.
7	Ban Joo Guan 萬裕源 Vạn Dụ Nguyên	Firm: Ban Soan An 萬順安 Director: Ong Ka Tiong 王家忠	From 1895	Steamer lines Shan & Bun Hin, insurance companies Man On, Khean Guan, Po On. Shareholders included Li Cheung. Trading house Kien Soon, owned by Ong Ka Tiong, managed by Lim Tien Sang.

Source: see Appendix 1.

²⁶² Trocki, “Internationalization,” 171.

²⁶³ Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, ‘Tableaux de population, de culture, de commerce et de navigation’, 1871, 291.

²⁶⁴ Likely ran by Chin Seng firm, founded by Tan Kim Ching of Singapore, operated since 1888. Manager 黃錦壽. Salmon and Tạ, “Wang Annan Riji,” 79.

The trans-local industrialisation of rice milling paralleled the Municipal Government's development of the Western Area. In the 1880s, the Municipality chose to develop the west, and not the east, because they wanted to further facilitate and organise the pre-existing rice shipping routes along the Arroyo Chinois and the outer Lò Góm Canal. Simultaneously, big rice merchants gathered along the banks of Arroyo Chinois provided stronger incentives to persuade the Municipality to invest this area. The result of the two mutual processes of commercial specialisation and public works development was that the Western Area became almost exclusively focused on rice.

Such specialisation was reflected in the List of Enterprises (Appendix 2). On the Quai de Mytho, the addresses numbered from 160s to 390s were lined with large and small rice mills, warehouses, agency offices, loading docks for rice barges, and a variety of different sized shops belonging to rice sellers. Supporting these burgeoning industrial operations were at least ten firms selling sacks and packaging on Route de Bình Tây. The owners' names suggested that these were four key families: Banh, Duong, Pho, and Trinh, who were all registered at number 12. Another supportive, but also crucial industry, was shipbuilding. Originally, the shipyards were scattered along Quai des Jonques, Quai de Phú Hữu, and Quai des Chantiers.²⁶⁵ As their huge sheds and wood supplies posed a serious fire danger,²⁶⁶ they were moved to Bassin de Lanessan, which now held nineteen shipbuilders, refitters, and repairers; the only outlier was a separate dockyard on Quai des Jonques. Mitigating fire risk was as important to the Municipality as relocating all shipbuilding firms into one single location for ease of governance. Such specialisation in the Western Area was only a requirement for the rice industry, because most other trades were scattered all over the town. Even the log ponds that stored timber for the dockyard were located a distance downstream in the Arroyo

²⁶⁵ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1888), 489.

²⁶⁶ Rossigneux, 'Rapport', 1896..

Chinois. Thus, Cholon's economy was more than just the rice industry. This could be seen from the assortment of trades in the city centre.

City centre

The new city centre was delineated by Quai de Cambodge on the west, Avenue Jaccaréo on the east, the inner Lò Góm canal on the north, and Quai de Mytho on the south (Fig. 4.1). In other words, the new centre comprised two islets that were created after the digging of Canal An Thong in 1819, later called the Arroyo Chinois.²⁶⁷ The settlement here was sparser than in the old centre: there were fewer residential buildings, more manufacturing workshops, and greater open waterfront space for markets.

Activities in the new centre revolved around the markets. The long-standing ones were the Central Market and the Fish Market (Fig. 4.2, Plate 4.3). With inner and outer grounds, these markets were large and over-crowded. They were housed in dirty, rundown covered halls that had floors of beaten earth (Plate 4.1). In the Central Market, the list recorded a modest number of butchers, grocers, money changers, and an engraver; they formed a minority among several other classes of vendors. Goods sold at the markets included a range of grains, vegetables, fresh meat and seafood. Jean-Louis de Lanessan gave a vivid description of the market's open ground areas:²⁶⁸

Outside, in wooden crates or in bamboo slatted baskets, [there were] blackish and viscous fish. A merchant squatting on her heels sells, swimming bladders of fish, to make glue, [that was] all fresh, swollen by the air, shining, whitish and iridescent;

²⁶⁷ Chapter 2 has shown that habitation on the original Cholon market site spread as far as the inner Lò Góm canal, which was then called Bình Dương river. Since this river was silting up, in 1819 Canal An Thong was opened to the south, creating, in between, two islets separated by small connecting canals. On the islets was Bình An market which later became the Central Market (see Figure 2.1). By the early 1880s, the west of the Central Market was still filled with rice fields and mangroves (see Chapter 3).

²⁶⁸ Lanessan, Jean-Louis de. *L'Indo-Chine Française : Étude Politique, Économique et Administrative Sur La Cochinchine, Le Cambodge, l'Annam et Le Tonkin*. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889), 285–86.

another [seller] cuts betel-areca chewing quids [...] Here are small black crabs picked up in the rice fields, arranged on skewers, the legs pressed between two bamboo sticks. Pieces of the pale, soft flesh of a caiman are piled on a board. Pork quarters show their pink meat and white fat, framed by black skin. Little whole pigs and ducks browned by the cooking that keeps them aglow as if they had been varnished. The big shrimps abound in the arroyo jump in the large basket waving their long antennae. The big white palm worms that are eaten fried and have the taste of hazelnut, the eggs of brood hens containing small half-formed chickens, the blackish spindles of smoked fish eggs, piles of white vermicelli made with the flour of rice or beans, rounded plates of a kind of vegetable jelly planted with a multicolored mince, yellow or violet aubergines, long black radishes, shoots of aquatic plants, white coconut pieces like milk, sweets and cakes of all kinds.

Plate 4.1 Cholon's Central Market



Source: *Le Maire de la Ville de Cholon*, F. Drouhet. *Album. Ville de Cholon*. Saigon: Photo-studio L.Crespin, 1909.

Sellers on the open grounds traded all sorts of seasonable edible foodstuffs, easily accessible by casual grocery shoppers. Meanwhile, inside the covered hall, as noted by Jean-Louis de Lanessan, merchants bartered a more selective collection of merchandise. These included clothing, accessories, tobacco, lamps, potteries, homewares and:²⁶⁹

Multicolored dresses and trousers, with the ecru cotton belt, blue or red crepe scarves that are tied around the head, the silk scarves, the embroidered purses that hang on the belt, the yellow amber buttons, arranged by five on a small red card in a tiny box with glass top, the black and glistening false-haired braids worn by men as well as women, olive-colored amber necklaces, colored glass bracelets, shiny, translucent, reddish gemstones, yellowish squares of finely chopped tobacco, long pipe copper, very small furnace for tobacco, bamboo pipes of opium smokers, similar to flutes, and small glass lamps [...] the European-made oil lamps used even in the smallest hamlets, the copper-made boiler and iron pottery in red earth, the crude homeware pottery exported by China, the golden papers and the incense sticks [...]

Merchants needed a certain amount of capital to rent a space and set up shop. Spaces in the covered hall cost more than those on the open ground. For example, the standard price was set at 40 to 50 piastres per square metre. To pay this amount of rent, they required a stable clientele and regular income, which covered the common risks stemming from low seasons, extreme weather, fire, disease, and loss of temporary labour. In addition, they had to afford the numerous municipal

²⁶⁹ Lanessan, *L'Indo-Chine Française*, 286.

taxes.²⁷⁰ Those who maintained an enduring presence there most likely belonged to the more established group of merchants.

Given that the market rent provided the greatest municipal revenue, it was unfortunate that the physical conditions of the town's market halls were so poorly maintained. Consequently, sellers preferred the tax-free surrounding open ground, despite being squeezed into little wedges of space only suitable for sitting for a few hours. Also, some vendors set up pop-up huts outside the gate to minimise costs (Plate 4.2).

Plate 4.2: Vendors outside Central Market



Source : Nadal, “La Cochinchine: Album Illustré de 456 Gravures sur Cuivre,” 1926,

<http://belleindochine.free.fr/NadalSaigonCholon.htm>.

²⁷⁰ The taxes paid by a Cholon-based seller included: land tax, Vietnamese or foreign capitation tax, boats' tax, and trade duties. In addition, they also paid to the colony the taxes and fees in litigation, rice export, passports and travel permits, stamps, custom duties, registration, and mortgage (*douanes et régie*). Bernard Rossigneux, ‘Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880’, Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939 (Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

Plate 4.3 : Fish Market



Source : Nadal, “La Cochinchine: Album Illustré de 456 Gravures sur Cuivre,” 1926,

<http://belleindochine.free.fr/NadalSaigonCholon.htm>.

Many other traders chose to be mobile and moved elsewhere. In fact, small hawkers tended to abandon the large high-rent markets. Consequently, two former market halls had already closed. Indeed, a decade earlier, the Phú Lâm market had been abandoned, because the merchants formed another market, a mere 100 metres away outside the Western Area. The old Bình Tây market was half abandoned for the same reason, when the merchants withdrew just outside the boundary of Quai des Jonques.²⁷¹ These small vendors opted for temporary, low-rent locations, by gathering in several hawker clusters on the fringe. Popular locations were found at a fraction of the cost on the town-district's borders where Cholon's population was still accessible.

²⁷¹ Rossigneux, ‘Rapport’, 1896.

Revenue from market rents, despite the seepage, remained a lucrative proposition for the Municipality. In 1896, the markets' high economic value pushed the town to plan on building two new market halls, both in the Western Area. One would be in Bình Đông, close to the new land annexation, and the other would be located near the Lanessan shipyard. Building market halls in the outskirts confirmed the Municipality's intention to spread economic activities outwards from the city centre.

The markets were not the only feature that made the new centre the most dynamic part of Cholon's economic boom. Quai de Mytho hosted, as a continuation of the Western Area's rice industry, a range of commercial services. Eastwards from its intersection with Rue de Go Cong were several high-profile brokerage agencies, including those of the rice mill managers Ong Ka Tiong, Tjia Mah Yen, and Khuru Tiết. While the Western Area was all about rice, Quai de Mytho's central section housed a mixture of firms, such as cabotage operators, tinsmiths, stonemasons, foundries, innkeepers, dry-cleaners, pharmacies and bakeries. Also, the largest landowners in Cholon could be found here. For example, in 1896 Ly Thanh Huy was licensed to repair no less than eight discrete properties that he owned on Quai de Mytho.²⁷² His renters included the Nam Lung mill manager Lư Lự, whose office was next to an oar seller, Tran Thi Hon, together with several other retailers, two small rice mills, one goods broker, and one dealer in horns and skins.²⁷³

Such assortment of trades, as seen on central Quai de Mytho, was the norm for the old centre. Take, for example, Rue des Marins, formerly known as the widest street of the original market site. Hosting a high variety of trades, a walk down this street would take one to the shops of playing-card makers, decorators, jewellers, tailors, photographers, travelling theatres and funeral directors.

²⁷² Ly Thanh Huy Francois, born in 1866, was a *naturalisé*, residing at 14 Rue des Roses. Naissance de Ly Thanh Nguyen, Antoine. Registre des Actes de l'État Civil, no.7, 1898. Ville de Cholon, Cochinchine française. ANOM.

²⁷³ 'Arrêté autorisant la nommée Ly Thanh Huy à réparer ses maisons, sises quai de Mytho à Cholon. 24 December 1895', in *Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française. Année 1896*, vol. 4 (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 37.

An assortment of trades also meant that most sectors, except rice, had to be sourced from suppliers located all over the town. For example, the conspicuous presence of suppliers of building materials suggested that one burgeoning sector was the construction industry. Construction was not only a municipal focus, as private enterprises were equally active in erecting and renovating their own facilities. In 1896, four proprietors were approved to build open docks for private use along a busy section of Quai de Mytho. Regulations required that the piers had to be made of wood or wrought iron, with bracing on all sides, and the decking had to be made of wooden planks of at least five centimetres thickness.²⁷⁴ Meanwhile, a ubiquitous form of lodgement was the wooden house with tiled roofs. Owners of thatched huts in the Western Area were replacing the straw roof with tiles, as a safeguard against fire.

Scattered over the inner streets were metal works and foundries specialising in tin, iron, copper and stone. The long-standing brick kilns on the outer Quai de Lò Góm continued to produce bricks and tiles. These were shipped into the centre along the inner Lò Góm canal, and their wares were piled along the banks.²⁷⁵ Apart from roofing tiles, they also produced all types of pottery. In Plate 4.4 below, piles of clay pots and roof tiles can be seen arrayed along the bank on the right.

Wood, apart from iron and brick, was likely the most popular construction material. Wood-related workshops included those of pit sawyers, carpenters, engravers, coopers and draftsmen. In particular, the pit sawyers occupied a sizeable area along Quai des Jonques and Route Basse, near a well that was close to the urban area's eastern limit (Fig.4.2). Rafts of raw timber and bamboo from upstream forests often clogged this section of the Arroyo Chinois, making the passage even more

²⁷⁴ 'Arrêté autorisant M. Blanchet, directeur des Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine, à construire un appontement découvert sur le quai de Mytho à Cholon. 28 December 1895', in *Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française. Année 1896*, vol. 4 (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 40.

²⁷⁵ Lo Gom meant brick kiln in Vietnamese.

congested (Plate 4.5). In 1896, the Colonial Council eventually required the digging of two log ponds on Quai des Jonques to store timber for the sawmills, colliers, and shipyards (Fig. 4.2).²⁷⁶

Plate 4.4: Piles of clay pots and roof tiles on the quay



Source: Nadal, “Collection Pujade de Ladevèze,” 1910s, <http://virtual-saigon.net/Data/Photographers?ID=73>.

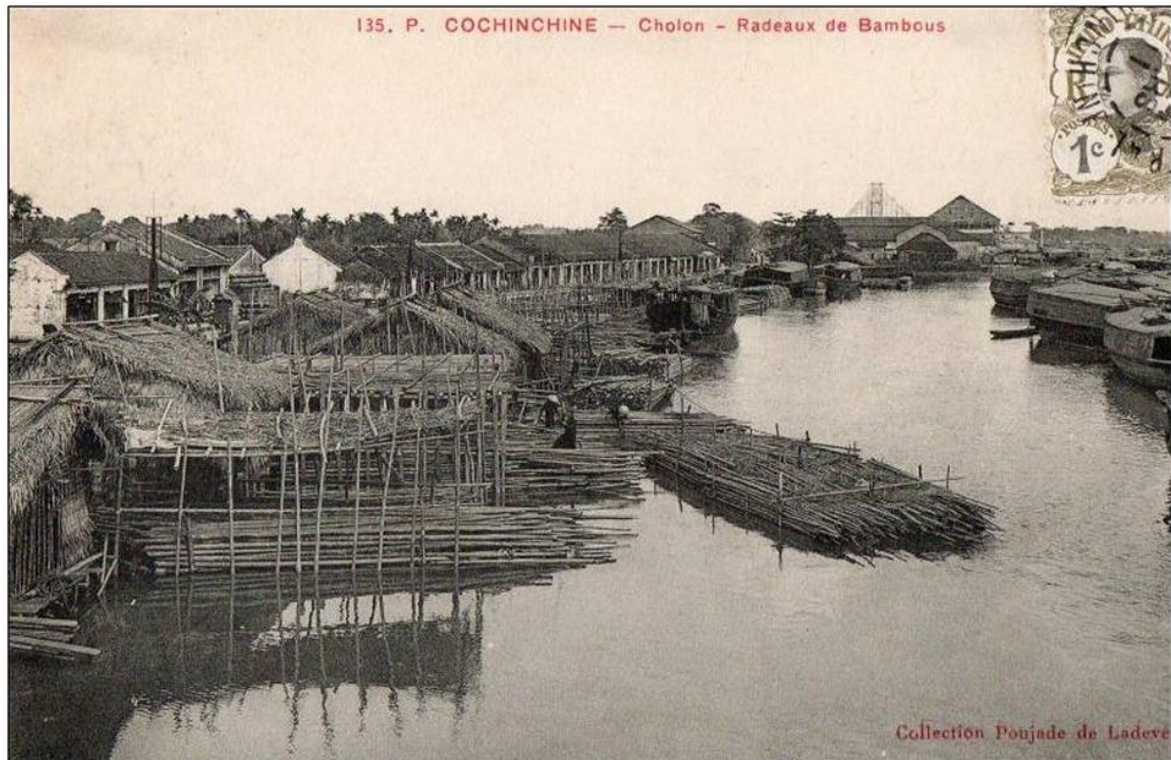
The list of firms was not exhaustive of Cholon’s economic activities. It omitted two steam-driven mills—Seng Guan and Union on Quai des Jonques. Brothels and licensed gambling houses were not mentioned, despite being the subject of considerable surveillance by police.²⁷⁷ Also overlooked were the renting and real estate businesses, which, given the influx of migrant workers, were booming. Given that the major landlords were the temples and capitalists such as Ong Ka Tiong, the few records available on inns and rental tenements suggest that their owners obstructed the Municipality from learning about their sources of income. Indeed, only two landlords were listed: a worker lodgement owned by Ta Boi at 133 Rue des Marins, and an inn owned by Tran Duc at 46

²⁷⁶ Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, ‘Aménagement de bassins pour le dépôt des bois à Cholon’, in *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session extraordinaire de 1895* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1895), 21.

²⁷⁷ Cherry, “Down and Out,” 106–42. Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 207–12.

Rue du Marché. Otherwise, the residences for the swelling labour force were either the upper stories of shophouses in which they worked by day, or the cramped, low-ceilinged tenements on the winding, dead-end alleys behind the commercial frontages.²⁷⁸

Plate 4.5: The log pond off the Arroyo Chinois



Source: Nadal, “Collection Poujade de Ladevèze,” 1910s, <http://virtual-saigon.net/Data/Photographers?ID=73>.

Overall, the Municipal Government responded positively to the economic boom. Public works development was not just connecting the outskirts with the centre; they also encouraged economic activities to spread outward. The government was generally successful in constructing a specialised space that accommodated the industrialising rice sector. Such an economic boom gave rise to a new class of elites, whose social position was recognised by membership on the Municipal Council. The

²⁷⁸ Cherry, “Down and Out,” 124. Rossigneux, ‘Rapport’, 1896.

family and networks of Đỗ Hữu Phương and Ban Hap were still prominent, but they had retired from municipal service. Their place had been taken by several major proprietors.

New elite class

In 1896, the Municipal Councillors included Oscar Du Crouzet, Émile-Charles Linger, J. Berthet, Ong Phong Hoa, Khuru Tiết, Trần Hữu Định, Trần Tường Thoại, Nguyễn Hữu Đầu, Lam Thien Tong, Cham Leng, Lam Quan Kien. Among this group—Oscar Du Crouzet and J. Berthet were both merchants in Saigon and members of the Chamber of Commerce. Du Crouzet used to be the paymaster of the Route Haute tramway company;²⁷⁹ as a Colonial Councillor and the consul for Italy, he had been active in Cholon municipal issues since the late 1880s.²⁸⁰

The remaining councillors operated businesses in Cholon. The rice and paddy wholesaler Ong Phong Hoa was based at 76 Quai Gaudot; he also owned a large general goods retail store at 21-23 Rue Lareynière, and represented a semi-retailer at 11 Quai de Hoi Cui (Appendix 2). Cham Leng had been serving on the Council since 1890.²⁸¹ More prominently, Khuru Tiet²⁸² ran the mill Nha Cheong Seng (or Khoo Tech Pye) through the firm Kian Hong Seng, and owned several rice and paddy agencies on Quai de Mytho. The two Minh Huong groups also had prominent representatives. Councillor Trần Hữu Định was a leader in Minh Huong Gia Thanh temple. His colleagues Trần Tường Thoại (or Thụ) and Nguyễn Hữu Đầu had been involved with Nghĩa Nhuận temple as early as 1879.²⁸³

Of these councillors, Ong Phong Hoa and Khuru Tiết came from the class of merchants who were newcomers to Cholon. These newcomers included some of the biggest names in the rice

²⁷⁹ *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1890), 356.

²⁸⁰ *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 426. *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1888), 102.

²⁸¹ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine française* (Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1890), 114.

²⁸² Also known as Khuru Tuyết, Khuu Hoan Tuyet, Khoo Heng Sech.

²⁸³ Inscriptions in their respective temples. Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 472 and 481.

industry: Lur Lưc, Tan Sou Bian, Lim Tien Sang, Ong Ka Tiong, Banh Le, Ngo Sine Hoan²⁸⁴, and Khuru Tiết. In 1896, they maintained warehouses (*magasins de dépôt*) on Quai de Mytho, engaged in wholesale commerce, and worked as commercial brokers of commodities.²⁸⁵ Two profiles of these merchant capitalists illustrate the emergence of this group of newcomers in Cholon: Ong Ka Tiong and Li Cheung.

Ong Ka Tiong²⁸⁶

In 1896, Ong Ka Tiong (Vương Gia Trung or 王家忠) was the director of Ban Soon An firm, running one of Cholon's largest rice mills. Born in 1849 in southern Fujian, he had lived in Xiamen before moving to Cholon, where he became a prominent figure in the town during his late forties. He had managed the Ban Joo Guan mill since its establishment in the early 1890s.

By 1896, he managed several ventures. Half of his major business dealings were associated with Ban Soon An. Using the firm's fund, he purchased several shares in the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation, the North China Insurance Company, the Yangtze Insurance Association and the Straits Insurance Company. These shares were listed under his own name but belonged to his Ban Soon An associates. He also opened the Kian Soon trading house in the same premises as housed the Ban Joo Guan mill. With Lim Tien Sang as the director, these premises were used exclusively for trading on behalf of the mill (Table 4.3).

Concurrently, Ong Ka Tiong also ran his own businesses with the trusted partner Tjia Mah Yen. The latter was the manager of Ban Guan et Cie, a firm Ong opened in 1894.²⁸⁷ Ong invested in

²⁸⁴ May be a misspelling of Ngo Chin Guan/Ngo Chung Hoan.

²⁸⁵ *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1890), 408–543.

²⁸⁶ This section is based on Ong Ka Tiong's personal wills, unless otherwise noted. Ong Ka Tiong's personal wills. Hong Kong Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, HKRS144-4-1335, 27/07/1897.

another firm Ban Teck Guan, also ran by Tjia Mah Yen, together with Ngô Chung Hoan. He also had a stake in the rival Man Cheung Yuen rice firm and the German-owned Union mill.

Such active entrepreneurial undertakings earned Ong Ka Tiong a fortune which he promptly transformed into real estate properties. Using Ban Soon An's fund, at public auctions, he made several land purchases from Tan Eng Bock. These purchases included land on Rue Chaigneau, Rue Lefebvre, Quai de Commerce, and Rue Mac-Mahon, all in Saigon. These were prime locations which were either market streets or being developed into the railway station's surroundings. On these plots, he built more than fifty rental tenements and double-storied houses. His only land purchase in Cholon, also from Tan Eng Bock, was a lot at the far western end of Quai de Mytho, where he built a house numbered 700. Although this was likely an empty unit, its purchase was predicated on Bình Đông's later development. Notably, the seller of these properties was Tan Eng Bock, the Straits Fujianese British subject, who was working as a comprador of the rice firm Speidel & Cie.²⁸⁷ Ong's association with people of other supposedly rival rice firms corroborated with the above observation that, when it came to moving capital around, big rice merchants did not restrict themselves to their own firm.

As for himself, Ong Ka Tiong bought from Ngo Hoa Dong lot 20C on Boulevard Charner, Saigon, which he then divided and built four-storey houses and an eight-unit tenement in a blind alley. Apparently satisfied with these investments, in the same year 1897, Ong Ka Tiong sold his Ban Soon An shares to the partner Tran Chia An, thus ending his stint at the firm. Also counted as his trusted colleagues were Tan Ho Seng and Tran Hui Ni.

²⁸⁷ This was likely the earliest record of this well-known Fujianese merchant from Batavia who, due to this partnership, later emerged as a prominent figure in the 1900s.

²⁸⁸ Salmon and Tã, "Wang Annan Riji," 80.

Table 4.3: Ong Ka Tiong's business dealings

As a manager of Ban Soon An firm	His own business interests
Helped establish and manage rice mill Ban Joo Guan	1894: Ban Guan & Cie, manager Tjia Mah Yen. 1896: rice firm Ban Teck Guan, manager Tjia Mah Yen & Ngô Chung Hoan
Shares in HSBC, North China Insurance Company, Yangtze Insurance Association, Straits Insurance Company	1896: trading house Kien Soon on Ban Joo Guan's premise, manager Lim Tien Sang
1896: trading house Kien Soon on Ban Joo Guan's premises, manager Lim Tien Sang	
Land and rental tenements: - Chaigneau street: 15 - Lefebvre street: 23 tenements, 1 large storeyed house - Quai de Commerce: 7 storeyed houses - Mac-Mahon: 13 storeyed houses - Lefebvre Street: 2 rows of tenements - Quai de Mytho in Cholon : 1 house	Shares in Rizerie l'Union
Sold all shares to partner Tran Chia An	Bought from Ngo Hoa Dong lot 20C on Boulevard Charner, Saigon. Built 4 storey houses, and a tenement in a blind alley.
Colleague of Tan Ho Seng	Other close associates: Guan Nhuan Sanh, Li Diet Trang, Tran Hui Ni, Tjia Mah Yen.

Source: *Ong Ka Tiong's personal wills. Hong Kong Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, HKRS144-4-1335, 27/07/1897.*

Ong Ka Tiong was of vital interest, not just for his high profile in the rice industry, but also for his family situation (Fig. 4.3). His parents were both deceased: his father was Quack Tien, and his mother was Tong Shi (i.e., a woman from the Tong family). It was unusual that he did not share his parents' surnames. He had a stepmother Co Shi, who was still living in China, most likely in Xiamen.

Ong Ka Tiong married two Vietnamese wives, To Thi and Ung Thi, and took in two concubines, who were formerly his maids.²⁸⁹ All of them likely lived at the family house in 208 Quai de Mytho, Cholon. Such inter-marriages meant that, while Ong was a Fujianese from Xiamen, he created a Minh Huong family in Cholon.

His children were raised in mixed cultural settings. The eldest son An Seng was sent to Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon for a French education. The second son Joo studied at an English

²⁸⁹ The wives' ethnicities are inferred from the spelling of their names in the will.

school in Hong Kong, and the third son Yeng went to China for a likely Chinese education. His eldest daughter died after her marriage, before his own death. Judging from her brothers' ages, she likely died at a young age too. His four younger children were still infants at the time of the witnessing of his will: the girls were being raised in China, likely with their step-grandmother or a wife in Xiamen; the boy Tiock, aged 3, was probably raised in the Cholon family house.

His sons' varied education suggested that the father wanted to take advantage of what the colonial system in the region had to offer. By sending his son to three different cultural environments, he also maximised his offspring's ability to cross borders and fit into different government systems: An Seng would be able to work in French Indochina, Joo in British Hong Kong, and Yeng in China (likely Xiamen). Such educational arrangements also seemed to be deliberate strategy; it could imply that Ong Ka Tiong expected each son to safeguard the family's fortune deposited in these three very different places.

Meanwhile, the small girls were all being raised in China (likely Xiamen). This arrangement corresponded with Erica Peters' observation that Chinese fathers preferred to keep their daughters away from the prying eyes of the colonial police.²⁹⁰ This explained why Ong would not want to keep his daughters in Cholon. Indeed, out of the seven surviving children, only the eldest son and maybe the youngest son were living in the town.

The exceptional mobility of Ong Ka Tiong's family suggested a major social change was occurring in Cholon: the rise of a trans-local commercial class, who had much less attachment to the town. Born and raised in China and married to Vietnamese wives, Ong Ka Tiong's family fitted the Minh Huong definition. However, his children's education indicated that Ong had higher hopes than merely being a rich person in Cholon. Just like his own life, he wanted his children to be able to

²⁹⁰ Peters, "Colonial Cholon."

cross administrative and cultural borders, which was the true value of building up such an extensive fortune. Ong Ka Tiong's exceptional mobility contrasted with that of Li Cheung, a fellow rice capitalist who had stronger attachment to Cholon.

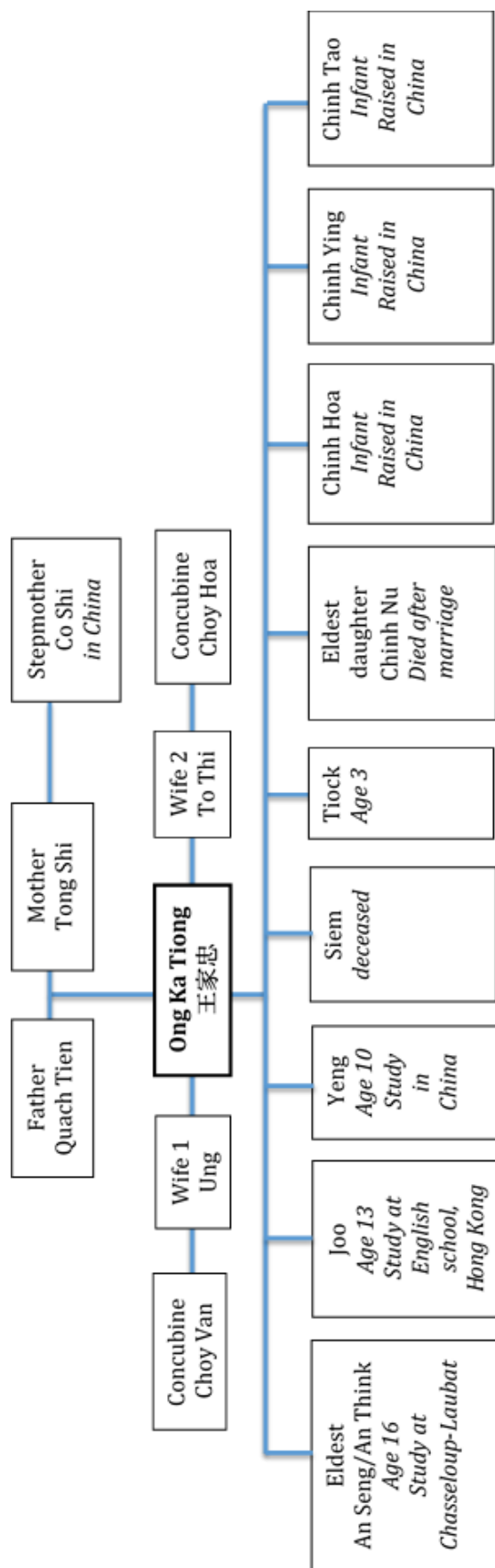


Figure 4.3 Ong Ka Tiong's family tree

Li Cheung²⁹¹

Li Cheung was known by a variety of other names: Lichtiong, Li Yu Chong and Li Yao Chong. Li Cheung did not work for any big firm; yet, his business interests were extensive. Born in 1838, Li Cheung was a native of Guangzhou, but since his mother was Vietnamese, he probably spent his childhood in Cholon. Similar to Ong Ka Tiong, Li Cheung operated either under his own name or in partnership. He owned firms, shares, and several real estate properties. While Ong earned his fortune mostly from rice and real estate, Li Cheung had a more diversified portfolio.

His core enterprise was the fully owned On Long trading firm in the Central Market area, at 40 Rue du Marche.²⁹² He was also known as a goods broker on Boulevard de Canton, in Saigon.²⁹³ Also, he was the majority owner of the Phu Yen firm, and partnered with Sam Linh in the Tack Seng firm.

In real estate, Li Cheung owned several houses. He reserved three lots for ancestor worship on Rue de Canton, Cholon, and Rue d'Adran, Saigon. These roads occupied central locations in both towns, suggesting that a lineage temple or an ancestral hall was likely located there. In addition, he partnered with Lur Lưc under the name of Vĩnh Hiệp Long to buy properties across the new Western Area in Bình Đông, Bình Tây, and Bình Tiên. Each man owned 50 per cent of the shares. Since his partner Lur Lưc was the director of Nam Lung rice mill, Li Cheung was likely involved as a major shareholder of Man Cheung Yuen firm, and socialised with the Un and Lau founding families. While

²⁹¹ This section is based on Li Cheung's personal wills, unless otherwise noted. Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 27573. Li Cheung's personal wills. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, HKRS144-4-2771, 11/04/1907.

²⁹² See the List of Principal Businesses in Cholon, 1897, in Appendix. 'Liste des Principaux industriels et commerçants de la Ville de Cholon', in *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 548–62.

²⁹³ *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1890), 513.

being a Man Cheung Yuen shareholder, Li Cheong's assets also suggested that he was involved in trading firms, sawmills, and brick factories (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Li Cheung's shares

Company	Activity	Location	Li Cheong ownership
On Cheong firm		Saigon	10 of 22 shares
Minh [Hinh?] Cheong firm, Saigon		Saigon	1 of 20 shares
Union	Rice mill	Cholon	2 shares
Orient	Rice mill	Cholon	6 shares
Ban Joo Guan	Rice mill	Cholon	6 of 225 shares
Ban Cheong Guan	Rice mill	Cholon	24 of 300 shares
Ban Teck Guan	Rice mill	Cholon	21 of 315 shares
Phu long	Sawmill	Cholon	1 of 12 shares
Nam Ly	Sawmill	Cholon	5 of 21 shares
Phu Chong Long	Brick factory	Cholon	2 of 7 shares in Ly Lap's name

Source: *Li Cheung's personal wills. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, HKRS144-4-2771, 11/04/1907.*

While Ong Ka Tiong created a Minh Huar family, Li Cheung was born into one: his mother and three of his five wives all came from an Vietnamese background. While his father's hometown was in Kong Chao prefecture, Guangdong province, Li Cheung was born in 1838, and possibly raised by his mother Triệu Thị in Cochinchina during the last decades of the Nguyễn regime in the south. Indeed, Li Cheung could be seen as belonging to the first generation of merchants under the colonial regime, for he was in his early twenties after the French conquest.

His properties in urban central locations, and his varied financial interests appeared to be limited to the Saigon-Cholon area. Without assets in other colonies, Li Cheung likely sent his four sons to French schools in Saigon.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ See Chapter 5 for details of his son Ly Lap.

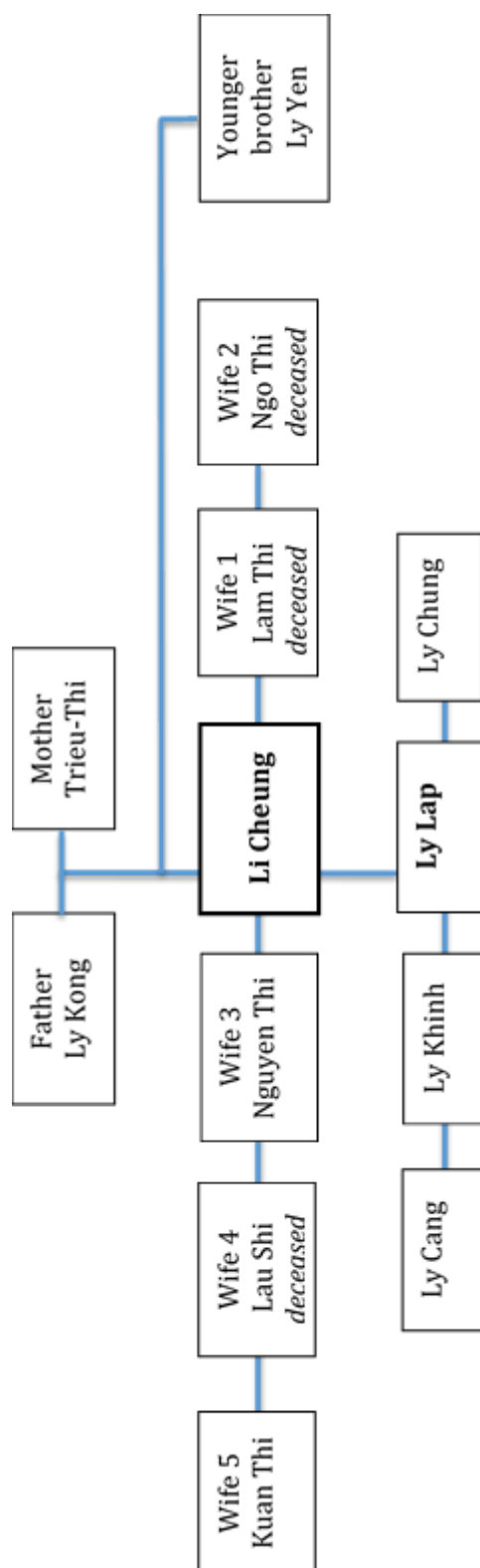


Figure 4.4 Li Cheung's family tree

As a Minh Huong capitalist with extensive assets, Li Cheung was not regarded like Ong Ka Tiong as being trans-local and mobile. This might have been attributed to having grown up in Cochinchina, while Ong came to Cholon for economic opportunities. Nevertheless, Li Cheung was much more flexible than Ong in his investments, going beyond the rice industry to tap into sawmills, bricks, and commerce. The varied types of assets suggested that Ong Ka Tiong's economic involvement in Cholon was facilitated mainly by his fortune derived from the rice industry. The rice industry was so monopolistic and profitable during the mid-1890s that it acted as a bubble or an enclave, which allowed Li to make enough money to secure real estate properties and then retire. Meanwhile, thanks to his local background, Li Cheung had more varied contacts in Cholon, which gave him access other trades and industries.

In a similar way to their control of the alcohol monopoly, ethnic Chinese shaped the rice economy for decades to come.²⁹⁵ But this discourse of Chinese economic domination can be misleading: it is easy to imagine the ethnic Chinese to be one block of high-flying capitalists. The profiles of two such capitalists have shown that they made their fortune in different ways, and they lived in different family arrangements, with varying degrees of attachment to Cholon. While both could be classified as ethnic Chinese, Li Cheung's Minh Huong background allowed him deeper and more varied local attachment and interests, while Ong Ka Tiong's Xiamen background enabled him to better tap into the trans-local networks. These were only two well-to-do men among hundreds of others in Cholon who were making a good living during the economic boom.

Conclusion

Since its creation, the Municipality had done much to make Cholon an economically viable town. Extensive public works were developed, especially in the Western Area, to further enhance

²⁹⁵ Sasges, *Imperial Intoxication*, 28.

freight routes. Such development incentivised the emergence of a new class of rice capitalists, whose activities founded several large-scale, steam-driven rice mills. They heralded an industrial emergence in the Western Area that rode on the booming economy in the rest of the town. Consequently, the hospitals and schools came under strain from a growing population. By 1913 both health and education had become the Municipality's priorities.

CHAPTER 5 1913: HEYDAY

By 1913, Cholon's economy had been riding high on two decades of an economic boom. The resultant prosperity gave rise to wide range of social and political transformations. These raised issues of how the Cholon Municipality governed a population whose work and life constantly transgressed administrative boundaries.

Attention is focused here on Cholon's accelerated urbanisation and the social and political effects of the port-town's strong economic growth. How did the Municipality accommodate the urban area's growth and extend its activities to embrace health care that involved harnessing the local population to support its activities? How did the local and the trans-local populations thrive during the booming economy? How did a stronger central directive seek to curb the controlling influence of Cholon's local notables?

In addressing these issues covering the growth of the urban area, the role of the town's notables in the rice industry and attempts by the Colonial Government to control their influence, the chapter draws upon a wide range of sources. Government periodical publications, Municipal Committee agendas and Colonial Council meeting records offer important insights into the state's changing priorities. Also, more personal documentation, from personal wills, and birth and adoption registrations in the *État Civil* archive are added to provide a deeper understanding of key families who underpinned Cholon's economy. We begin with an overview of Cholon's urban area.

The port-town's expansion

A description of Cholon's urban centre in 1913 painted a lively picture of Cholon during its heyday.²⁹⁶

Numerous bridges, very high above the quays, give a stunning sight to this busy city; but what is really interesting to see is, in the interior, the shops held by important Chinese, and the small businesses held by Vietnamese women. Each store has its sign, its name on the door painted in artistic Chinese characters. The shops at night remain open, and the streets are illuminated by lanterns of the most varied shapes and colours and bearing in transparent letters the signs of the merchant.

The biggest increase in Cholon's population stemmed from the doubling of the number of Chinese residents. This increase was likely the result of sojourning labourers attracted by Cholon's booming industries. This temporary, floating population swelled Chinese numbers to a level that almost matched the Vietnamese majority. The increase in temporary labour, in turn, entrenched the perception of some Vietnamese and French that Cholon was filled with self-interested foreigners, who bled wealth out of the country.²⁹⁷ Despite their varied backgrounds and social position, the trans-locals were seen as a dominant and domineering group, not just because of their capitalist activities, but also due to their sheer number.

²⁹⁶ *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 453.

²⁹⁷ 'Plainte Anonyme Relative à la Situation Faite aux Chinois en Cochinchine et à l'Exécution des Travaux Publics', *Naturalisation des Chinois. Questions de Principe*, 1908, ANOM, INDO GGI 20527.

Table 5.1 Cholon's population 1913

Categories	Population	Categories	Population
Vietnamese	87,057	Cambodians	115
Chinese	75,247	Indians	54
Minh Huong	4873	Malays	17
Europeans	419	Japanese	5

Source: Extracted from Cholon's population table in Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française, 1914, 362.

Despite an increasingly antagonistic view towards this population, the Municipality was simultaneously capitalising on their movements. The Municipality realised the futility of curbing the activities of mobile businesses and individuals located in the urban area's outskirts, who were part of the urban economy but paid only a fraction of the urban tax. Consequently, municipal and colonial taxation together were used to place a heavy burden on entries, exits, stays, and rights of doing businesses. People in the *étranger* category bore a tax burden several times more than those in other categories. Nevertheless, their increasing number suggested that the annual growth was strong enough for this arrangement to work well for both sides. Apparently, the Municipality was becoming more adept at harnessing Cholon's particular characteristics and, contrary to the contempt that the French colonists had exhibited in 1880 to those living on the fringe, town expansion was the means of co-opting them.

Heavy taxation, derived from a growing population, boosted the Municipality's budget and extended its reach. Between 1896 and 1913 Cholon's Municipal budget had quadrupled.²⁹⁸ Reflecting its rising population, the port town's eastern limit had been extended to Rue de Nancy to include the whole of the Chợ Quán area (Fig. 5.1). Bringing Cholon's urban limit to border that of Saigon, the expansion suggested that the Cochinchinese government had abandoned their intention of keeping the two towns separate and had started to see the necessity of urbanising this intermediate zone. Indeed, while this area was pockmarked by mangroves, creeks, orchards, and alleys of thatched

²⁹⁸ From \$212,681 piastres to \$915,994 piastres in 1913. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 456.

huts, its crowded population had been well integrated into Cholon's life. As noted, the Chợ Quán hospital served a portion of Cholon's residents (see Chapter 4).²⁹⁹ In addition, there were new hospitals and schools. Around the key intersection of Route Haute and Route Stratégique, three *congrégations*—Cantonese, Fujianese, and Chaozhou—maintained their respective dialect-based hospitals. Further towards Saigon, the students of the *Lycée Franco-Chinois* were enjoying their new school building. On Route Basse, the brewery Mazet had joined the string of factories along the Arroyo Chinois.

Allowing Cholon's border to reach Saigon was not the only revision to the Colonial Governments' perspective. By 1913, Chinese hospitals were built adjacent to the tramway, while the French mill was built on the waterfront. Building a quayside mill allowed it to tap into the shipping routes, which hitherto had served predominantly non-French industrial facilities. Also, the establishment of the Larue brewery signified that French-owned firms had started to stake a claim towards controlling the busy water traffic on the Arroyo. On the other hand, the founders of the Chinese hospitals recognised the value of rail transport for their staff and patients by grouping their medical services around the Route Haute tram station. Therefore, there was an exchange in technology use: French firms had adopted some local waterborne ways of operation, while the *congrégations* had embraced French-built rail transport.

Another sign of changing perspective was that much urban development broke away from the watercourses. The northern outskirts witnessed the greatest growth. Development of this region extended Cholon's urban area away from the canals. Unlike the old centre, the facilities here relied on the train. A short walk from the old centre to the railway station on Boulevard de l'École took one to this cluster. Land was delineated in a linear grid layout, much different from Cholon's older

²⁹⁹ A valuable source to learn the topography of the area is the map of Saigon and Cholon in 1923. *Plan de Saigon-Cholon* (Hanoi: Service géographique de l'Indochine, 1923),

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53065091z/f1.item.r=hanoi.langEN.zoom>.

winding streets and alleys (Fig. 5.1). Within these square blocks, new hospitals and schools were concentrated along Route de Bình Hòa. These included: the Drouhet Hospital, the Maternity Hospital, the attached Midwifery School, an orphanage/nursery, the Retirement House, and the Municipal School (Fig. 5.1). Thus, the Municipality planned the northern area to house municipal facilities, while allowing private enterprises to build up their activities in the east. The newly urbanised eastern and northern outskirts made Cholon into the town with the highest concentration of welfare facilities in Cochinchina.

Finally, walking south from the railway station took one into the old centre. There the innermost canal was being filled.³⁰⁰ Having been a dumping place for broken sampans, it had been falling out of use for some time.³⁰¹ The filling of this canal reflected the wider trend of land reclamation. While Saigon's canals had been replaced by streets for decades, those in Cholon were beginning to see the initial effects of similar land-based urban planning.

Land reclamation was pushed by the increasing use of motor cars, but Cholon's lifestyle changed more slowly than technology. As the residents continued to live and work so heedlessly on the streets, safety issues stemming from construction work and navigation were rife. Indeed, road accidents were reported weekly.³⁰² This safety challenge had become even more entrenched with population growth and an increasing number of auto cars in circulation.

³⁰⁰ Also known as Phở Xếp canal. There is no clear indication in the sources as to a specific year when this canal was replaced with Boulevard Tổng Đốc Phương.

³⁰¹ Commission Municipal de Cholon, 'À Sujet du Comblement des Canaux. Session Ordinaire du 4^e Trimestre 1921', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Foncières de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 15 November 1921, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 8830.

³⁰² For example, 'Đạo Tắc', *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn*, 3 July 1913, mfm X 472, National Library Australia.

Table 5.2 Locations numbered on Figure 5.1 Map of Cholon 1913

No.	Buildings & functions	No.	Buildings & functions
	Civil administration		Healthcare
1	Town Inspection ground	1	Drouhet Hospital
2	Direct Contribution	2	Indigenous Hospital of Cochinchina
3	Douanes et Régies	3	Chợ Quán Hospital
4	Reception	4	Fujianese Hospital
5	Town Hall	5	Chaozhou Hospital
6	Justice de Paix	6	Cantonese Hospital
7	Central post office	7	Maternity Hospital
8	Bình Tây post office	8	Retirement House
9	Chợ Quán post office	9	Orphanage
10	Functionaries' accommodation	10	Orphanage accommodation
11	Passengers' House	11	School for the Blind
12	Campement		Industries
13	Bình Đông slaughterhouse	1	Rice Mill Ban Teck Guan
	Military	2	Rice mill Union
1	Infantry camp	3	Rice mill Nha Cheong Seng
	Education	4	Rice mill Orient
1	Franco-Chinese School	5	Rice mill Nam Lung
2	Municipal School	6	Rice mill Ban Soon An
3	Nursery	7	Rice mill Yee Cheong
	Police	8	Rice mill Ban Hong Guan
1	Central Commissariat	9	Fontaine Distillery (Bình Tây)
2	Surêté Commissariat	10	Mazet Distillery
3	Bình Tây commissariat	11	Municipal shops and warehouses
4	Xóm Cùi police station	12	Larue Frère Brewery
5	Phú Lâm police station	13	Water & Electricity
	Worship places	14	Cây Mai Potteries
1	Cholon Church		Markets
2	St. François Church	1	Central Market
3	Chợ Quán Church	2	Bình Tây Market
4	Convent	3	Bình Đông Market
	Theatres		Cemeteries
1	Casino	Area	Cemeteries
2	Chinese theatre		
3	Vietnamese theatre		

Source: *Le Bret. 'Saigon-Cholon et Environs'. 1/50 000. Cochinchine: Service du cadastre et de la topographie, 1912. Bibliothèque nationale de France.*
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53075544/f1.item.zoom>.

Moreover, the Municipality had improved its functions beyond the roads and canals. An album of photographs of Cholon published in 1909 showcased several landmarks that, together, suggested

how the town celebrated its achievements since its founding in 1879 (Plates 5.1 to 5.3).³⁰³ The Municipal Council had upgraded and extended the transport system, enabled industrial operations in the west, and expanded the urban limit. In 1913, the most celebrated and recent achievement, however, was the cluster of welfare facilities on the planned grid in Cholon's north.

Plate 5.1: Cholon Maternity Hospital



Source: *Le Maire de la Ville de Cholon*, F. Drouhet. *Album. Ville de Cholon*. Saigon: Photo-studio L.Crespin, 1909.

³⁰³ The album of Cholon, shot by Studio Crespin and published in 1909, showcased the achievement of the municipality. Most of what it included were municipal pavilions. Only a few non-municipal buildings were shown, as a selective acknowledgement of the contribution from private enterprises.

Plate 5.2 Cholon Retirement House



Source: *Le Maire de la Ville de Cholon*, F. Drouhet. *Album. Ville de Cholon*. Saigon: Photo-studio L.Crespin, 1909.

These municipal welfare facilities were initially created by local charity associations, with Cholon's prominent figures sitting on the boards of their committees. These associations came into being on the initiative of these figures, but they worked on the basis of collaboration with the Municipal Government. Initially, in the 1900s, such collaboration allowed not only prompt approval and subsidy, but, more significantly, generous funding and donations from private sources.

Plate 5.3 School for the Blind, Cholon (*École des Aveugles de Nguyen Van Chi*)



Source: *Le Maire de la Ville de Cholon*, F. Drouhet. *Album. Ville de Cholon*. Saigon: Photo-studio L.Crespin, 1909.

Hence, the town's pattern of self-governance in which local groups actively responded to the community's needs by using their own resources continued. This pattern was repeated in the case of Cholon's three Chinese hospitals on the eastern outskirts. On the other hand, the welfare facilities departed from the *congrégations*-led projects in the sense that the Municipality's strengthening role compelled these projects to be a collaboration effort. Community leaders, both from the previous era

and the new generation, adopted a more overt and direct approach to the state. Especially for those considered to be from *étranger* backgrounds, they were gaining more visibility and involvement in local society. Unique to Cholon in this period was the collaboration of the upper milieu across ethnicities, as exemplified by the Maternity Hospital.

Maternity Hospital

By 1913 childbirth mortality had emerged as an urgent problem in Cholon. As noted in 1896, public healthcare had been poor: the two hospitals serving Cholon, the Municipal Hospital and the Chợ Quán, had been so overwhelmed by injuries to labourers that other types of care could not be prioritised. By 1913 this lack of care had led to the establishment of the Maternity Hospital, which, in turn, initiated a range of new social welfare projects and the construction of new pavilions, all located in Cholon's planned northern area.

In 1913, the Maternity Hospital's personnel, located at number 1-4 Boulevard de la Maternité, included: director Madame Léandri, deputy Maroselli, Doctor Biaille de Langibaudière from the Municipal Hospital, and six professionally trained Vietnamese and Chinese midwives. They were assisted by a cohort of nurses, cooks, servants, and coolies. The Hospital had two pavilions, with bedrooms for patients, a classroom, dormitories and a canteen for trainee midwives. It also shared some facilities with the Municipal Hospital. These included a nursery where abandoned or unattached newborns were collected and cared for by five trained nurses. Also, there were six pavilions for Chinese and Vietnamese women, an operating room, an amphitheatre, a morgue, and a laundry room.³⁰⁴

The Maternity Hospital was a popular place for obstetric care for women in Cochinchina. Unlike the exclusive French Military Hospital in Saigon, women of all ethnic groups and residential status were welcomed at the Maternity Hospital. The Hospital aimed to deliver babies, either on the

³⁰⁴ 'Oeuvre d'assistance. Ville de Cholon', in *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 454–55.

premises, or at home, with the assistance of medically certified midwives. Giving birth at a hospital with professional medical assistance was a new practice, and the Maternity Hospital set out to instil its value to the population at large. As a testament to the success of this particular civilising mission, the Hospital often lauded the significant drop in infant mortality. Founded in 1901, the idea for the hospital was first suggested as a response to studies showing high rates of infant mortality in Cholon. Roughly two-thirds of the newborns died within their first month of life. By 1913, the rate had dropped to 16 per cent.³⁰⁵

Before the founding of the Maternity Hospital, most women used to give birth at home, assisted by *bà mư* or midwives, who were experienced in childbirth but, to the colonial eye, did not have any medical training. Women who were poor and were without a family in Cholon were unable to provide food or care for their impending childbirth. They could only go to the Saint Enfance Maternity Ward, which provided exclusive care for pregnant women without charge. Here the Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres assisted with their labour, then baptised the babies. However, the facility had received little support in resources, furniture, and personnel.³⁰⁶ They had been strained by the increasing number of newborns in need of assistance. In addition, the staff were criticised as being more zealous in their religious mission than doing genuine medical service.³⁰⁷ Indeed, in 1900, only 26 out of 384 newborns were healthy enough to return to their families.³⁰⁸ Despite the Hospital's

³⁰⁵ Doctor Bailly of the Cholon Municipal Hospital. Doctor Bailly, 'De la Mortalité Chez les Enfants à Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Création d'Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 6 August 1901, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1912, 704–705.

³⁰⁶ 'La Mortalité Infantile à Cholon - Les Empirisme Annamites et La Dime Du Tétanos - l'arrêté Du 15 Octobre 1901', *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, 15 April 1907, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

³⁰⁷ Doctor Bailly of the Cholon Municipal Hospital. " Doctor Bailly, 'De la Mortalité chez Les Enfants à Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Création d'Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 6 August 1901, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³⁰⁸ Headmistress of St. Enfance, 'L'école des Villes à Cholon 1901', Dossier Relatif à la Création d'Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 24 June 1901, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

doubtful reputation this situation has been improved by 1913, but the maternity ward still continued to operate as an orphanage.

The families that were more open to Western medicine and could afford medical care went to the Municipal Hospital, where a special pavilion was set up for them on the campus. Nevertheless, this pavilion garnered a bad reputation among women from more respectable families, because it was often confused with the facility that admitted prostitutes for compulsory venereal examinations.³⁰⁹ Also, European women needed new medical facilities, due to the deplorable conditions at Saigon's military hospital.³¹⁰

In addition to poor medical facilities, the high mortality rate was attributed to the poor hygienic conditions experienced by the *indigène* mothers and midwives (*bà mụ*). Despite the new hospital, these conditions still persisted among the populace in 1913. The mother was isolated from the rest of the family. She lay on a bed of racking over a slow fire of wood or coal. The exposure to heat was meant to stop her bleeding. The midwife cut the umbilical cord with a random broken piece of earthenware, a shard of bottle, or a scrap of pottery, picked up somewhere on the ground.³¹¹ This resulted in traumatic tetanus being the main killer of newborn children between 15 and 18 weeks old. If the mother did not produce enough milk, and the family was too poor, the child was then fed with rice or fish. Infantile diarrhoea and athrepsia were consequences of this diet. As for the cases at the Municipal Hospital, families and mothers did not follow the doctors' prescriptions. Indeed, even the

³⁰⁹ 'Les Oeuvres d'Assistance de Cholon', *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, 15 April 1907, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

rich families ignored doctor's advice, leaving their babies to the care of wet nurses, who followed dubious indigenous practices.³¹²

The Cholon Maternity Hospital was founded with the express purpose of making *indigènes* aware of the need for modern medicine that was necessitated by the high infant mortality rates and dire needs of a growing population. Apart from on-site midwifery assistance, the Hospital provided mothers and newborn children with clothing and the relief that they needed on their return home. Besides civilising *indigène* mothers and families about modern obstetrics, another goal was to regulate the midwifery profession. Specifically, the attached School of Indigenous Midwifery (*École des sages-femmes indigènes*) trained professional midwives. They not only worked at the hospital, but also brought the supplies, such as France-imported ready-made bandages, to the family homes in need, while also teaching them about antiseptic precautions.³¹³

Responses to the call for the founding of Cholon's Maternity Hospital had been enthusiastic and widespread. The Cholon Maternity Association was formed to manage the hospital's affairs. While the Colony subsidised a large portion of the hospital's budget, there were also other types of donations. This was likely the first programme in Cholon that attracted people from across ethnic and administrative lines. All those who counted as the cream of Cholon society had been involved with the Association at one point.

Notably, the membership included not only the usual meeting-going gentlemen, but also their wives. Although several firms and individuals had withdrawn their support after the economic downturn, these women continued to be involved in the Hospital's operation. Other participants

³¹² Doctor Bailly of the Cholon Municipal Hospital. "Doctor Bailly, 'De la Mortalité Chez les Enfants à Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Création d'Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 6 August 1901, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³¹³ Association maternelle de Cholon, 'Undated Article', Dossier Relatif à la Création d'Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

included the headmaster and teachers of the Municipal School, the Chiefs of all Cholon districts, and the heads of the four congrégations of Cantonese, Fujianese, Hainan, and Chaozhou.³¹⁴ Some Chinese rice mills, probably Nha Cheong Seng and Ban Teck Guan, provided the Hospital with free rice. They were among numerous donors from the Cholon-based industries and commercial houses, including major proprietors such as the merchant Trịnh Tông of Rue de Canton, landowner Lý Thành Huy, and Quách Đàm of the Thông Hiệp rice firm.³¹⁵ In addition to those supporters based in the urban centres, provincial administrators also joined.³¹⁶ Before maternity wards were established in the provinces, the Maternity Hospital was the only place providing specialised obstetric care in Cochinchina. In 1913, the families of Đinh Sơn Lý, Đỗ Hữu Phương, Hà Minh Phái, Lâm Lệ Trạch, Quách Đàm, and Phùng Nhựt, remained fervent supporters of the Maternity Hospital.³¹⁷ Hitherto, no other organisation had attracted such extensive support from such a diverse milieu.

The Maternity Hospital was very successful. Infant mortality dropped significantly. A cohort of non-French obstetric nurses was trained, certified, and assigned to work. New pavilions were built, and the personnel was enlarged to accommodate an increasing number of patients, especially European women.³¹⁸ Two-thirds of the patients came from the urban centres.³¹⁹ Because of the long

³¹⁴ The last of the congrégations, that of Hakka, based their temple outside Cholon. This might explain why they were not involved in this.

³¹⁵ ‘Statut de La Maternité’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 19 September 1901, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223. Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Deuxième Assemblée Générale du 30 Mars 1903’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 30 March 1903, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³¹⁶ Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Deuxième Assemblée Générale du 30 Mars 1903’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 30 March 1903, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³¹⁷ Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Bulletin de l’Association Maternelle de Cholon’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 1911, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³¹⁸ Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Subvention’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 4 September 1905, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

travel time involved and generally unsanitary conditions in the towns, hospital care comprised not only the deliveries, but also the necessary rest and nourishment for the mothers before the due date.³²⁰ The Hospital admitted a total of almost 1,000 patients every year.³²¹

Beyond these activities the Maternity Association also disseminated a brochure called ‘Advice to Mothers’ (*Conseils aux mères*), in *quốc-ngữ* and Chinese, to popularise their medical assistance to the wider population. Promoted by local administrations, this little manual was claimed to have been eagerly received by thousands across Indochina. To serve the remote provinces of Cochinchina, subsidiaries of the Association were formed in other urban centres such as Sa Đéc and Gò Công. The city of Hanoi established its own Maternity Hospital shortly afterwards, followed by other urban areas in Tonkin and Annam. Therefore, Cholon was the first urban centre to initiate widespread welfare programmes and practical medical training. The Maternity Hospital, in particular, initiated a host of other welfare projects, also operated by collaborative associations. Indeed, the same people were involved in several other welfare projects.

Other welfare projects

The Maternity Hospital heralded a series of collaborative projects between the Municipality and local notables to provide welfare. The Retirement House, or *Maison de Retraite*, was among them. In 1913, the Retirement House sheltered 40 male and female pensioners (Plate 5.2). They were

³¹⁹ Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Etat des Admissions à la Maternité depuis la Fondation jusqu’au 1er Octobre 1906’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 1 October 1906, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³²⁰ Depending on how healthy they were on admission, European women needed to stay for 18 to 20 days, shorter than the 25 days that were the average stay for Vietnamese women. Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Deuxième Assemblée Générale du 30 Mars 1903’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 30 March 1903, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

³²¹ Number speculated from statistics for 1906 with a steady increase every year. Association Maternelle de Cholon, ‘Etat des Admissions à la Maternité depuis la Fondation jusqu’au 1er Octobre 1906’, Dossier Relatif à la Création d’Une Maternité et Association Maternelle à la Province de Cholon (1897-1911), 1 October 1906, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 11.223.

the old and infirm, who lived begging on the streets, with no money or family. They were provided with free food, clothing, and lodging. These included a bed (at most two beds in one room) and a table, with access to a large common veranda and a fairly large garden. They ate at a buffet, the food of which was provided by the Municipal Hospital. Other than the compulsory mealtimes, a night curfew, and standard bedtime, they had complete freedom to go outside, provided that they abstained from begging.³²² Their number was growing so quickly that a new building was necessary.

The Retirement House had begun in 27 November 1902, when Cholon's Chinese merchants and mill owners held a banquet for the representatives of the French metropolitan press, who were delegates to the Hanoi Exhibition. These Chinese notables were already major donors to the Maternity Hospital. They had received from the Mayor a project to build a retirement house for the Asian aged and infirm. The Chinese women at the banquet asked the delegates to submit the project to the patronage of *La Presse Francaise*. The Mayor then ratified the founding decree, and the *Maison de Retraite* was opened a few months later. Like the Maternity Hospital, before August 1913, the House was run by a council including the usual names, notably Hà Minh Phái and Tjia Mah Yan.³²³

Similarly, in 1913, the School for the Blind was headed by Albert Luzernes, with four Vietnamese teachers, in charge of 28 Asian boys and girls (Plate 5.3).³²⁴ It was open to all blind people in the Colony and provided them with the necessary primary and professional education to enable them to make a living. During their training the pupils received a pension. On their departure, the School recommended them job opportunities. Otherwise, the School allocated them the relief to

³²² 'Les Oeuvres d'assistance de Cholon', *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, 15 April 1907, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

³²³ *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 454–56.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

subsidise their wages, if they were insufficient, or place them in a special workshop. It also provided them asylum when their physical distress did not allow them to work in paid employment.

Therefore, the population and economic growth resulting from the industrialisation of the 1890s pushed forward the need for welfare assistance. In this respect, Cholon initiated a wide range of programmes that were then spread across the Colony. These institutions relied on the support of people who had benefited from the economic growth. They were not purely private initiatives. This was also the first time that the Colonial Government took an interest in collaborating with Cholon's notables to provide facilities that allowed others a more liveable urban life. Considering the overwhelmed state of public institutions in 1896, such welfare programmes could not have come about without a cooperation between both private and public forces. An emerging native intelligentsia would have regarded these efforts as only scratching the surface and little more than tokenism. Nevertheless, it is still important to identify leading members of Cholon's upper milieu, notably Tjia Mah Yen, Quách Đàm, Lý Lập and Un Lai Chuen, to gauge the degree to which they were benevolent and immersed in local municipal affairs. Only in this way can we deepen our understanding of the port-town's economic, social and political life.

Emerging trans-local leaders

By 1913, the rice industry had seen the emergence of a group of trans-local industrialists, who derived their affluence from sustained industrial operations in Cholon's Western Area. Among them was Tjia Mah Yen.³²⁵ In the late 1890s, when Cholon's oldest rice firm *Rizerie à vapeur*³²⁶ stopped operation, Tjia Mah Yen's firm Ban Guan 萬源 took over the French firm's ownership and changed the mill's name to Ban Aik Guan 萬益源.³²⁷ This takeover was momentous, because it removed any

325. Also known as Tạ Mã Diên or 謝媽延.

326. Also known as the Spooner/Cornu mill.

327 Tana Li, 'The Tomb Inscription of Tjia Mah Yen, a Hokkien Businessman of French Cochinchina', *Southern Chinese Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 223–24.

major French ownership from Cholon's rice industry. More notable was the fact that a long-standing French firm was taken over by a new Chinese firm. These developments must have alarmed the Colonial Government about the growth of Asian capitalism, which was having a marked impact upon the Colony's economy.

A closer look at Tjia Mah Yen's profile revealed a typical trans-local background. Born in 1862 and raised in Batavia, he moved with his father to Xiamen for schooling, where he learnt English. While his parents' families remained in Xiamen and Batavia, he was attracted by Cochinchina's booming rice industry.³²⁸ In the early 1890s he came to Cholon, where he founded the firm Ban Guan 萬源 with the support of Ong Ka Tiong, the director of the Ban Soon An rice firm (Table 5.1).³²⁹ With such a high-profile ally, Ban Guan's strategy in the 1890s was to seek mergers with existing big players. Tjia first partnered with Ngo Chung Hoan's firm to jointly run the Seng Quan mill, renamed as Ban Teck Guan 萬德.³³⁰ The takeover of the French mill Cornu on Route Basse (see Fig. 5.1 and Table 5.1) was another big move that decidedly placed Ban Guan among the first rank of mill owners. He assigned the directorship to Tan Ho Seng 陳和盛, again, of the Ban Soon An firm.³³¹ Considering that most of his key associates had worked for this Singaporean

³²⁸ Li, "Tomb Inscription of Tjia Mah Yen," 223–24.

³²⁹ Ong Ka Tiong mentioned Tjia Mah Yan (written as 'Tshia Ma Yeng') the manager of Ban Guan & Co trading house, of which the contract was registered on 1 March 1894. 'Ong Ka Tiong's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 27 July 1897), HKRS144-4-1335.

³³⁰ This information was deduced from the name change of the mill Seng Quan in 1896 to Ban Teck Guan by 1905, both located at the same address at 120-122 Quai des Jonques, and both were managed by Ngo Chung Hoan. *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française Ire partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897), 548. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1905, 555. Ong Ka Tiong also mentioned Tjia Mah Yan (or 'Tshia Ma Yeng') and Ngo Chung Hoan as managers of Ban Teck Guan in 1897. 'Ong Ka Tiong's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 27 July 1897), HKRS144-4-1335. Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 37509.

³³¹ Tjia Mah Yan's tomb inscription indicated his firm's takeover of the only French mill in Cholon, which was the Cornu/Spooner mill in 1896 (Table 4.2, Chapter 4). After the takeover, the mill was renamed Ban Aik Guan. Li, "Tomb Inscription of Tjia Mah Yen," 223–24. By 1913, Ban Aik Guan's manager had been listed as Tan Ho Seng, who was also

Fujianese syndicate, Tjia Mah Yen's rise attested to the way this syndicate expanded its share of the rice industry. This was the process of creating new associate firms to take over old mills.³³²

During the 1900s, Tjia Mah Yen had moved beyond partnerships. Since the acquired mill Ban Aik Guan was on the east side, an unfavourable location compared to the rice-focused Western Area, Tjia bought land in Bình Đông and built the brand new steam-driven mill Ban Hong Guan 萬豐源.³³³ As the newest in Cholon, this mill was located on Quai de Lò Gốm, which was on the provincial border.³³⁴ In 1913, this mill became his main operation. In Singapore, Tjia Mah Yen set up a branch and in Hong Kong, he established both a rice firm 福源米行, and a steamer line 福海輪船公司.³³⁵ Significantly, for the first time, Ban Guan was a Cholon firm that expanded to other locations, a reverse from the earlier period when Hong Kong and Singapore firms branched into Cochinchina. Building upon the foundation of older firms, Ban Guan symbolised the rapid growth of the industry in the new century: the emerging Cholon rice capitalists not only took over French enterprises, but also branched out and competed with existing firms.

a manager of Ban Soon An since the early 1900s. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1905, 555. So the various connections between Tjia Mah Yen and the people of Ban Soon An, i.e. Ong Ka Tiong and Tan Ho Seng, suggest that Tjia's emergence in Cholon was closely associated with, or maybe even facilitated, by the Singaporean Fujianese syndicate.

³³² Tjia's association with the Straits Fujianese also went beyond rice. The Lycée Franco-Chinois which he founded with the Cholon Municipality also involved several Ban Soon An people, such as Tan Ho Seng, and the two sons of Ong Ka Tiong, Ong Yu Joo and Ong An Think. Before the school building was completed, from 1908–1912, classes were held in Minzhang Secondary School which was the Fujianese congrégation's school. 'Statuts du Lycée Franco-Chinois de l'Indochine', Instruction Publique Grève des Élèves du Lycée Franco-Chinoise de Cholon, 19 December 1907, ANOM, INDO GGI 44039. Le Maire de la Ville de Cholon, F. Drouhet, *Album. Ville de Cholon* (Saigon: Photo-studio L.Crespin, 1909), FR ANOM 8Fi489/1-27/ICO/8Fi/489.

³³³ Li, "Tomb Inscription of Tjia Mah Yen," 223–24.

³³⁴ 'Transport des Riz par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon', 2 November 1907, FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

³³⁵ 李塔娜, '尋找法屬越南南方的華人米商', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 189–201.

Table 5.3 Rice mills in 1913

No.	Rice mill	Firm & Leadership	Operation	Associates
1	Ban Aik Guan 萬益源	Firm : Ban Guan et Cie 萬源 Owner: Tjia Mah Yen Directors: Tan Ho Seng 陳和盛, Tan Ho Wec	Started in the 1870s	Formerly Spooner rice mill, taken over by Ban Guan at the turn of the century
2	Ban Teck Guan 萬德源	Firm: Ban Guan et Cie Directors: Ngô Chung Hoan & Tjia Mah Yen	Started in the late 1880s	
3	Union	Speidel & Cie	Since early 1890s	French, Chinese, German shareholders
4	Orient			
5	Ng Cheong Seng	Firm: Kien Hong Seng 建芳成 Manager: Khuru Tiét	Constructed in 1886.	Comprised 6 small mills instead of a steam-powered one ³³⁶
6	Nam Lung 南隆	Firm: Man Cheong Yuen Director: Lư Lực, Un Man Chuen, Ly Lap Parent firm: Kung Yuen 公源米行, Hong Kong	From 1895	Po On Marine & Fire Insurance & Godown Company 普安公司 華商燕梳行, HK. Directors included Un Choi Oi, Lau Yat Tsun 劉日泉.
7	Ban Joo Guan 萬裕源	Firm: Ban Soon An 萬順安 Director: Tan Ho Seng 陳和盛, Lim Keng	From 1895. Bailed out from bankruptcy	Steamer lines Shan & Bun Hin Insurance companies Man On, Khean Guan, Po On.
8	Yee Cheong 怡昌	Firm: Thông Hiệp 通合 Owner: Quách Đàm	Operating since mid-1900s.	
9	Ban Hong Guan 萬豐源	Firm : Ban Guan et Cie Owner: Tjia Mah Yen	Operating since mid-1900s. Bailed out from bankruptcy	Singapore branch 福源米行 福海輪船公司

Source: see Appendix 1.

A contemporary of Tjia Mah Yen was Quách Đàm, a major patron of the Chaozhou congregation, who founded the other new mill, Yee Cheong, through the firm Thông Hiệp.³³⁷ Both men had served on the Municipal Council since the 1900s, However, Quách Đàm appeared to be less involved in public affairs than his Fujianese contemporary.³³⁸

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Quách Đàm was among the leading donors of the Chaozhou Nghĩa An temple in 1902. Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*, 224.

³³⁸ While Tjia Mah Yen served on several committees for welfare programs, Quách Đàm was involved briefly in the Maternity Hospital. Association Maternelle de Cholon, 'Troisième Assemblée Générale Du 30 Mars 1904', in *Bulletin de*

These newcomers differed from the older generation of entrepreneurs and merchants in terms of their visibility and willingness to collaborate with the Municipal Government. While also coming from trans-local backgrounds, they went beyond merely profiting from industrialisation, to contributing funds and endorsements to welfare facilities. These so-called foreign, but *assimilé*, public benefactors further complicated the ethnic categorisation of the Cochinchinese Government and challenged the role of European enterprises as builders of large public utilities. Their public roles and representation for a social class unique to Cholon also reinforced the town's political ambiguity.

Tjia and Quách were well-known representatives of an emerging social class who had been stratifying their affluence through either welfare contribution or strengthening familial ties. The following profiles of Un Lai Chuen and Lý Lập suggest that this second generation of rice industrialists built upon the groundwork of their forerunners, while making their own stance in regard to how much involvement they should have with local affairs, and thus, their identification with the colonial regime.

Michel Ly Lap

Unlike Tjia Mah Yen, Michel Lý Lập rarely participated in any municipal matters, despite being born and raised with *assimilé* status in Cochinchina. Lý Lập was the son of Li Cheung profiled in 1896.³³⁹ By 1913, he was living as a well-off proprietor at 27 Rue Duperré, Saigon.³⁴⁰ Although

l'Association Maternelle de Cholon, vol. 2, 3 vols (Saigon: Imprimerie Saigonnaise, 1904), 16. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 7141.

³³⁹ While Lý Lập's personal will, lodged at PRO HK, strangely did not specify his parentage, his names appeared in several records in relations to Li Cheung's legacy in Saigon and Cholon. Based on these clues, the thesis speculates that Lý Lập must have been Li Cheung's son. For example, Li Cheung (written as Lichtiong) was labelled on a plot along Quai de Mytho where the Route Basse tramway's extension was being planned in 1912, more than a decade after his death. This suggested that Lý Lập inherited the property and maintained it under his father's name. *Plan d'ensemble, Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l'Électrification du Tramway Saigon-Cholon (Route Basse) (1882-1913)* (Saigon: Compagnie Française de Tramways (Indochine), 16 July 1912), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386. See also, 李塔娜, '尋找法屬越南南方的華人米商', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 189–201.

³⁴⁰ South side of Boulevard de la Somme, i.e. the terminus of the Saigon–Mytho railway.

his son Léon was born in Saigon, he died five months later in Cholon, which suggested his main place of residence was in the port town.³⁴¹ By marrying a local Cholon women, Lý Lập's case demonstrates that the mixing of locals and trans-locals continued, the ambivalence of which came from the difference between his heritage and identity in later life.

Lý Lập was appointed by his father to be the executor of his will. He was the main heir to most of his father's estate, with his name specified as the recipient of the main businesses. This appointment was a mark of trust and responsibility. Consequently, Lý Lập would have inherited most of his father's real estate properties, businesses, and social reputation. For example, he owned the firm *Ôn Long* at a prime location, on the corner of Rue des Jardins – Quai de Mytho, close to the Central Market. He also worked as a manager of the Man Cheung Yuen rice firm.³⁴² He owned several shares in the rice mills and worked as a broker for other firms. This extensive involvement explained how for two years he became the President of the Indochina Chinese Chamber of Commerce, headquartered in Cholon. He donated generously to the Chamber.³⁴³

As Lý Lập was embedded in the Chinese diaspora, it made sense that he later deposited his own will in Hong Kong (and later passed away there).³⁴⁴ Both he and his father were among the few Chinese who managed to obtain French naturalisation available during the relatively short period

³⁴¹ Décès de Lý Lập, Leon. Registre des Actes de l'État Civil, no.17, 1913. Ville de Cholon, Cochinchine française. ANOM.

³⁴² Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française, 1905, 555.

³⁴³ Lý Lập acted as the president in 1909–1910. However, whether the Chamber president Lý Lập was the son of Li Cheung was unclear. 'Inventaires et Bilan Dressé du 17 Juillet 1909 au 6 Juin 1910 sous le Président de Lý Lập', Inventaires et Bilans de la Chambre de Commerce Chinois, 1909 - 1911, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5556.

³⁴⁴ 'Michel Lý Lập's Personal Will' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 5 May 1931), HKRS144-4-3857. Lý Lập's will was made in the same year Li Cheung's will was deposited in Hong Kong. It was a pattern that the son made his own will shortly after his father's death or deposit. For example, 'Un Lai Chuen's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 8 March 1911), HKRS144-4-2613.

during the 1880s and 1890s, when the administration was lax in their administrative procedures.³⁴⁵ Considering Li Cheung's Minh Huong heritage, Lý Lập's identity as a French *naturalisé* with a Chinese heritage justified their deep personal connections in both Saigon-Cholon and Hong Kong.

By 1913, however, Lý Lập was going through a major transformation in his personal life. By then he had become a European elector in Saigon, a privilege stemming from both his *naturalisé* and merchant capitalist status.³⁴⁶ Also, he had friends among the Chettys, who lived close to the Halles Centrales³⁴⁷—the new market square in Saigon. Consequently, he referred more to his *naturalisé* status than his Chinese heritage. Besides, he was fluent in French, and did not consult the usual legal services engaged by his Chinese clients.³⁴⁸

His personal life may have been seen as unconventional compared with his Chinese peers, who had an admixture of wives and concubines. Although he never married legitimately, he was fully capable of providing for an extended family. Indeed, he recognised five children, born to two women. With Le Gian (Le The An—likely Vietnamese), he had Ly Loc, Ly Cung, and Ly Yoc, and with Andrée Mazeich,³⁴⁹ he had Elaine and Denise (Fig. 5.2). These children might have been either his own, or adoptees. Less ambivalent in personal allegiances than Lý Lập, but embracing a greater span of trans-local connections, was Un Lai Chuen.

³⁴⁵ 'Naturalisation des Chinois. Question de Principe', 1904, ANOM INDO GGI 20506.

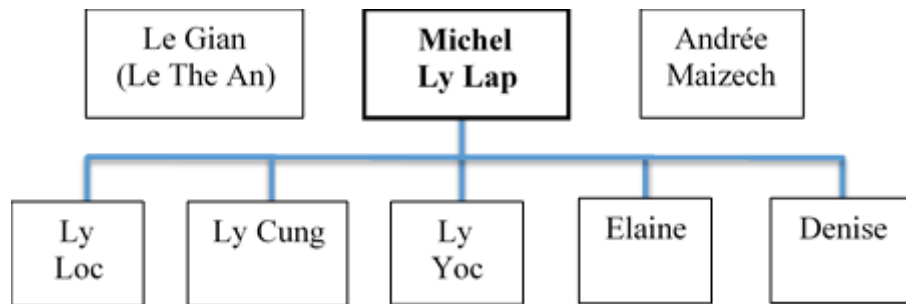
³⁴⁶ Here he was specified as "Ly-Lập, dit Liction fils, négociant, Saigon." *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1912, 640.

³⁴⁷ The current Bến Thành Market. Construction completed in 1914.

³⁴⁸ Wills of ethnic Chinese always mentioned a certified translator, often Saw-Chung, and notarised by the same legal office, Gigon-Papin. For example, Ong Ka Tiong's personal wills. Hong Kong Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, HKRS144-4-2613, 08/03/1911. No interpreter was mentioned in Lý Lập's personal will, thus it was originally written in French. Instead of Gigon-Papin, his will was notarised by Aymard's office. Lý Lập's personal wills. Hong Kong Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, HKRS144-4-3857, LY (LEE) LAP, 05/05/1931.

³⁴⁹ The will did not specify if Andrée Mazeich was French.

Figure 5.2 Lý Lập's family tree



Un Lai Chuen 阮荔邨³⁵⁰

The personal wills of Un Lai Chuen³⁵¹ suggest that the people of the Nam Lung rice mill prioritised trans-local networks over getting involved in Cholon's local affairs. While starting out in the late 1890s as a manager in the Nam Lung rice mill, in later years Un Lai Chuen went on to be more attached to his Hong Kong headquarters. Whereas the Un family was more active in managing the parent firm Kung Yuen in Hong Kong, the other members of the syndicate Kung Yuen, the Lau/Luu family members were more active in Cholon managing the Man Cheung Yuen firm. Such trans-local division of operations between the two founding families probably reflected the relative proportion of power within their internal hierarchy: the Un family, having the most shares, headed the syndicate in Hong Kong; the Lau came second, managing the most important subsidiary,

³⁵⁰ This section is based on the personal wills of the father Un Chung Wo, and the eldest son Un Lai Chuen. 'Un Chung Wo's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 14 December 1909), HKRS144-4-2409. 'Un Lai Chuen's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 8 March 1911), HKRS144-4-2613.

³⁵¹ Also known as Un Man Chuen 阮文邨, Yuen Man Kwong 阮文光, Un Ting Kwan 阮庭鑾, Un Ting Kam 廷錦. Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45863. Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45859. 'Un Lai Chuen's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 8 March 1911), HKRS144-4-2613. 'Un Chung Wo's Personal Wills' (Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 14 December 1909), HKRS144-4-2409.

Cholon's Nam Lung mill. The rest of their activities were dispersed among several shareholders in Cholon, Hong Kong, and the diaspora.

The Un and the Lau families were close associates in both business and marriage, sharing connections to a Cantonese-speaking diasporic network. The first generation, Un Chung Wo 阮寵和³⁵² and Lau Ping 劉平 founded *Kung Yuen* 公源 rice firm in the late 1880s. They imported rice from Cochinchina to Hong Kong and sold to local dealers. By 1913, the second generation had taken over the reins of the family syndicate. To maintain such an inter-colonial operation, they travelled often between Cholon and Hong Kong, to work with appointed local directors: the one in Cholon was Lru Lư, was a regular figure at Cholon Municipality's meetings. An examination of the personal wills of the Un family reveals much about how they managed their internal affairs across a range of localities.

In 1913, the eldest son Un Lai Chuen 阮荔邨 had been leading the syndicate with Lau Siu Chuek for several years. Born in 1880, he came of age in the 1900s when his family business emerged as a major player in Cholon's economy. Following in his father's footsteps, Lai Chuen began his career at the Nam Lung rice mill in Cholon.³⁵³ He also worked as a secretary of Po On Marine & Fire Insurance & Godown Company Co. Ltd, 普安公司華商燕梳行, which took charge of the shipping line for the Nam Lung rice mill. Also, he worked under the director Un Choi Oi, probably an uncle. After 1908, he took over his father's position.

Lai Chuen married a woman from the Lau family (Fig. 5.2), but the Un family's business interests extended beyond rice. For example, he was also involved with the Chu Kong Lan Tobacco

³⁵² Also known as Yuen Hai or Un Oi Yue 阮藹如. Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 53987; Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45787.

³⁵³ Li, "Saigon's Rice Exports."

Company, belonging to the parent firm Chu Wing On 朱永安. A Chu daughter married his second youngest brother.³⁵⁴ Also, the Un family was related to other family businesses by marriage.

Lai Chuen inherited his father's disciplined approach in managing the family's wealth, which had been pooled by his father Un Chung Wo into the fund of the ancestral hall *Un Wo Lok Tong* 阮和樂堂. Each year, \$10,000 was withdrawn from the fund and divided into ten shares of \$1000 each.³⁵⁵ The shares were then paid annually to each family member. Apart from this annual withdrawal, the rest of the estate stayed in the ancestral fund. Lai Chuen and his brothers could borrow from this fund by consulting with each other and paying back interest. For his involvement in the Nam Lung, Lai Chuen received the largest share.

Like his father, Lai Chuen managed his estate methodically. He followed the tradition that the eldest son received most shares. Nevertheless, he deviated in some respects. While his father paid family members at the same time, Lai Chuen prioritised the women to receive the payments first. While his father maintained a common savings account, which the brothers could access at will, Lai Chuen invested the fund. If the investments had been unprofitable, his sons would likely receive nothing. Hence, allowances depended upon the success of his brothers in investing the family capital.³⁵⁶

The difference between Lai Chuen and his father's management of their respective estates probably indicated a generational shift in the upkeep of their wealth. While both shared a methodical and cautious attitude towards paying family members, Lai Chuen invested, rather than saved, distributing his savings rather than the capital. His caution was a hard-earned lesson from the

³⁵⁴ Li, "Saigon's Rice Exports."

³⁵⁵ Money was likely in Hong Kong dollars.

³⁵⁶ The family Hui Bon Hoa, of Saigon, was also known to have similar wealth management among the sons. The eldest's signature was essential for any major withdrawal from the family fund, and only profit was distributed. Vương Hồng Sên, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa*, 284.

complications experienced by their close associates, the Lau family. The economic boom following the rice mills in the 1900s led to extravagant expenditure and business dealings with little hedging. The Lau's numerous sons and relatives incurred excessive debts under the firm's name. While the head of the Lau family struggled to constrain their expenditure, the Un family was surprised by their debt. After that, the Un family had taken prudent measures to curb extravagance. In 1913, the firm was not held responsible for the debts of relatives; all transactions had to be signed by both general managers: Lau Siu Cheuk and Un Lai Chuen.

The ascent to wealth and over-indulgence in the Un and Lau families happened over two decades and were tied closely to the industrialisation and monopolisation of the rice sector. The sector's rapid growth worked in tandem with the considerable exchange between trans-local partnerships, whether it was capital, labour, or managers. The Un ancestral hall and family estate *Un Wo Lok Tong* were apparently located in Hong Kong, but the family's affluence drew substantially from a range of sources across the East Asian Sea. As noted, shares in their Nam Lung mill were owned by merchant-capitalists, such as Li Cheung and Ong Ka Tiong, who were not limited by firm rivalry or industries (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, the diverse and expansive nature of these capital networks was also their weakness, since a rapid rise to wealth encouraged unchecked spending that was hard to track across the branches of relatives, in-laws, partners, and acquaintances. Such expansion compelled the Un family to adopt more sophisticated measures to handle the family's estate, to safeguard against the indiscretions of the earlier period.

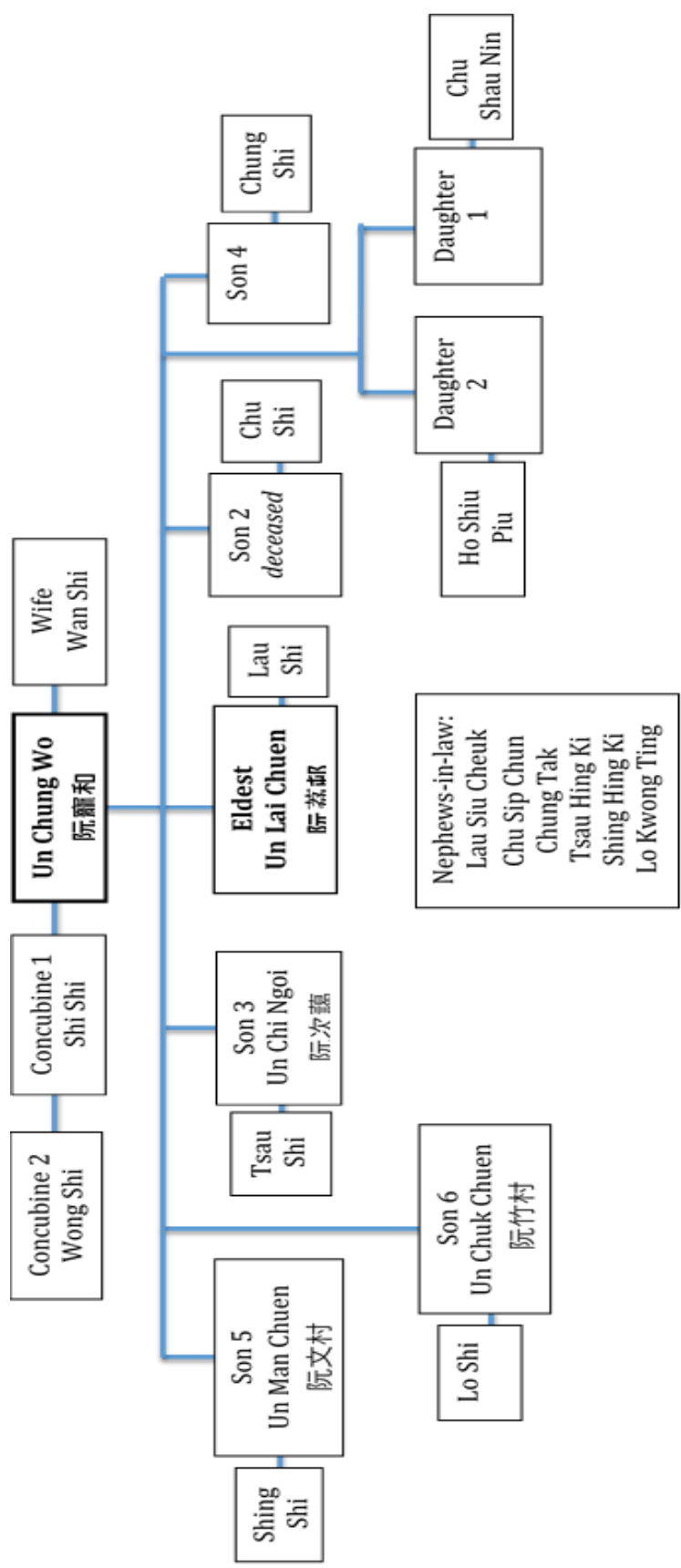


Figure 5.3 Un Lai Chuen’ s family tree

This discussion of leading members of Cholon's upper milieu—Tjia Mah Yen, Quách Đàm, Lý Lập and Un Lai Chuen—illustrate that exchanges and the generation of revenue from industrial activities occurred not only in Cholon but across a range of urban centres, including Hong Kong. With the task of deriving benefits from these activities in taxation the Municipality struggled to learn the extent of this trans-local nexus. The perception of these people as 'foreigners' stemmed from the fact that the existing governing apparatus was unable to either to contain and regulate these trans-local networks or earn their allegiance. Apart from Tjia Mah Yen's various involvements, their indifference towards municipal affairs illuminated the nuances often overlooked by higher levels of government. Despite all of them being 'chinois', their engagement with Cholon's society diverged widely. Indeed, the personal wills of the people behind the Nam Lung mill were lodged not in Cholon but in Hong Kong, a suggestion of their preferred resting place. These developments led to governments at all levels seeking to reinforce their influence over Cholon's municipal affairs.

Strengthened central authority

Anxious about the Colony's dependence upon the rice industry led by 'foreign' industrialists, the Indochinese Government, inspired by a call from Governor-General Albert Sarraut, sought to curb the influence of the trans-local notables on several fronts.

Reformed central directive

During the 1900s strong growth was halted by two consecutive years of bad harvests (1910–1912) from which the rice industry was still recovering in 1913. This short downturn exposed the pervasive influence of the industry on the entire economy, at the heart of which were the syndicates based in Cholon's Western Area. By April 1912, the mills Ban Teck Guan and Ban Soon An stopped operation and filed for bankruptcy. Banks and export houses in Saigon were affected by suspended payments. Immediately negotiations were initiated, and loans were issued, to bail out the two firms

to enable them to continue their operations.³⁵⁷ Also shipping suffered: with a 25 per cent drop in tonnage and vessels arriving at and departing Saigon port.³⁵⁸

The Colonial Government took the Cholon bankruptcies as a sign that the time was ripe for French enterprises to thrive. Sarraut, the incumbent Governor-General, raised a number of improvements to manage future downturns.³⁵⁹ The first step was to improve the conditions of rice production. He recommended that farmers should be more selective in choosing the type of rice to cultivate. Among the innumerable varieties, years of studies and market preferences indicated that Gò Công rice was the best choice. While Gò Công rice was most popular in Europe, Hong Kong remained the biggest market for Cochinchina's rice exports. Thus, this suggestion was aimed probably at the French rice growers in the western provinces.

Also, the Indochina Government recognised the need to organise a system of agricultural credit for Vietnamese farmers. Sarraut emphasised the task's urgency: "In a country where the Vietnamese farmer, whether he speaks to the Chinese or Chetty, or his own more fortunate compatriots [...], often finds himself borrowing at an incredible [exorbitant] and yet very real rates of 28% for five months, it is clear that reform is needed".³⁶⁰ This system would take longer to establish, because it would have to deal with the prevailing practice of mutual credit. Despite this obstacle, Sarraut wanted to rally effort behind the Government's cause.

As a second step, Sarraut recognised the vulnerability exposed by the downturn: the over-reliance on Chinese-led industrialisation on a single crop. He was convinced that this was an

³⁵⁷ Conseil d'Administration du Compagnie, 'Compagnie de Commerce et de Navigation d'Extrême-Orient', *Les Annales Coloniales*, 12 June 1913, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

³⁵⁸ 'Les Mouvements de Navires du Port de Saigon 1903-1912', in *Bulletin Économique de l'Indochine* (Hanoi-Haiphong: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1913), 1110.

³⁵⁹ 'Le Mouvement de Sortie Des Riz d'Indochine Au Cours de l'année 1912', in *Bulletin Économique de l'Indochine*, 3 (Hanoi-Haiphong: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1913), 237–38.

³⁶⁰ Albert Sarraut, 'Extrait Du Discours Prononcé Au Conseil de Gouvernement, à Hué, Le 5 Février 1913', in *Bulletin Économique de l'Indochine*, 1 (Hanoi-Haiphong: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1913), 5–6.

opportunity to benefit French enterprises by capitalising on rural plantations, and shifting from Cochinchina to the new economic terrain of Tonkin and Annam. Polyculture, agricultural hydraulics, traditional handicraft exports, mining, public works, and transport were among the proposed ideas.³⁶¹ Also, there were signs that rubber was beginning to be important. These potential activities would enable new colonial enterprises to break new ground outside the crowded urban-based industrial manufacturing and commerce for which Cholon was well-known. This initiative was supported by the Saigon Chamber of Commerce and the Cochinchina Chamber of Agriculture. Both were particularly involved in encouraging French competition against Chinese firms.

Shifting the economic heavyweights away from Cholon was not an easy task. This led Sarraut to enter a long-running debate as to whether French enterprises should aim for the regional Asian markets or the metropolitan market. An important fact that he noted was that, however varied were exports to Europe, those to the Asian region remained exponentially larger. Following this observation, Sarraut suggested that instead of focusing only on the European market, the Metropole needed to recognise the value of French commercial interests in this part of the world. The increasing population in neighbouring countries presented a promising prospect that could lead to Indochinese industry becoming an indispensable complement to metropolitan industry.

Sarraut concluded with a call for more investment in education that would tie together the interests of both the French and the Vietnamese. His statement was indicative of the general sentiment among colonists in 1913. Since 1896, they had realised that the rice-based, Chinese-owned industrial foundation in Cholon, stratified into a single-cultivation economy, left little room for competitors in other activities. More damning was that most of their exports were not sent to the Metropole, but to other colonies within the immediate region. Thus, the Colonial Government was searching and pushing for alternative venues for French economic exploitation. Nevertheless, the

³⁶¹ Ibid.

French could only do this with Vietnamese support, despite them being ‘uninformed’. Hence, education was their solution to equip the Vietnamese with the knowledge and practice of modern economic development. This would awaken and align their interests with the Colonial Government, thereby strengthening Franco-Vietnamese cultural and economic solidarity (*Pháp Việt đề huề*).

The implication was that this solidarity would have the mutual aim of winning together against the overweening Chinese economic dominance. Hence, the central government wanted to shift their economic effort from Chinese-dominated urban centres such as Cholon, to the rural areas, where they could monopolise economic activities through their control of transport, hydraulics, and polyculture. This strategy would pave the way towards increasing French economic presence in regional markets and, no doubt, their political presence against the British Empire. Finally, the Indochina Government also needed support from the Metropole that had hitherto remained apathetic about their cause.

Such central directives corresponded with the emergence of several French-owned colonial conglomerates. While the majority were located outside Cholon, some had set up facilities there. These included the Fontaine distillery in Bình Tây, Mazet distillery and the Larue brewery in Chợ Quán, and the Water and Electricity Company on Boulevard Tongkéou in Cholon’s north. Significantly, the directors of these firms sat on Cholon Municipal Council, joining directors of rice syndicates and other big proprietors. Hence, French firms had started to challenge what they perceived as Chinese dominance in Cholon; they were soon joined in this encounter by upper-class Vietnamese.

The Reformed Municipal Commission

In addition to emboldening French-owned firms to enter Cholon’s cut-throat economic arena, such central directives also sought to reform the Municipality in ways that constrained *étranger*

influence. Such administrative reform responded to the liberty and collaborative spirit under Drouhet, one of the two longest-serving mayors in Cholon (1907–1912).

In April 1913, Albert Garnier became the Mayor of Cholon following the short-lived stint of his predecessor Jean Baptiste Édouard Bourcier de Saint Chauffray.³⁶² As a result, he inherited the Drouhet's strong legacy. Also, Drouhet's end of term marked the end of the Municipal Council, as from 1913 onwards it was reorganised into a Municipal Commission. Drouhet was close to the Chinese entrepreneurs,³⁶³ as evident in his refusal to support another plan to extend the tramways to Bình Tây and provide an alternative shipping route for moving rice.³⁶⁴ The Municipality's reorganisation after Drouhet's departure was a possible indication that his Chinese-friendly orientation was not well regarded by the Indochina Government; he was replaced by Garnier who was more likely to adopt a stronger stance against Chinese economic interests.

Apart from the change from Council to Commission, the town's administrative units and personnel remained relatively unchanged. Still active from Drouhet's time were Councillors Lâm Lê Trạch, Huỳnh Cao Kê, Quách Đàm, and Phùng Nhứt. Joining them were the newcomers such as Larue, owner of the Larue Brewery, Nguyễn Chiêu Thông, an emerging Vietnamese figure in the rice industry, and Lâm Khanh (or Lim Keng), an associate of Tjia Mah Yan and the Ban Soon An firm.³⁶⁵ As previously occurred under the Municipal Council, the Vietnamese population was divided into ten districts, and the Chinese into five *congregations*. While these administrative units did not mean that their residences were segregated, there were some areas that had a more homogeneous

³⁶² *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1913.

³⁶³ Barrett, *Chinese Diaspora*, 19.

³⁶⁴ 'Extrait du Registre des Délibérations du Conseil Municipal de Cholon', Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l'Électrification du Tramway Saigon-Cholon (Route Basse), 19 March 1912, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386. Transport Des Riz Par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon', 2 November 1907, FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

³⁶⁵ The rest of the councillors included L'Helgouach, Reich, Lâm Khanh, Bonnefoy, Khuông Thành Nguyên, Van Trung Cu. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 362.

demographic, such as the bureaucrats' families residing on Rue de Ky Hoa and Rue de Câý Mai, next to the Inspection ground (Fig. 5.1).³⁶⁶

The most obvious change from the administrative reorganisation was the concentration of major welfare programmes under the Municipal Commission. From August 1913, the Maternity Hospital, the School for the Blind, and the Retirement House were attached to the Municipal Hospital.³⁶⁷ They used to be run by separate private associations. The attachment to the Municipal Hospital might have resulted in the dissolution of these arrangements, bringing these institutions entirely under the Municipal management.

Also, the attachment to the Municipal Hospital reflected a larger trend in welfare organisations in Cholon. Having started in the 1900s, many of them were initiated by private associations that drew upon a generous initial funding injection and ongoing donations of goods and money. However, by 1913 these association had been struggling to balance their accounts. They had started to charge fees, and some even requested compulsory donations from members.³⁶⁸ These shortfalls in funding compelled both the Municipal and the Indochina Government to shift the management into the state's hands to secure continuous funding.

Despite their operations remaining the intact,³⁶⁹ the most significant change was the dissolution of the private associations that once managed them. Due to self-financing by the Indochina

³⁶⁶ I infer the location of bureaucrats' residence area from the État Civil 1913, which registered births at home by bureaucrats' families. *Registre des Actes de l'État Civil*, no.17, 1881-1916. Ville de Cholon, Cochinchine française. ANOM. A 'European quarter' was mentioned to have the sewerage installed so that it was cleaner than the rest of the town. This quarter was accessible by the Route Haute tramway, which placed it next to the Inspection ground. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 453.

³⁶⁷ *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1914, 362–65.

³⁶⁸ 'Ouverture d'Une Souscription au Profit de l'Hôpital Cantonnaï de Cholon', Dossier Relatif à l'Ouverture d'Une Souscription au Profit de l'Hôpital Cantonnaï de Cho Lon (1910-1915), 1913, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 12555.

³⁶⁹ The attachment did not seem to involve a big change in their operations, because they had been sharing personnel and services from the start of their activities, located within one block from each other (Fig. 5.1).

Government these associations were short-lived. Further, the new rich, as their fortunes expanded, sought social recognition by donating to both welfare and education. However, these occasional donations were generally special or one-off; the regular ones coming from commercial firms had tapered off due to the bankruptcies during the economic downturn, leaving the associations with insufficient money to continue.

The changing fortunes and variations in support of Cholon's notables for welfare programs could be seen as a manifestation of the urban area's transient nature of affairs. Compared to Saigon, most firms, except for the monopolies, did not have a long business life due to competition and rising taxation. Apart from a few established families, new and different people came for a short period and left. While the Municipality improved its capability to regulate these changes, the mixing of people under the influence of colonial racial thinking and emerging national and ethnic identities in a crowded urban space proved to be a daunting challenge.

Conclusion

Industrialisation and urbanisation enabled a group of trans-local and local industrialists to emerge as visible and influential community leaders. Coming from various trans-local and local backgrounds, these Cholon notables collaborated with the Municipality on a range of welfare programs that improved the town's living conditions. However, this collaborative arrangement, probably unique to Cholon, was curbed by an economic downturn and a strengthening directive from the central Indochina government.

Social welfare was a way in which the diasporic strongmen within the Municipality translated their financial capital into socio-cultural influence. The resultant welfare facilities added a new dimension to Cholon: it was not only a commercial and industrial hub, but also a provider of welfare services. Such development drew even more population and wealth into Cholon. The resulting

pressure and its consequences would further entrench the hostility between the state, the local, and the trans-local, which was evident when we meet them again in 1930.

CHAPTER 6 1930: CHOLON'S END IN SIGHT

By 1930 nascent reforms by the Colonial Council had sought to curb Cholon's Municipality's accommodation of community leadership initiated by heads of temples and proprietors of syndicates. These reforms had three drivers: (1) the rise of Vietnamese nationalism propelled by a flourishing print media; (2) the push for comprehensive reforms that strengthened the position of the Vietnamese in the colonial hierarchy; and (3) the emergence of French-owned colonial conglomerates, which posed a serious challenge to Cochinchina's monopolistic rice industry. Collectively, these changes modified Cholon's long-standing economic and social substructure for the first time.

A series of issues are raised by these changes. How had the rapid urbanisation of the 1920s boom years changed Cholon's urban form? Why did the Cochinchinese government want to amalgamate Saigon and Cholon? How did such a proposed administrative reform affect Cholon's society in ways that were inimical to its way-of-life? And how did Cholon's rice-based economy fare during this transition period marked by depressed economic conditions?

To address these issues, the meeting notes of the Municipalities of Saigon, Cholon, and the Colonial Council are used. They are supported by several articles drawn from periodicals, notably *Écho Annamite* and *Éveil Économique*. Also, Lê Văn Lư's book on temples provides a special focus on Cholon's local communities in 1930.

Urbanisation

On the eve of 1930, Ernest Hébrard lamented the disorder of the Saigon-Cholon urban areas:³⁷⁰

No distinction of neighbourhoods or areas was visible. Factories and warehouses [were] near the centre of the cities with luxurious homes. The islands, or blocks, of an arbitrary size, were determined without regard to their future purpose. The same

³⁷⁰ Ernest Hébrard, 'Urbanisme En Indochine', *L'Éveil Économique de l'Indochine*, 31 March 1929, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

blocks are used for administrative buildings, commercial buildings, dwellings and factories or depots. As a result, factories have four or five annexes separated by streets, and housing blocks that are too deep give rise to real ‘ghettos’ behind public roads.

By 1930, Cholon’s old landmarks had been altered. For the first time, canals ceased to be a distinctive feature. The three innermost canals had been filled in and replaced by boulevards. These were the last of the naturally formed canals. Silted and cluttered with broken sampans, they cost too much to be maintained, when more roads were needed to accommodate tramway extension and permit the relocation of markets. The resultant investment in roads created Boulevard Tong Doc Phuong and Boulevard Gaudot, which then became the main arteries in the centre (Fig. 6.1). The only waterway remaining from the former era was the Canal Bonnard, which continued serving the industrial Western Area.

Such canal replacements did not mean that the waterways had ceased to be important in Cholon. Instead, water traffic was directed southward through five new canals branching off the south bank of Arroyo Chinois. The starting point, Canal au Bois, was extended from the old log ponds that had served the wood mills, carpentries, and construction sites. These branches connected the Arroyo Chinois with the new Canal de Doublement. This new, major waterway ran parallel to Arroyo Chinois, allowing the two-way navigation for vessels on this key water route between the urban centres and the provinces. Therefore, by 1930, modified water coverage restricted shipping movements to Cholon’s outer areas; its city centre was only served by land transport.

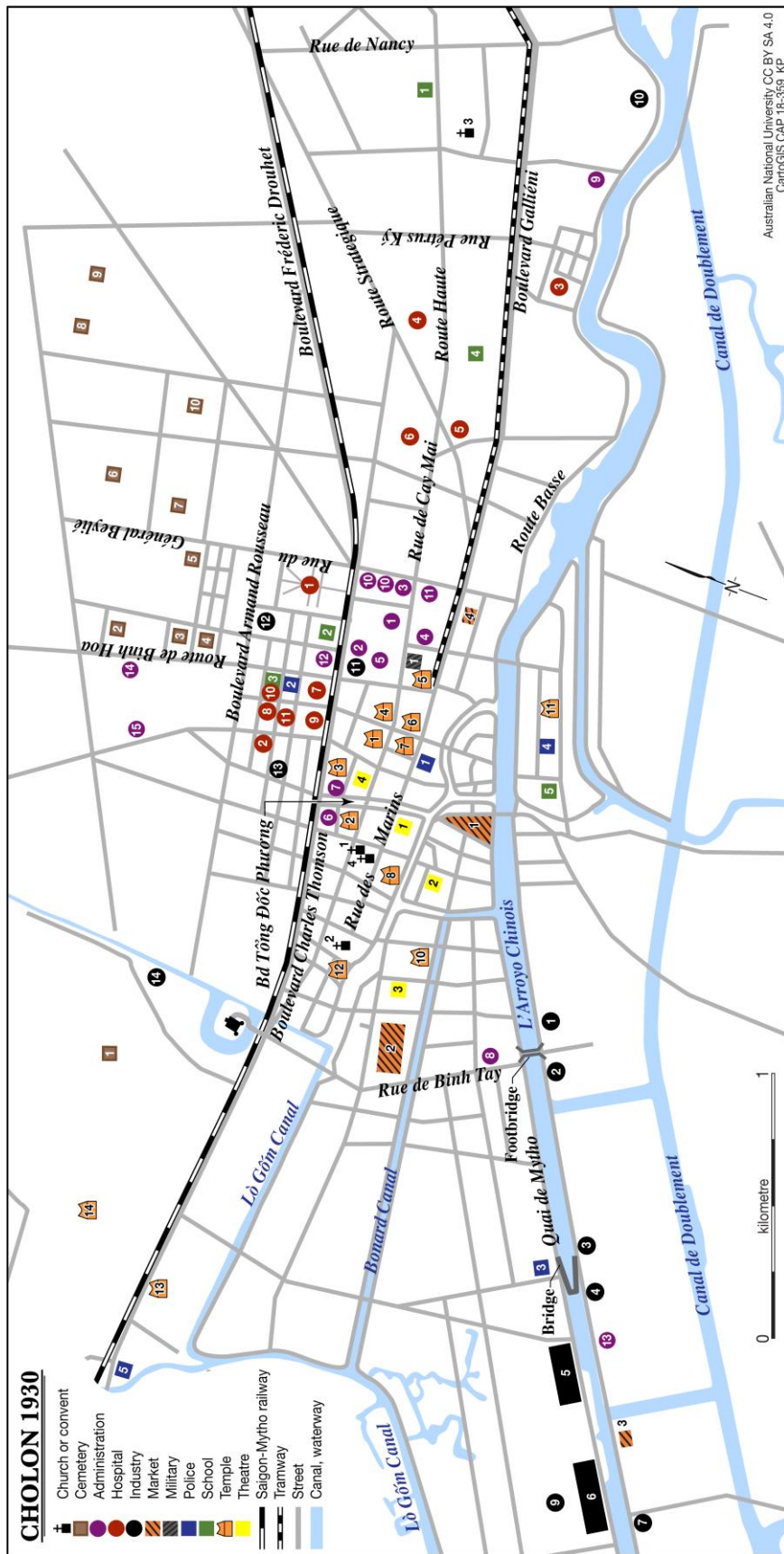


Figure 6.1 Map of Cholon 1930

Source: see Appendix 1.

Table 6.1 Locations numbered on Figure 6.1 Map of Cholon 1930

No.	Buildings & function	No.	Buildings & function
	Civil administration		Healthcare
1	Town Inspection ground	1	Drouhet Hospital
2	Direct Contribution	2	Indigenous Hospital of Cochinchina
3	Douanes et Régies	3	Chợ Quán Hospital
4	Reception	4	Fujianese Hospital
5	Town Hall	5	Chaozhou Hospital
6	Justice de Paix	6	Cantonese Hospital
7	Central post office	7	Maternity Hospital
8	Bình Tây post office	8	Retirement House
9	Chợ Quán post office	9	Orphanage
10	Functionaries' accommodation	10	Orphanage accommodation
11	Passengers' House	11	School for the Blind
12	Campement		Theatres
13	Bình Đông slaughterhouse	1	Casino
14	Car impound	2	Chinese theatre
15	Garbage dumping ground	3	Vietnamese theatre
	Military	4	Eden cinema
1	Infantry camp		Industries
	Education	1	Rice mill Ban Teck Guan
1	Franco-Chinese School	2	Rice mill Union
2	Municipal School	3	Rice mill Nha Cheong Seng
3	Nursery	4	Rice mill Orient
4	Nursery (10th <i>quartier</i>)	5	Rice mill Nam Lung
5	Xóm Cui nursery	6	Rice mill Ban Soon An
	Police	7	Rice mill Yee Cheong
1	Commissariat Central	8	Rice mill Ban Hong Guan
2	Commissariat de la surrêté	9	Fontaine distillery (Bình Tây)
3	Commissariat de police de Bình Tây	10	Mazet Distillery
4	Poste de police de Xom Cui	11	Municipal shops and warehouses
5	Poste de police de Phu Lam	12	Larue Frères Brewery
	Religious places	13	Water & Electricity
1	Cholon Church	14	Cây Mai Potteries
2	St. François Church		Markets
3	Chợ Quán Church	1	Central Market
4	Convent	2	Bình Tây Market
	Temples	3	Bình Đông Market
1	Tue Thanh Cantonese temple	4	An Điềm Market
2	Ha Chuong Fujianese temple		Cemeteries
3	On Lang Hokkien temple	1	Cantonese Cemetery
4	Nghĩa An Chaozhou temple	2	Muslim Cemetery
5	Quynh Phu Hainan temple	3	Indigenous Catholic Cemetery
6	Tam Son Fuzhou temple	4	European Cemetery
7	Minh Huong Gia Thanh temple	5	Buddhist Cemetery
8	Nhi Phu temple	6	Chaozhou Cemetery
9	That Phu temple	7	Hakka Cemetery
10	Nghĩa Nhuan temple	8	Fujianese Cemetery
11	Huệ Lâm buddhist temple	9	Hainan Cemetery
12	Bửu Sơn hội quán temple	10	10th <i>quartier</i> Cemetery
13	Giác Hải buddhist temple		
14	Giác Viên buddhist temple		

Sources: 'Plan de Saïgon-Cholon'. Hanoi: Service géographique de l'Indochine, 1923.
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53065091z/f1.item.r=hanoi.langEN.zoom>.
'Plan de Saïgon-Cholon'. Saigon: Editions J. Aspar, 1949 1945. Nla.obj-233303069. National Library Australia. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233303069/view>.

Bolstering the prevalence of land transport, new streets were built. Boulevard Galliéni extended the Rue des Marins across the Chợ Quán area so that it connected with Saigon (Fig. 6.1). This was a straight, tree-lined thoroughfare, spacious enough for two-way transport and a new electric tramway. Also, the building of Boulevard Galliéni led to the draining of the marshes and creeks of the Chợ Quán area. This process involved making space for new urban streets and building blocks that gradually replaced the dirt paths, orchards, and ponds of the pre-colonial villages. The older two tramways systems had been removed. In their place, the new Galliéni electric tramway served the direct route between Cholon and Saigon. By 1930, this tramway was being extended to the new Bình Tây market.³⁷¹

It had taken decades to extend rail transport to the industrial area of western Cholon. As noted in earlier cross-sections of Cholon in 1880, 1896 and 1913 this extension was unfeasible due to the impenetrable nature of the old centre. Remediation had been too costly, or simply too dangerous. Finally these issues were overcome thanks to the major development of the Bình Tây market, which was inaugurated in 1929. Built on the site of the former Lanessan shipyard, the new market relieved the burden on the old Central Market by directing commercial activities to Cholon's outskirts. For the first time in its history, Cholon had a second commercial centre.

As the outskirts were being expanded, the old centre remained crucial to most economic activities. Quai de Mytho was still the most popular address for large firms. The 79 large firms

³⁷¹ Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session 1* (Saigon: Imprimerie de la Dépêche, 1931), 38.

located there dealt in a variety of goods and services, of which the top three were dried fish, fabric, rice milling and their complementary services such as packing, commercial agencies, merchants, and insurance. Another old favourite commercial location was around the Central Market. Big firms operated there as retailers, commercial agencies, and fabric sellers. Conversely, only a handful of large firms were established among the smaller firms within the new Bình Tây Market area, because the market's opening occurred on the eve of an economic downturn.

The newly built inner boulevards and streets that replaced the inner waterways also hosted a range of big firms. In addition to a minority of more traditional commercial merchants, the large firms located there invariably offered services that were relatively new in Cholon: printing houses, pharmacies, doctor's clinics, and cinemas. Therefore, the rise of land transport and the reclamation of urban canals paved the way for a new economy of professional services. Few metalsmiths and carpentries remained to refit broken sampans. In their place were repair shops selling motor vehicle parts and cycle accessories. Also, this trend transformed the commercial storefronts of the old streets. There were now privately owned maternity wards, dental clinics, pharmacies, mechanics, bicycle repair shops, laundries, and commercial services. Hence, Cholon was becoming not only an industrial area, but also a service centre that responded to the needs of an emerging middle class that was not very large but certainly energetic.

Territorial expansion presented a patchy picture of urbanisation. New streets might have drained the marshes and reclaimed dry land for construction, but the new urban space was not developed evenly. Uneven urbanisation could be seen in the state of the streets and housing conditions. Most inner urban dwellings were street-facing tenements that were two-storied, terraced, narrow and deep. Rooms and floors were divided into rental units. The first floor was often the store front, and some had storage space at the back. People lived on higher floors. A brick rental unit with an area ten metres long and four metres wide, equivalent to an urban house's living room, could be

rented for at least 100 francs per month.³⁷² The rent was often exorbitant, so that three or four households of professional workers could only afford to share one unit.³⁷³

Better-off households were able to afford houses with more space. A well-off urban house had a front yard and a gate, buffering it from the street. They owned enough land to leave an open area in between the kitchen and the main house. Also, they had earthenware jars to store grain, a rice pestle, and barrels of drinking water (Plate 6.1).

Poorer residents, unable to afford the increasingly exorbitant rent or land prices, lived on the outskirts.³⁷⁴ Their dwellings were located in the vicinity of factories and along extended boulevards. Leading off from Boulevard Galliéni, for example, were several unpaved winding alleys that used to be village dirt paths. Here, roads, electricity, water supply, and sewerage were all lacking, even though the Municipality was expediting their extension. Without extensive drainage, it took only a heavy bout of rain during the wet season to flood these areas. The resultant muddy surfaces were a breeding ground for infectious diseases. Noise was another problem. As the sirens of industrial establishments could be prolonged and ear-splitting, the Municipality restricted their operation from 1930 to less than fifteen seconds at a time.³⁷⁵

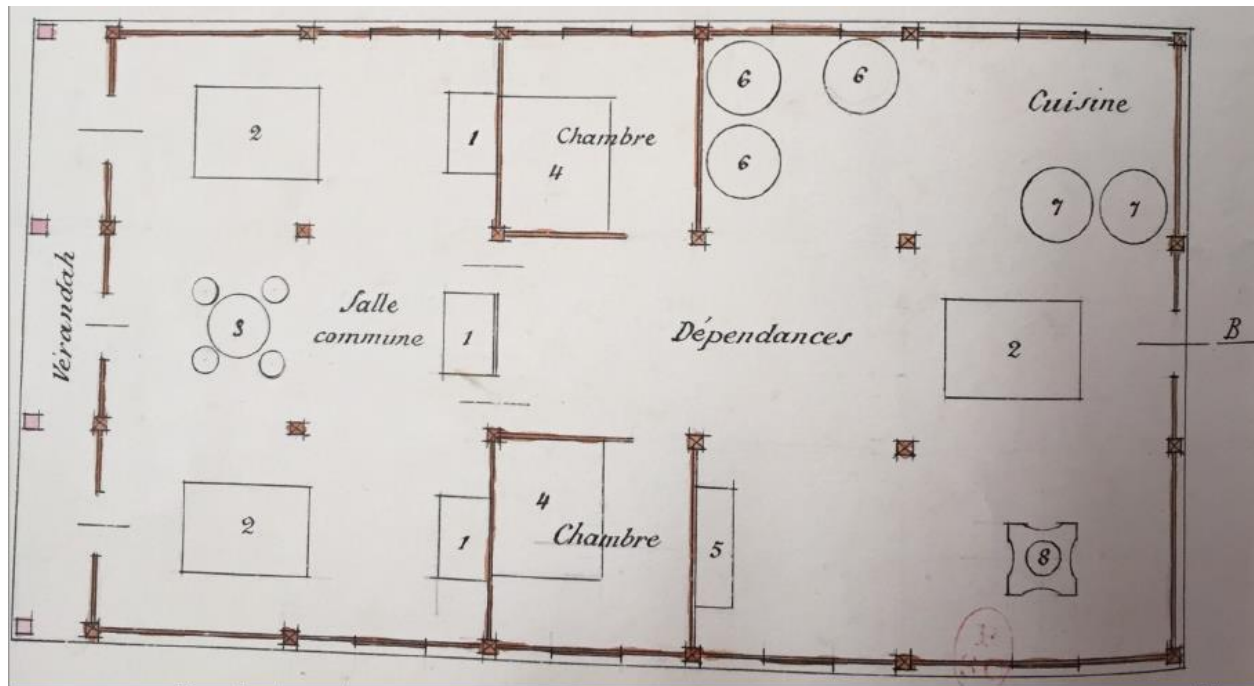
³⁷² Prices of 1938. These reports were sent to the Gouverneur Général, so likely the original prices in piastres had been converted into francs. It might have been more costly in 1930. Nguyễn Văn Nghè, instituteur de 1^e classe à Cholon ville, 'Habitation Urbaines Ville de Cholon', Réponses aux Enquêtes N° 2 sur l'Habitat des Indigènes, 20 September 1938, FR ANOM 130COL88/FM/GUERNUT//88.

³⁷³ Teachers were poorly paid in comparison to the exorbitant rent. Commission municipale de Cholon, 'Les Instituteurs de la Ville', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'Un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Foncières de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 19-22 June 1922, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 8830.

³⁷⁴ Commission municipale de Cholon, 'Les Instituteurs de la Ville', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'Un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Foncières de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 19-22 June 1922, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 8830.

³⁷⁵ Bulletin Administratif de la Cochinchine, 3 April 1930, 898.

Plate 6.1 Sketch of the interior of a well-off urban house



Legend:

- 1 – Altar
- 2 - Flatbed
- 3 - Guéridon or small table
- 4 - Bed
- 5 - Commode
- 6 - white rice jar
- 7 - drinking water jar
- 8 - rice pestle

Source: Nguyễn Văn Nghè, instituteur de 1^e classe à Cholon ville, 'Habitation Urbaines Ville de Cholon', Réponses aux Enquêtes N° 2 sur l'Habitat des Indigènes, 20 September 1938, FR ANOM 130COL88/FM/GUERNUT//88.

Clusters of small, low thatched huts were pressed against each other along these paths.³⁷⁶ Their major difference from urban houses was not only the smaller space; they also had less in-house supplies of grain and drinking water. Moreover, while inner urban houses were built of brick, the thatched huts were more often built of wooden pillars, with water-palm leaves covering the walls and

³⁷⁶ Nguyễn Văn Nghè, instituteur de 1^e classe à Cholon ville, 'Habitation Urbaines Ville de Cholon', Réponses aux Enquêtes N° 2 sur l'Habitat des Indigènes, 20 September 1938, FR ANOM 130COL88/FM/GUERNUT//88.

roofs.³⁷⁷ Such flimsy materials increased the risk of fire, particularly when they were close to the flammable operations of the factories. Frequent incidences of factory explosions occurred; the ensuing fire went on for hours, devouring neighbouring rows of thatched huts and warehouses.³⁷⁸

The Municipality may have touted extensive urban projects, but the majority of the population still lived in semi-rural slum housing. Thatched huts remained the most common type of dwelling. Brick-built urban houses, most equipped to resist fire accidents, were rarely available beyond the immediate town centre. Responding to this need to spread urban facilities to the outskirts resulted once again in Cholon's non-state actors stepping in to collaborate with the Municipality in resolving such issues.

Collaboration

In 1930, Cholon's critical urban expansion in the outer suburbs was driven by cooperation between private demand and municipal accommodation. Bình Tây Market and housing construction provided two examples of this successful collaborative process.

In 1930 Cholon's merchants had been enjoying the use of the new Bình Tây market for over a year. This market had been a seven-year long project. As early as 1923, the Municipal Commission had raised the issue of renovating the Central Market. Even then, this market had been over-crowded, its building battered by decades of use, and its sellers and stalls spilling onto the streets and obstructing traffic. Any renovation and expansion of the Central Market would have entailed filling

³⁷⁷ Nguyễn Văn Nghê, instituteur de 1^e classe à Cholon ville, 'Habitation Urbaines Ville de Cholon', Réponses aux Enquêtes N° 2 sur l'Habitat des Indigènes, 20 September 1938, FR ANOM 130COL88/FM/GUERNUT//88.

³⁷⁸ For example: A fire that burnt down more than 200 huts along Boulevard Galliéni. A. V. M., 'Chronique de Saigon', *L'Écho Annamite*, 5 March 1929, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. A major fire broke out at Yee Cheong rice mill, Nguyen Phan Long, 'Incendie d'Une Rizerie', *L'Écho Annamite*, 27 November 1920, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Fire broke out from a hut on Rue du 7^e quartier in Bình Tây. 'Bình Tây: Encore Un Incendie', *L'Écho Annamite*, 3 December 1924, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

up the nearby *Canal du Commerce*, and acquiring the jam-packed area between the canal and Rue Lareynière (see Fig. 6.1). The cost and the disruption of such a scheme would have been prohibitive.

When the rich merchant Quách Đàm, featured in Chapter 5, had been informed of this project, he wanted to participate. Initially, he offered to give his existing land rights over the Lanessan Basin and a lump sum of 200,000 piastres to provide the necessary cash for a new market. Rather than renovating the old Central Market, the new market would be built on an old shipyard that was away from the city centre.

The Municipal Commission struck a deal with Quách Đàm. He was requested, in addition to the original donation, to commit to half of the construction cost to the maximum sum of 42,000 piastres. Quách Đàm agreed, but the Department of Roads incorrectly calculated the cost. After modification, Quách Đàm agreed to offer an additional lump sum of 242,000 piastres. This amount came to 30 piastres per square metre. This was the base price that the Municipal Commission proposed to the contractors, which had to compete for the project. In addition, Quách Đàm donated land bordering the north and south sides of the shipyard. The Municipality paid the rest of the costs, covering canal filling, road construction, amenities, and compensation for the proprietors of land on the market's east and west sides. They also went on to develop an adjacent area in the *Quartier de Thap Muoi*. After expropriation and compensation to proprietors, the town enlarged old streets and opened new ones.³⁷⁹ In return for his generosity, Quách Đàm received the right to build apartment buildings around the future market, and a long-lasting recognition of his reputation.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ Gouverneur de la Cochinchine to Gouverneur-Général de l'Indochine, 'Modification à Apporter au Plan Général d'Alignement de la Ville de Cholon. Modification du Plan d'Alignement de la Ville de Cholon 1920-1925', 24 May 1924, ANOM INDO GGI 60.941.

³⁸⁰ Quách Đàm was known to have had sharp acumen and taken great risks in business, for example, how he manipulated the prices and market information of rice. Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa*, 288–89.

Another case of cooperative urban development between the Municipality and private initiative had originated eight years before 1930, when Xavier de Condappa wanted to develop a new housing area. This area was delineated by the Water Tower on the east, the *Canal de Ceinture* on the west, and the city's northern limit. The land used to be barren and marshy. The 30 hectares were owned by a group of Chettys from Pondicherry. As their representative, Xavier de Condappa requested the Municipality to provide the necessary public works to drain the swamp, build sewers (not toilets), open streets, and extend electricity lines to this area. For his part, Xavier de Condappa would build residential apartments. After completion, a street in this new area was named after him.³⁸¹

As these examples show, Cholon outskirts continued to be developed by a host of productive cooperation arrangements between the Municipality and private groups. Projects were raised by either side, such as a new central market by the Municipality, or a new housing area by Xavier de Condappa. Once financing discussions had concluded, the Municipality took charge of public works and road construction, which included swamp drainage, sewerage, and lighting extension, and the addition of police and fire stations. Retaining ownership of the land, private proprietors then made good on their proposals by building rental tenements. These cooperative development projects gradually helped spread the population and businesses from the inner streets outwards to the vicinity of the peripheral mills, hospitals, and schools. From the Cochinchinese Government's view, Boulevard Galliéni was a major colonial driver that carried Cholon's urbanised area towards Saigon. However, from Cholon's perspective, this urban growth was necessitated by demands from different groups of proprietors, businesses, and residents, who wanted to profit from their access to land.

³⁸¹ Xavier de Condappa was a law clerk (*clerc d'avocat*) in Saigon. Commission municipal de Cholon, 'Création d'Un Nouveau Quartier d'Habitations. Procès-Verbal de la Commission Municipal de Cholon. Session Ordinaire Session Ordinaire du Deuxième Trimestre. Deuxième Séance', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'Un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Foncières de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 19-22 June 1922, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 8830. Rue Xavier Condappa can be found on the map of Saigon-Cholon circa 1945-1949. *Plan de Saigon-Cholon* (Saigon: Editions J. Aspar, 1949 1945), nla.obj-233303069, National Library Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233303069/view>.

Despite this ongoing activity the future of Cholon's Municipality's continuing existence was cast in doubt by administrative reforms instituted by a higher authority.

Administrative reforms

The year 1930 witnessed ongoing administrative reforms that sought to downplay Cholon's independent municipal authority and reduce the influence of trans-locals. These reforms reflected the Saigon-based Colonial Council's determination to exert more power over Cholon's local affairs. By 1930 this process was well advanced, but its final consummation was stalled by a legal technicality.

Amalgamation

Discussions about merging Saigon and Cholon into a single municipality had occurred intermittently for over a decade. By 1930, however, the merger had still not been consummated.

The amalgamation was initiated by the architect and urban planner Ernest Hébrard, with the support of Governor-General Maurice Long. In 1922, Long created the Urbanism Department. This official government organisation enabled Hébrard to design several public monuments, such as *Lycée Pétrus Ký*, Collège de Saigon, the Institute Pasteur and the Ministry of Finance building in Hà Nội.³⁸² Also, Hébrard planned the redevelopment of other urban areas, notably Hà Nội, Hải Phòng, and Đà Lạt.³⁸³ Drawing upon this accumulated experience, Hébrard envisioned the combined Saigon-Cholon metropolitan region as follows.³⁸⁴

Production and consumerism would be geared even more primarily to European markets. Industry, long a mainstay of Cholon, now attained unprecedented proportions with Hébrard's enlarged industrial area. Commercial vitality, associated

³⁸² The year the Urbanism Department was founded was not 1923, as recorded by Wright, but 1922. Although Hébrard arrived in 1921, Maurice Long's term as Governor-General ended in 1922. Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991), 209.

³⁸³ Wright, *Politics of Design*, 208–31.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 217.

with Saigon since the early days of French occupation, was now dominated by larger enterprises grouped in a concentrated business district.

The details of Hébrard's vision suggested that he had only Saigon in mind. He simplified the functions for both towns, by assigning Saigon a commercial role and Cholon a purely industrial one. Cholon's well-known commercial vitality, which was being expanded by the new Bình Tây market project, went unnoticed. Hébrard saw Cholon as "the indigenous commercial city, inhabited by the Chinese",³⁸⁵ to which he paid little attention.³⁸⁶ While projecting Cholon's industrial area to the south of Bình Đông,³⁸⁷ Hébrard also planned for future factories to be located in Khánh Hội, the new industrial district south of Saigon.³⁸⁸ Perennial problems such as housing shortages for Cholon's struggling urban working class went unaddressed. Indeed, Hébrard's only suggestion was to build more parks, "a reform popular among urban designers in Europe and the United State."³⁸⁹

A raft of reasons for advancing the proposed merger had been raised to justify Hébrard's vision. The merger was seen as the next inevitable step in urbanisation. The villages between the two towns had been absorbed progressively into both urban territories, which now bordered each other. The Boulevard and Galliéni tramway projects were seen as having 'urbanised' this intervening area, despite it still being pock-marked by ghettos of thatched huts.³⁹⁰

Rapid urban growth and the construction of large-scale infrastructure to accommodate the expanded population led to the second reason for fast-tracking the merger: governance. Accelerated urban growth had generated huge needs that the two municipalities were unable to satisfy separately.

³⁸⁵ Hébrard, "'Urbanisme En Indochine."

³⁸⁶ Wright, *Politics of Design*, 209.

³⁸⁷ Figure 141, plan for a unified Saigon-Cholon, by Ernest Hébrard, 1925, from *Architecture 1928*. Cited in Wright, *Politics of Design*, 219.

³⁸⁸ Hébrard, "'Urbanisme En Indochine."

³⁸⁹ Wright, *Politics of Design*, 217.

³⁹⁰ Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa*, 95–96.

Thus, the merger was seen as a means of facilitating an accumulation of resources to better develop mutual projects:³⁹¹

The agglomeration Saigon-Cholon will have four hundred thousand inhabitants, a budget of three to four million piastres, and superior to that of certain French colonies, two hundred kilometres of streets, major works of urban planning that will require careful study by municipal governors. To name only one [work], the supply of drinking water will entail expenditures of as much as 14 million piastres.³⁹²

Clearly, given the annual budget, the supply of water was a longer-term project.

By 1930, a third pertinent reason had surfaced for the merger but, paradoxically, also represented a stumbling block against its consummation. This reason concerned Saigon, which had suffered a series of unprofessional mayors drawn from among leading industrialists and professionals. Unlike their Cholon counterparts, they could only devote limited time to their mayoral duties. They regarded this civic duty as a sideline, a minor addition to the professional obligations to their respective enterprises. Indeed, as far back as 1908, no Saigon mayor had served a full term. Essentially, these Saigon mayors were *rentiers*, people with independent means or private income. They performed their mayoral duties, but their income did not entirely depend upon the government. Nevertheless, they had full access to the municipal budget, and relied on the municipal public servants to run the city. In consequence, the mayor's authority was practically overridden by staff working full time on various municipal functions, whose work went unsupervised.³⁹³

³⁹¹ Sources on this item are taken from the folder 'Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon', 1923, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

³⁹² Gouverneur-General de l'Indochine à Ministre des Colonies, 'Réforme de l'Organisation Administrative des Villes de Saigon et de Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon, undated, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

³⁹³ Gouverneur-General de l'Indochine to Ministre des Colonies, 'Question de la Fusion Saigon-Cholon', undated, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

The series of unreliable mayors and unchecked subordinates resulted in a succession of stagnant administrations in Saigon. Consequently, despite being a principal city, its public works received little attention. Saigon's municipal governments "preferred to invest in visible pleasures rather than unseen services" such as the defective water supply.³⁹⁴ Gwendolyn Wright argues that prioritising "grandiose and vain acts of assertiveness" in Saigon's urban construction was the consequence of a larger perennial problem, which was unstable and weak political authority in Indochina.³⁹⁵

Cholon, however, did not have such a serious problem of mismanagement. One plausible reason was that its mayors were career administrators. While water supply had become an urgent issue in Saigon, Cholon had been sustained by its underground water source. This supply was sufficient to fill several wells in town and allow the Water and Electricity Company to maintain a water tower in Cholon's northern outskirts (Fig. 6.1). Unlike Saigon,³⁹⁶ the Municipality maintained the system of paved roads, pavements, sewerage, and lighting, especially for the inner centre.³⁹⁷ By the end of 1930 when an economic downturn was evident, Cholon still managed to turn a positive

³⁹⁴ Wright, *Politics of Design*, 183.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 166.

³⁹⁶ As late as 1909, Saigon's streets were largely unpaved, only a few spacious, former canals, had asphalt paving. *Ibid*, 186.

³⁹⁷ Inferred from sources such as : Bernard Rossigneux, 'Rapport sur la Situation Financiere de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880', Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939 (Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896), TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648. Commission municipale de Cholon, 'Création d'Un Nouveau Quartier d'Habitations. Procès-Verbal de la Commission Municipal de Cholon. Session Ordinaire Session Ordinaire du Deuxième Trimestre. Deuxième Séance', Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'Un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Révision des Impôts Foncières de la Ville de Cholon (1871-1923), 19-22 June 1922, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 8830.

balance in its accounts. As this surplus was more than enough to compensate for Saigon's losses, its Municipal Authority needed the merger more than Cholon.³⁹⁸

Hopefully, the merger would resolve Saigon's problems. A single municipality would have a unified direction, a larger budget, and combined resources. Under this new arrangement the Government of Cochinchina would directly appoint the new single municipality's new mayor from its senior administrative ranks. The appointed, not elected, mayor would share the attributes of Paris's *Prefet de la Seine* and the *Prefet de Police*. In other words, the new mayor would answer to the Colonial Government, rather than to the combined municipal electorate. If all proceeded according to plan, the new centralised administration would finally put an end to Saigon's years of mismanagement.

Administrative reform aside, the merger provided an opportunity to form a new, unified Municipal Council with a fresh set of priorities. The Government of Cochinchina claimed that the proposed Municipal Council would be composed in such a way that the interests of both cities would be represented and defended. Chairing this Council would involve the employment of a top-rank, full-time, career administrator, whose training and experience equipped him to respond to the needs of a large modern urban centre. To safeguard Cholon's interests, nine out of twenty council seats would be reserved for its representatives. Among these, two notable French citizens would be appointed by the Governor from a list incorporating the leaders of Cholon's industry and commerce. The two French citizens must not already be members of the Chamber of Commerce. Given that the majority of Cholon's leaders were non-French, this list would be limited to either the handful of naturalised Vietnamese proprietors or French owners of distilleries and public works. In addition, there would be a further two councilors chosen from a list of five names supplied by the Chinese *congrégations*. However, the two nominated Chinese councilors would have only consultative roles.

³⁹⁸ 'Requête Contre Région Saigon-Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon, 1933 - 1934, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

Moreover, the new Municipal Council was intended to strengthen Vietnamese representation. An equal number of seats would be allocated to Vietnamese and French councilors, elected by their respective electorates. This would provide four more seats for the Vietnamese than they had in the existing Saigon Municipal Council. Lastly, two seats would be chosen from the members of the Chamber of Commerce, which leaned heavily towards supporting Saigon's Franco-Vietnamese interests. A command of the French language would be compulsory for all new municipal councilors, similar to the rule for members of the Colonial Council.³⁹⁹

In this way, the new single Municipal Council would remove Cholon's Chinese merchants from the decision-making process. The citizenship requirement barred most of them from consideration, because virtually no Chinese individual had been naturalised during the preceding decade.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, Chinese representation would effectively be reduced to the two consultative positions suggested by the *congrégations*. For these two seats, the French language requirement would further tighten participation from Cholon.⁴⁰¹ Only a minority of the Chinese had been educated in the Colony; these were possibly alumni of the *Lycée Franco-Chinois*.⁴⁰² Even then, they would have no impact on decision-making. Therefore, the proposed unified Municipal Council appeared to be merely expanding the composition of the existing Saigon Municipal Council, by adding four more Vietnamese seats to replace meaningful Chinese participation.

³⁹⁹ Although the draft decree was itself undated, it was mentioned in the context of 1923 when the amalgamation was proposed. 'Projet de Décret', Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon, undated, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

⁴⁰⁰ To my knowledge, the only exception was Quách Đạm, who passed away in 1928.

⁴⁰¹ The French language requirement had been used in France to tighten political participation. "One can hardly imagine a more effective formula for immediately devaluing local knowledge and privileging all those who had mastered the official linguistic code." Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 72.

⁴⁰² The Lycée Franco-Chinois, founded in 1908, remained the only publicly funded school for Chinese students in Indochina. The school had a small student body of less than 200 students, most of whom were full boarders. Most graduates worked in commerce as interpreters. Commandant Robert, 'L'enseignement Franco-Chinois', in *La Revue Du Pacifique*, ed. Léon Archimbaud, 1923, 185–94.

The Cochinchinese Government expected the new mayor to be “an impartial arbitrator” given that the merged city’s representatives would include an amalgam of French, Vietnamese, and foreign Asian needs and influences. Many ethnic groups had been unhappy with the proposal. Indeed, Councilor Nguyễn Minh Huy voiced the disapproval among the Vietnamese, who worried that a major part of the shared budget would actually be either absorbed by Saigon, or, at least, would reduce Cholon’s original budget. The Governor of Cochin China also admitted the foreseeable usurpation of Cholon’s autonomy:⁴⁰³

The two neighbouring cities may have common interests, but they are very dissimilar.

[.....] It had hitherto seemed difficult to unite this rich agglomeration, the commercial and industrial metropolis of Cochin-China [Cholon] with its neighbour [Saigon], with which it would have been closely dependent.

Being administered by a Mayor and a Municipal Council elected mostly by French citizens, Saigon interests were almost alone represented [in the new municipality] since Cholon is populated by foreigners.

Such an arrangement ignored both Vietnamese and Minh Hương inhabitants.

As envisioned in 1923, the merger was to effect a rapid re-organisation of the two towns into one single municipality.⁴⁰⁴ However, by 1930, the merger had not occurred. Instead, a Saigon-Cholon Region was created. A *Resident Supérieur*, Eugène Henri Eutrope, was put in charge of the new Region. Two municipalities remained separate but subordinate to the new authority. Municipal responsibilities remained divided between their respective mayoral offices, while Eutrope took charge of the most important mutual projects. Most importantly, Eutrope was tasked with drawing up

⁴⁰³ Gouverneur de la Cochinchine to Gouverneur-General de l’Indochine, 14 March 1923, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

⁴⁰⁴ ‘Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon’, 1923, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

a development plan for the combined Region. An integral element of this plan was to determine the actual urban boundary, which included the prospect of annexing three more villages to Cholon's north.⁴⁰⁵ This prospect reflected that urban reorganisation often involved annexing more rural territory.

As noted, a legal technicality prevented the merger being approved. Legislation, passed in the 1880s, dictated that Saigon's municipal leadership had to be elected by its own Municipal Council, which effectively prevented any appointment from higher levels.⁴⁰⁶ The Governor-General of Indochina had written to the Minister for Colonies to ask for a reform of this legislation, but to no avail. With such legislation in place, it was deemed illegal for the Cochinchinese government to appoint a non-elected mayor. Hence, the constitution of the new Saigon-Cholon Region, combining two municipal authorities, could not be completed.

Further, councilors from both cities were unhappy with the oversight of the *Resident Supérieur*, criticising his appointment as unconstitutional.⁴⁰⁷ As the Colonial Councillor Lachevrotière summarised:⁴⁰⁸

The two cities have been kept separate; the territories of the two Saigon-Cholon wings will exist. There will be two different municipalities under the direction of a Resident Superior. Well, I do not think that was what was asked at the beginning. We asked for

⁴⁰⁵ Those villages were Chi Hoa, Phu My and Phu Nhuan. 'Requête Contre Région Saigon-Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon, 1933 - 1934, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Requête Contre Région Saigon-Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon, 1933 - 1934, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter by Doctor Biaille-Languibaudoère, former doctor at Cholon Municipal Hospital, with 21 other signatures. 'Requête Contre Région Saigon-Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Fusion des Villes de Saigon, Cholon et Création de la Région Saigon-Cholon, 1933 - 1934, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 3414.

⁴⁰⁸ Conseil colonial de la Cochinchine, 'Fixation des Limites de la Région Saigon-Cholon', in *Procès-Verbaux du Conseil Colonial*, 2 vols (Saigon: Imprimerie de la Dépêche, 1931), 412–13.

the merger of Saigon-Cholon into one city with one municipality [...] this merger does not answer the needs of the two cities; neither does it answer the requests of the population.

Eutrope's assumption of this position was not welcomed by his fellow citizens. This was in spite of his career as an administrator in Cochinchina since 1907, rising up the ranks to being recognised as a first-class bureaucrat.⁴⁰⁹ He was also the acting Governor of Cochinchina in 1929 and 1931–1932 when the incumbent Krautheimer was on leave.⁴¹⁰ Thus, he accepted the position of *Resident Supérieur* of the Saigon-Cholon Region after he had assumed the Colony's top position. However, the position of *Resident Supérieur* was new to Cochinchina but had been used in the other protectorates, notably Tonkin, Annam, Laos, and Cambodia. As a directly ruled colony, the Cochinchina Government was responsible for its own governance, assisted by *Conseil Colonial* and *Conseil Privé*. This was possibly why the colonial councillors disliked having a *Resident Supérieur* foisted upon them. They disliked him, on principle, because they believed that, unlike the rest of Indochina, Cochinchinese affairs, and especially Saigon, should be governed by elected councils of Frenchmen, not by colonial administrators, who answered directly to the Governor-General. As the bastion of French interests, Saigon governance was considered to be distinct from the rest of Indochina.⁴¹¹

Local elections

Even though the merger had not proceeded as planned, local elections offered another way through which the Colonial Government was able to strengthen Vietnamese representation. Four

⁴⁰⁹ For example, Eutrope was listed as intern administrator (*administrateur stagiaire*) in 1907. 'Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française', vol. 7, 1907, 572.

⁴¹⁰ Commission française du Guide des Sources de l'Histoire des Nations, Archives. Volume 2 of International Council on Archives: Guides to the Sources for the History of the Nations. 3rd Series (Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 540.

⁴¹¹ Corresponded with Wright's assertion that "commercial interests based in Saigon [such as Banque de l'Indochine] resisted all efforts on the part of the central political authority to direct policy, especially in Cochinchina, where they managed to control affairs virtually on their own terms for almost thirty years." Wright, *Politics of Design*, 164.

elected Vietnamese representatives sat on Cholon Municipal Council, giving them a voting majority.⁴¹²

The elections did not mean universal suffrage. Electors were all male and selected on the basis of satisfying specific conditions: they must be at least 21 years old and registered as Vietnamese on Cholon's various tax rolls, for which they must pay at least 15 piastres per year. This list included property and business owners, but they usually formed a small minority.⁴¹³ On the other hand, the majority of electors comprised employees of the administration with a monthly salary of at least 25 piastres.⁴¹⁴ Hence, the selection criteria limited the municipal vote to those who were already engaged with the government. Omitted were the vast majority of the population, who drove Cholon's well-known vitality.

In addition to municipal councillors, district chiefs were also elected. The criteria for a candidate required that he should be a male voter of at least 30 years of age and have been a resident of Cholon for at least ten years. Nevertheless, a loophole in the criteria allowed a person living in one district to run for the chief's position in another district. Once elected, his service was ranked according to three classes, with a monthly salary ranging from 234 to 388 piastres.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² They were: Nguyễn Văn Liêng, Lữ Thái Bình, Trương Văn Công, (Lê Văn Lưu), Nguyễn Văn Nhiều. 'Élection des Chefs des Dix Premiers Quartiers', Dossier Relatif à la Réorganisation du Statut, Élection, Démission, Prorogation des Mandats des Chefs de Quartiers de Saigon, Cholon, 26 February 1929, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4653.

⁴¹³ Administration de Saigon-Cholon, 'Unification de Statut des Chefs de Quartiers', Dossier Relatif à la Réorganisation du Statut, Élection, Démission, Prorogation des Mandats des Chefs de Quartiers de Saigon, Cholon, 25 February 1935, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4653.

⁴¹⁴ 'Projet d'Arrêté Convoquant Les Collèges Électoraux Indigènes de la Ville de Cholon pour 15 Juillet 1928, à l'Effet d'Élire Les Quatre Membres Annamites de la Commission Municipale', Dossier Relatif aux Élections des Membres Indigènes de la Commission Municipale de Cho Lon (1928-1929), 1928, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4641.

⁴¹⁵ Chef du 1^e bureau, 'Réorganisation du Statut des Chefs de Quartier de la Région de Saigon-Cholon', Dossier Relatif à la Réorganisation du Statut, Élection, Démission, Prorogation des Mandats des Chefs de Quartiers de Saigon, Cholon, May 1935, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4653.

Such limited participation meant that municipal elections failed to connect with the Chinese and Vietnamese majority. During their six-year term, Cholon's elected district chiefs were similar to Saigon's ineffective mayors, as they were out-of-touch with municipal duties, especially when they became over-concerned with re-election. Continuing professional staff in municipal services gradually appropriated the authority of inexperienced representatives. Thus, enforcement of municipal authority was over-dependent on intervention by the police, which proved to be an ineffective form of governance.

The myriad of administrative reforms that strengthened Vietnamese representation ran counter to the nature of Cholon's society. They sought to inspire the Vietnamese to shift their attachment to the priorities of the colonial state and away from the trans-local Chinese networks. The reforms also alienated the ethnic Chinese from taking part in Cholon's local affairs. Hence, the reforms using French Republican rhetoric, planning ideals, and practices sought to supplant a fundamental characteristic of Cholon—inter-mixing between locals and trans-local.

Community leadership in the face of reforms

How did the communities in Cholon respond to the myriad of administrative reforms that were hostile to its way-of-life? The administrative separation of the Vietnamese and Chinese by these proposed reforms found resistance at the local level, albeit in more subtle forms. Lê Văn Lưu's monograph, published in 1931, could be seen as a being tantamount to opposition to these reforms by a seasoned bureaucrat and a long-term local resident, veiled in a nostalgic account of temples and religious life in Cholon.

Born in 1870, Luru had worked as a teacher of French language at the Cholon Municipal School since 1888.⁴¹⁶ Also, he had served as an elected municipal councillor and deputy mayor of the Municipal Commission in the 1920s.⁴¹⁷ As a member of the administrative class and a proclaimed supporter of colonial modernity, Lê Văn Luru's book was significant, because it commended a past way-of-life that was threatened by the very administration he had served. His ambiguity could be taken as illustrative of the position of the Vietnamese long-term residents in Cholon, who recognised and even enjoyed the town's heritage and particularities, while also feeling obliged to accept the inevitable changes imposed through colonisation.

Lê Văn Luru's book was an informative account that aimed to educate his students. It was written and published at the Municipality's request.⁴¹⁸ Including several photographs of both temples and people, the book reflected the author's personal relations with the Vietnamese Buddhist clergy. Holding steadfast to the perspective of a teacher and a councillor, Lê Văn Luru reported how the temples' roles and religious practice had waned over time, as more local people in Cholon adopted the modern Republican values instilled through a colonial education. He lamented the weakening devotion to religious adherence even among the monks themselves. In addition, he emphasised the importance of pragmatic resource management in sustaining the existence of temples in Cholon's cut-throat environment, where big money was often earned in the hunt for more real estate

⁴¹⁶ He entered the municipal administration in 1888. *Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1903, 461. He first appeared in the municipal record in 1890 as a teacher at the School for Boys. *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française 1re partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge* (Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1890), 115.

⁴¹⁷ Based on two sources : 'Projet d'Arrêté Convoquant Les Collèges Électoraux Indigènes de la Ville de Cholon pour 15 Juillet 1928, à l'Effet d'Élire Les Quatre Membres Annamites de la Commission Municipal', Dossier Relatif aux Élections des Membres Indigènes de la Commission Municipale de Cho Lon (1928-1929), 1928, TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4641. Lê Văn Luru, *Pagodes*, front page.

⁴¹⁸ Imprimerie Tonkinoise was established by the famous Vietnamese shipowner Bạch Thái Bưởi. In 1911, Lê Văn Phúc, his brother-in-law, took over the printing house. In the 1920s, Lê Văn Phúc used to serve as a municipal councillor of Hanoi. 'Dans la Légion d'Honneur au Tonkin', *L'Éveil Économique de l'Indochine*, 6 May 1933, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Nguyen Phan Long, 'Politique d'Association sur le Terrain Économique', *L'Écho Annamite*, 15 June 1920, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

properties. He contrasted the Chinese *congrégations* who, with savviness, preserved the vibrancy of temple life by securing land ownership and renovation, against the inefficiency of many of their Vietnamese counterparts in this arena, who lacked members with the necessary skills to buy and retain land. Overall, he demonstrated a keen observation of the material and social aspect of religious practice, providing elaborate details on major rites and personal profiles of the head monks. His account was a nostalgic reminder of the past during which religion played a larger role in Cholon's urban life. Thus, the book struck a balance between pragmatic concerns, by regarding temples as real estate properties, and spiritual concerns, by seeing religion as an honourable cultural tradition.

Lê Văn Lư's account can be maintained as a representative of a Cholon-centric perspective. He acknowledged the *Minh Hương* heritage, and the commercial trade and craft villages of times past, now only existing in the naming of modern urban areas. He also held the belief that the Chinese were predisposed to be more successful. In the first few pages, he wrote "the sons of Han [.....] were and are still very much better prepared than the natives to fight for life."⁴¹⁹ This view resonated with that of the early Minh Tân reformists in the 1900s, when they had criticised their own people, the Vietnamese, for being ill-equipped and unwilling to step up their game against Chinese activities.⁴²⁰ This led to Bùi Quang Chiêu and other constitutionalists' condemning Chinese economic influence.⁴²¹

While Lê Văn Lư did not express his view on the Franco-Vietnamese reform effort, his assessment, as a colonially educated bourgeois, still favoured the retention of a preponderant Chinese influence in Cholon that accorded with its Minh Hương history. He wrote:

⁴¹⁹ Lê Văn Lư, *Pagodes*, 8.

⁴²⁰ Pairaudeau, "Vietnamese Engagement with Tamil Migrants," 22–24.

⁴²¹ David G. Marr and Brissenden collection, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

A considerable number of our Cochinchina compatriots, who can be counted to a good third of the total population, have distant or recent Chinese ancestors who were first political refugees and then immigrants. The patronymic names like below and many others that some of our compatriots bear denote their distant or recent Chinese ancestry: Âu , Bành, Ca , Chung, Cỗ, Cù, Diệp, Giang, Hoa, Hồng, Khẩu, Khương, Khứu, La, Mã, Nhan, Ôn, Ông, Quách, Tân, Tăng, Thái.... Almost all of these foreign guests, whose qualities of endurance, sobriety, and economy are known, were able-bodied men in the adopted country.

Hence, Lur's account indicated that, despite the alternative viewpoint held by the higher levels of government, Cholon's leaning towards the Minh Hương legacy of being open to Chinese influence was still very much alive in 1930.

Lur's observation of Chinese temples were those of an outsider. He noted that the hosting of theatre performances or festivities in temple courtyards were no longer celebrated. Instead, the courtyards had been transformed into practice spaces for gymnastics and other sports. They also served as playgrounds for many Chinese school students, who studied in classrooms in the vast outbuildings.

It was true that temples remained relevant to the Chinese communities in Cholon. They continued to serve as administrative headquarters for the Chinese populace in Cholon. But, as a response to alienation, the *congrégations* had also adopted new priorities, by shifting their community resources from renovating temples to funding healthcare and education. In 1930, the Cantonese *congrégation* built a massive school building at 73 *Rue de Cây Mai*, in the vicinity of the four Chinese temples. This school was easily the biggest private school in Cholon, with a student

body of 1020, of which there were 245 boarders.⁴²² Its headmaster was Tchan Puoi Shao, who graduated from *École Supérieure de Pédagogie* in Hà Nội, and worked as a teacher at the *Lycée Franco-Chinois* in the mid-1920s.⁴²³ In addition several Chinese-language private schools were opened in Cholon, filling the previous lack of educational options for Chinese children growing up in the Colony. By offering a Chinese-language education, these schools oriented their students towards contemporary issues in the Chinese world, further cementing the alienation to which they had been subjected in the Colony. This is significantly different to what had occurred several decades earlier.

Lê Văn Lư, however, preferred a unifying maxim. The Temple Bảy Phủ (Plate 6.3)⁴²⁴ received the most applause from him, because it had the ability to unite separate dialect groups under one flag, thus symbolising the Republican era's united Chinese identity. Indeed, Lê Văn Lư tended to favour temples that attracted large followings. They drew most patrons from both the *congrégations* and non-members, and had the necessary funding to hold the most elaborate rites and support the biggest schools. The rest of the Chinese temples, serving separate dialect groups, were, in his assessment, falling into ruin.⁴²⁵ Lê Văn Lư explained this was due to a change in the mindset of the Chinese upper classes:

It is worth noting that the state of mind of today's Chinese upper classes, oriented towards modern civilization, has been profoundly altered, and that [they had maintained] only limited faith in the miraculous power of deified characters.

⁴²² *Bulletin Administratif de la Cochinchine*, 1930, 551-552. Indeed, Lê Văn Lư 1931 noted that the Cantonese congregation school was large, two-storied building next to the temple.

⁴²³ Indeed, the school was even bigger than the public Lycée Franco-Chinois which, in 1923, enrolled a mere 200 students. Commandant Robert, 'L'enseignement Franco-Chinois', in *La Revue Du Pacifique*, ed. Léon Archimbaud, 1923, 185-94.

⁴²⁴ Miếu Bảy Phủ, building now extinct.

⁴²⁵ Although he did mention ongoing fund-raising activities by some smaller temples, by 1930, their stone inscriptions had stopped marking major renovation. Li and Nguyễn, *Bia chữ Hán*.

Plate 6.2 Temple Bảy Phủ



Source: André Salle, Pagode de Bay-Phu, December 1, 1895, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

This transition in the mindset from past religious faith to modernist rationality was a key theme in Lê Văn Lư's view of Chinese temples. While he relished describing the minute details of devotional practices, he also maintained a pragmatic critique of how temples could sustain themselves in Cholon's contemporary environment.⁴²⁶

Having shown admiration and critique of the Chinese temples in the urban centre, Lê Văn Lư presented a sharp insider's insight into Vietnamese Buddhist temples.⁴²⁷ They were located in quiet locations on the outskirts, built among greenery, separated by creeks and far from the hustle and bustle of urban life. They were maintained as sacred places suitable for tranquil contemplation, rather

⁴²⁶ For example, the author criticised the use of wood in constructing and renovating the buildings. He deemed wood to be an inferior, costly, and high-maintenance material. Nevertheless, as donations kept coming, the temples continued to use wood, exhibiting the limited grasp of scientific rationality by those involved.

⁴²⁷ These did not include village temples which also worshipped local deities.

than social gatherings like their Chinese counterparts. Their buildings were more modest. Also, their communities sustained themselves not by rentals, but by tending donated rice fields.

Lê Văn Lư reverred the Buddhist religion but criticised its practitioners. He knew how the *bonzes* were trained. Also, he described Buddhist ceremonies in great detail, with a keen interest for faithful observance. Moreover, along with his admiration for esteemed Superiors and a former rich religious life, the author was critical of the contemporaneous state of Buddhist practice. He thought that there was a general lack of religious leadership. The great majority of the Vietnamese were indifferent to it; they were more enthralled with Western education. Meanwhile, the *bonzes* lived a loose life and approached their religion with disinterest and incapability; only a very few were committed to the faith. The monks were not trained in the theology that is written in the classical texts. As they could not read Han characters, learning the Buddhist *sutras* was beyond them.

Lê Văn Lư was also highly aware of a common problem in Cholon's Vietnamese temples: the mismanagement of resources. This problem stemmed from the utmost reliance of these temples on donations from their followers. Devotees were often laymen, who chose to live-in and adopt a monastic life. Some made substantial donations, usually of rice fields to the temples that sheltered them. Revenue from these fields, together with generous gifts from pious ladies, sustained the material needs of temples.

Problems arose when the donated rice fields, being a form of real estate property, were mismanaged by the temple's directors. A common case was that the donations established the incumbent Superior as the new owner of the rice fields. However, upon his death, being celibate and unmarried, he had no heir, so the fields were alienated from the temple's ownership and appropriated to public landholdings. Such ownership alienation was so prevalent, especially in the annexed

villages, that the Colonial Council issued a circular in June 1930 to restore their possessions and better preserve temple properties.⁴²⁸

By 1930 some of Cholon's temples built by richer devotees had fallen into ruin and were demolished, and the land on which they were built was appropriated. Thus, Lê Văn Lư highlighted the marked differences between the temples that dripped with wealth, and those that were left derelict. At best, a derelict temple could afford only one monk, and its few remaining faithful devotees were unable to sustain such a situation for very long.

In addition, the temples relied solely on donations and had no plan to keep it within their possession. Very few monks could read land deeds (also in Han characters), so they were incapable of holding onto land ownership for their temples. The consequence was that the temples were short-lived; many disappeared as soon as the head monks died, and they lost their sources of donations. The loss of leadership and sustenance was imminent in the near future when the Superiors would pass away. Despite such a bleak prospect, Lê Văn Lư nominated two Vietnamese temples located in the 14th *quartier* that were doing well in 1930: the 127-year-old *Giác Viên tự*, which was mourning the recent death of its Superior, Hoàng Ngãi, and the largest and best known *chùa Hố Đất*.

In addition to these Vietnamese Buddhist monasteries, Lê Văn Lư also followed colonial categorisation by classifying Minh Hương temples, despite their mixed characteristics, as Vietnamese. Minh Hương temples were not strictly Buddhist institutions because they also worshipped, among others, Quan Công, a folk deity often found in Chinese temples. Funded by leasing urban properties, their board of directors, comprising principal donors, took efficient charge of the accounts, worship, and building maintenance. Regardless of their Vietnamese categorisation,

⁴²⁸ Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session 1* (Saigon: Imprimerie de la Dépêche, 1931), 10.

Minh Hương's temples were different from Vietnamese Buddhist monasteries, and more akin to Chinese associations.

Minh Hương temples were not as ostentatious in festivities; but their boards of directors were also well-off merchants, proprietors, and industrialists, who had Minh Hương ancestry or were accepted into their social circles by other ways. The temples did not have colonial administrative function similar to their Chinese counterparts, but, like other Vietnamese temples, served grass-root religious and social needs. Therefore, reflecting the Minh Hương heritage, their temples were a mixture of Chinese and Vietnamese features.

Among the people involved in the Minh Hương temple associations were a number of Cholon's prominent Vietnamese members of the community. In 1930, Minh Hương Gia Thanh, the founding temple of the Minh Hương people, was led by Kha Văn Lân, a doctor of Eastern medicine. Also, the Nghia Nhuan temple had been 'modernised' by Đỗ Hữu Trí, son of Đỗ Hữu Phương and the directors were presided over by the well-known colonial councillor, Trương Văn Bền, a soap and vegetable oil entrepreneur.⁴²⁹ A third Minh Hương temple, the Bửu Sơn, was revived from ruin by a determined association. Among its members was Nguyễn Chiêu Thông, a former municipal councilor and owner of the Tong Wo rice mill by 1930. The board was headed by the proprietor Dương Công Cẩn.⁴³⁰ As late as 1930, therefore, the Minh Hương legacy remained strong in Cholon, exhibiting a strong link between the emerging 'Vietnamese' industrialists, who competed against Chinese enterprises.

As a municipal councillor and a long-term resident, Lê Văn Lưu had personally experienced Cholon's changes. The most significant feature in his book was that, unlike the hostility against the diaspora as found in *Écho Annamite* and council meetings, Lê Văn Lưu provided a relatively

⁴²⁹ Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa*, 208.

⁴³⁰ However, Nguyễn Chiêu Thông was also noted to be the board director of the Phước An temple (Phước An hội quán), built in 1900. Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn Năm Xưa*, 208.

balanced assessment of both Vietnamese and Chinese practices. He demonstrated an insightful and extensive understanding of Buddhism, folk festivities, and property management occurring in Cholon. His view could be seen as the Minh Hương view, that saw Cholon as a town in which an admixture of Vietnamese and Chinese elements was an inherent tradition.

The administrative reforms and changing community values were different reactions to the economic boom of the 1920s. During these years, rapid urbanisation and economic changes placed overwhelming demands on the town.

Rice industry shakeup

By 1930, in addition to increasing Vietnamese representation in governance, several changes in Cholon's economy enabled the rise of large Vietnamese firms and French-owned colonial conglomerates. With a combination of constant learning, reforms, and opportunities, these new players were able to pose a major challenge for the first time to the economic dominance that the trans-local inhabitants had been maintaining since the Western Area's inception. The change happened first in the rice industry. The years leading up to 1930 witnessed two major changes in the rice industry: one, the weakening of the dominance held by Chinese syndicates; and two, increasing competition from smaller mills against big urban mills.

Weakening of Chinese syndicates

Almost half of the urban area's milling operations were now managed by a French firm, *Rizeries d'Extrême Orient*, with its headquarter at 301 Quai des Jonques, and a capital of 25,000,000 piastres.⁴³¹ This firm had emerged during the First War and during the 1920s used a process of financial acquisition to develop a major stake in the ownership of Cholon's rice mills. Initially, the firm had obtained Speidel & Cie, a former German-Chinese firm, thereby gaining two mills, Orient and Union. Then the firm proceeded to take over substantial shareholding in three other Chinese

⁴³¹ Annuaire général de l'Indo-Chine française, 1925, 98.

large mills: Tong Wo, Ban Hong Guan and Nha Cheong Seng.⁴³² Collectively, the firm's four mills contributed a large segment of Indochina's rice production.⁴³³ In turn, Tong Wo mill was taken over by the Vietnamese proprietor Nguyễn Chiêu Thông, who himself owned a new mill Nam Thuận An.⁴³⁴ Tong Wo produced 150 tons per day, held up to 200,000 bags of paddy in storage, and employed 260 coolies.⁴³⁵ Therefore, by 1930, Tong Wo was co-owned by a French and Vietnamese majority.

The emergence of locally born and colonial rice firms contrasted with the demise of one of the biggest diasporic-owned mills, Nam Lung, in 1925. Since the death of its founding manager, Lư Lự, the company had been unable to find a suitable successor. Consequently, "the descendants of the Gongyuan Rice Bank [Nam Long's head company] had instructed the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank to stop all lending to Nanlong", thus ending the Cochinchina's most famous rice mill.⁴³⁶ Therefore, even before the downturn of 1930, the rice industry's Chinese-owned majority was already in decline.

Despite these changes, some older enterprises remained strong and grew in size. A famous office in Cholon was that of *Société Ban Guan* at 230 *Quai de Mytho*. As a commercial agency, Ban Guan managed various operations and subsidiaries, including, for instance, the rice mill Ban Hong Guan and a real estate company. At the top of the enterprise was Tjia Mah Yan, who also owned shares in *Rizeries d'Extrême Orient*. Success in this shareholding allowed him to add other forms of

⁴³² 'Chronique Financière: Rizerie d'Extrême-Orient. Reprinted from Information, January, 12, 1922.', *L'Éveil Économique de l'Indochine*, 5 March 1922, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁴³³ 'Chronique Financière: Rizerie d'Extrême-Orient. Reprinted from Information, January, 12, 1922.', *L'Éveil Économique de l'Indochine*, 5 March 1922, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁴³⁴ Nguyen Ho Ang, 'Inauguration de la Rizerie de M. Nguyễn Chiêu Thông', *L'Écho Annamite*, 13 January 1930, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁴³⁵ Léon Pagès, ed., 'M. Krautheimer a Inauguré La Nouvelle Rizerie', *L'Indochine: Revue Économique d'Extrême-Orient*, 20 March 1930, 88.

⁴³⁶ 李塔娜, '尋找法屬越南南方的華人米商', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 189–201.

wealth, which included several properties across both Cholon and Saigon that demonstrated the extent of the firm's wealth.⁴³⁷

Competition from smaller mills

By 1930 smaller rural mills started to compete against large urban mills. With a total capacity of up to 8,000 tons per day, the big urban rice mills required huge amounts of paddy grain for their continuous operation. Without them, they had to close for at least six months per year. Thus, a constant supply of paddy was essential to their operation. This was a reason why major rice syndicates sought to monopolise the chain of supply, from local production areas to overseas markets.

By 1930, however, the Cholon-centric monopoly was being challenged by small rice firms and rural landlords. On Cholon's outskirts, small firms were setting up and operating smaller mills.⁴³⁸ With a daily output of 1 to 25 tons, they had lower overhead costs than the big mills. They were also installing new equipment running on oil or electricity, which worked more efficiently than the older and larger steam-powered mills. The producers worked on a fee-for-service basis, milling small packages of paddy supplied by villagers, who lived close by the mill. Using mostly fine homogenous batches of paddy, they produced good quality rice for the immediate local markets that was not achievable by the larger mills.

The emergence of small, independent mills was due to the spread of machinery. Possessing and operating costly and cumbersome steam-powered heavy machinery was once exclusive to big firms and government projects, a technological exclusivity that ensured their former dominance. Small

⁴³⁷ Fernand Fays, notaire à Saigon, 'La Revue des Annonces Légales: Cie Immobilière de Saigon-Cholon', *L'Information d'Indochine, Économique et Financière*, 2 May 1936, 2–3.

⁴³⁸ 'Extr. d'un Arr. Autorisant l'Installation d'Une Décortiquerie à Cholon', in *Bulletin Administratif de La Cochinchine*, 1930, 167.

firms were limited by manual labour and shelling by mortar or hand peeling.⁴³⁹ Since then, thanks to the training offered by practical mechanical schools, the increasing use of machines, and the demand for skilled mechanical labour, working with machinery became less and less exclusive to big firms or public works. By 1930, smaller businesses were able to purchase, install, and operate their own machines. This resulted in the proliferation of smaller, competitive mills in Cholon.

By 1930 the exponential growth in Cholon's small urban mills had reached the verge of over-production. Although eleven new mills had been approved over the past two years, many were still not built.⁴⁴⁰ Nevertheless, mills of all sizes still produced more than enough for exports. Due to the excess of supply against demand, the rice sector in Cholon was steadily declining.⁴⁴¹ A host of other types of factories were, therefore, installed to fill the gap by manufacturing soap, processing vegetable oil and producing 'cold food' without refrigeration.⁴⁴²

Such proliferation of small-scale commercial machinery also spread beyond the urban limits. Due to the crowded nature of the urban economy, smaller mills were having more success in the provinces. Good crops of paddy were more readily available there. They sold milled rice to the local population, thus reducing both intermediary and transport costs, and providing affordable rice for the surrounding area. As the number of provincial mills was still small, competition was light, so they were able to operate year-round.⁴⁴³ In 1930, there were some fifty provincial mills in operation.⁴⁴⁴ The significance in the increase in rural milling was that industrial rice milling spread out from an urban base into the rural areas, concurrently weakening the monopoly of large urban mills that had already been under competitive pressure. Nevertheless, the urban and provincial mills continued to

⁴³⁹ Văn Thê Hội, 'Le Commerce et l'Industrie du Riz en Cochinchine', *L'Écho Annamite*, 28 December 1920, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁴⁴⁰ Albert Maybon, *L'Indochine* (Paris: Larose Paris, 1931), 67–68.

⁴⁴¹ 'Bulletin de l'agence Économique de l'Indochine', 1930, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁴⁴² Maybon, *L'Indochine*, 67–68.

⁴⁴³ 'Bulletin de l'agence Économique de l'Indochine', 1930, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 394–95.

⁴⁴⁴ Maybon, *L'Indochine*, 67–68.

work in tandem, each fulfilling different markets: urban mills produced for export and provincial mills for local consumption.⁴⁴⁵

The rice industry was inherently volatile and competitive. By 1930, French and Vietnamese firms worked in tandem to enact serious changes to undermine the past dominance exerted by the Chinese operators. Within the larger context of Cholon, the pattern of other economic activities remained slower to change. This pattern suggests that Cholon continued to be the hub for services and goods, but the urban area's continuing success was threatened by changed economic conditions.

The 1930 downturn

By 1930 the gradual takeover of the rice industry by French and Vietnamese firms was given a fresh impetus by the economic downturn. This downturn helped wipe away most Chinese-owned firms that had operated on speculative pricing, heavy debt, and overseas demand.

The year 1930 saw rice prices turn decidedly for the worse. Rice prices fluctuated from September of the preceding year, and dropped sharply from mid-1930.⁴⁴⁶ Such a price crash was detrimental, even though demand remained static.⁴⁴⁷ Moreover, as Haydon Cherry points out, the collapse hit Cholon harder than Saigon:⁴⁴⁸

Most of the firms that went bankrupt were Chinese: between 1928 and 1931, 64 percent of the bankrupt firms were Chinese; 16 percent were Vietnamese; 10 percent were European; and the remaining 10 percent were Indian firms. The drop in the price of rice and other commodities had ruined the income of many Chinese exporting firms, leaving them unable to pay their debts.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Bulletin de l'agence Économique de l'Indochine', 1930, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 394–95.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Prix - Enseignements Mensuels - Riz', *Bulletin Économique de l'Indochine: Industrie, Commerce, Finance, Statistiques* (Hanoi: Gouverneur Général de l'Indochine, April 1931), Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁴⁴⁷ Cherry, "Down and Out," 55.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 56.

By October 1930, four of Cholon's major rice firms were considering closure: Thong Hap with 250,000 piastres (owned by Quách Đàm); Hong Guan with a capital of 275,000 piastres (Tjia Mah Yan?); Thong Hap Nguyen Seng with 500,000 piastres; and Yee Cheong with 1 million piastres.⁴⁴⁹ Having made their fortune in rice, the Quách Đàm enterprise engaged in Yeng Seng shipping was also hurtling towards bankruptcy.⁴⁵⁰ Hence, the downturn affected firms of all sizes, and due to the nature of interdependent financing, failure within the large firms brought down several of their subsidiaries. Li Tana assesses that the foundation of the rice trade collapsed during the Great Depression, never to recover to the heights experienced before 1914.⁴⁵¹ Prior to 1930, several cases of liquidation and bankruptcies had already occurred;⁴⁵² by the end of the year, 31 firms had been liquidated, and 283 firms declared bankrupt.⁴⁵³

Rajeswary Brown assesses that the crisis years left a deep-rooted impact on the Chinese economic scene, much stronger than the decades of tireless competition mounted by French and Vietnamese firms against those from the diaspora.

What was more effective [than French and Vietnamese effort] at removing at least some of these Chinese networks was the Great Depression. The prices of Cochinchina paddy had risen markedly between 1923-9, encouraging Chinese merchants to borrow

⁴⁴⁹ Léon Pagès, ed., 'M. Krautheimer a Inauguré La Nouvelle Rizerie', *L'Indochine: Revue Économique d'Extrême-Orient*, 20 March 1930, 88.

⁴⁵⁰ Quách Chiêu, son of Quách Đàm, heir to Yeng Seng shipping, filed for bankruptcy and admitted to the benefit of liquidation. Léon Pagès, ed., '[Untitled]', *L'Indochine: Revue Économique d'Extrême-Orient*, 20 August 1931, 230.

⁴⁵¹ 李塔娜, '尋找法屬越南南方的華人米商', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 189–201.

⁴⁵² Conseil Colonial de la Cochinchine, *Procès-verbaux du Conseil colonial. Session 1* (Saigon: Imprimerie de la Dépêche, 1929), 7.

⁴⁵³ Cherry, "Down and Out," 56.

and speculate heavily. When the prices collapsed in the early 1930s, and credit tightened, many of the largest Chinese [firms] failed.⁴⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the preceding takeover meant that French and Vietnamese firms also bore the brunt of the downturn. Indeed, the French-owned *Rizerie d'Extrême Orient* reported an estimated net loss of eight million piastres.⁴⁵⁵ As the board attributed the loss to the liquidation of its subsidiaries, its mills continued to be profitable.⁴⁵⁶ At the same time, Nguyễn Chiêu Thông's mills (Tong Wo and Nam Thuận An) began to run down their operations.

The economic downturn from 1930 ended the previous decade's economic boom and provided a rare opportunity for French and Vietnamese firms to gain the upper hand in Cholon's highly competitive environment. These local interests, backed by the state, were increasing in voice, political influence, and economic presence. However, these interests must be contextualised within the long-standing urban legacy of Cholon that had always remained open to trans-local influences.

Conclusion

In summary, the administrative reforms promoted by the Colonial Council had largely backfired. By seeking to strengthen Vietnamese representation, these reforms nevertheless revealed the perennial inefficiencies in the Government of Cochinchina's governance. However, backed by colonial willpower, these reforms were pushed through, and by 1934, Saigon and Cholon were officially amalgamated, but housing issues continued to trouble the new Municipality.

A corollary of these reforms was the weakening of community leadership among the Vietnamese, as symbolised in Lê Văn Lư's mourning of the loss of religious faith. The shift to a

⁴⁵⁴ Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown, *Capital and Entrepreneurship in South-East Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 130.

⁴⁵⁵ Léon Pagès, ed., "Notre Carnet Financier," *L'Indochine: Revue Économique d'Extrême-Orient*, July 5, 1929, 205–6.

Léon Pagès, ed., "Notre Carnet Financier," *L'Indochine: Revue Économique d'Extrême-Orient*, September 20, 1931, 248.

⁴⁵⁶ Léon Pagès, ed., "Notre Carnet Financier," *L'Indochine: Revue Économique d'Extrême-Orient*, July 5, 1929, 205–206.

Republican mindset appeared to result in more positive outcome for the Chinese communities, whose self-governance by the *congrégations* was largely unaffected by the administrative reforms. Ironically, a loss of municipal representation also meant that the *congrégations* remained obscure but unfettered in providing for the particular needs of their communities.

The biggest change in Cholon's economy was the changing ownership in the rice industry. In this arena, trans-local syndicates lost their economic dominance, which was their most important leverage in negotiating with the Colonial Government. The new class of industrialists— French proprietors—were much less likely to get involved in local affairs. Just as the inner canals were backfilled for the first time, Cholon's pattern of self-governance by strong trans-local commercial interests was broken. Nevertheless, Cholon persisted with its obvious Chinese characteristics intact for some time to come.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study has rescued Cholon's neglected history as a port-town. Changes in the city's governance, economy, society and urban form have been identified in four cross-sections at seventeen-year intervals. Chapter two lays the foundation on which Cholon was going to be developed. Each subsequent chapter provides a cross-section of Cholon in 1880, 1896, 1913, and 1930. At each cross-section, the thesis traces the port-town's urban growth from the original frontier settlement into a major component of the Greater Saigon-Cholon Region. A triangle of three key agents, the state – the local – the trans-local, is employed to analyse how their interactions transformed the frontier settlement into a commercial, manufacturing, socio-cultural, and welfare hub.

Key findings

Three key findings emerge from this research. First, Cholon's defining socio-economic patterns derived from a tradition of blending local and trans-local influences. As a port-town in the Mekong Delta, Cholon residents lived close to the waterways, and made a livelihood out of the Delta's abundant resources. With a history of frontier expansion and migration, the residents were familiar with an intermixing between people of various backgrounds, and were open to sojourning residence and diasporic influences.

Second, Cholon was also a node in the maritime trading networks. It stood out for its beginning as a Minh Huong frontier town. With their mixed Chinese heritage, the Minh Huong people's commercial and seafaring way of life started as an economic necessity, but persisted as a local tradition. In later periods, such tradition enabled new migrants, from coolies to capitalist merchants, to easily blend into Cholon's society. New private associations found a fruitful ground in Cholon to start their endeavours by employing a mixture of local and trans-local resources. Therefore, enduring

heterogeneity and a conspicuous trans-local presence defined the port town's socio-economic patterns.

Third, Cholon's local government—the Municipality—prioritised local interests over central command. Incongruous priorities between the local state and higher governments explained why Cholon remained separate from Saigon. Because of the ubiquitous trans-local presence, the Cochinese government in Saigon consistently perceived Cholon as a 'foreign' place, a perception that limited them from imposing central dominance in Cholon's affairs. In contrast, the Cholon Municipality adopted a collaborative approach which recognised the particular community leadership comprised of local and trans-local actors. A combination of lukewarm central attention and municipal collaboration inadvertently made space for Cholon's local communities to proactively respond to local issues, and thus Cholon prospered.

Such local governance was a response to how the port-town grew. Being separate from Saigon afforded Cholon more space to grow. Cholon's urban growth was stimulated by the process in which the Municipality tolerated, or even endorsed, a range of social, communal, and economic private associations. These associations represented the interests of various local and trans-local groups that had connections to the Mekong Delta and the East Asian Sea. These private associations provided community leadership that mediated between the authority and the population. Thus, overlapping interests between the local state, the locals, and the trans-locals played a key role in shaping Cholon's socio-economic patterns of urban growth.

In this way, Cholon's autonomous history was shaped by the overlapping interests between the local state, the locals, and the trans-locals. The locals and the trans-locals remained mutable and mixing. Such intermixing was embodied in strong private associations, whose interests overlapped with the local state in shaping Cholon's defining socio-economic patterns. In turn, the Municipality, caught in between the pragmatic local concerns, and the compliance with administrative hierarchy,

often chose to accommodate private interests in order to sustain urban growth. It was able to strike a balance such that by the time of the merger in the 1930s, Cholon's governance had been more efficient than that of Saigon. At times, such local priorities went against the central state's efforts to categorise the population, and curb trans-local domination.

Significance

“If Saigon was the stage, then Cholon would be the backstage that witnessed innumerable complex, messy affairs day and night.”⁴⁵⁷

Yet this backstage was what made the show possible. Unlike several other Euro-Chinese port-towns or colonial cities in Maritime East Asia, Cholon was not formally segregated into ethnic quarters with direct governance by ethnic or religious leaders, but this lack of segregation did not preclude the strong presence of such direct governance. For most of its history, Cholon as a town formed and grew in the relative absence of an overarching, ruling polity. Like other settlements in Southeast Asia before the state building period from the late eighteenth century,⁴⁵⁸ the frontier communities in Cholon self-governed by adherence to their own temples, communal codes, and a waterside way-of-life. In the nineteenth century, both the imperial Nguyễn and colonial French empires were obliged to find ways to work with the pre-existing self-governing elements that prevented total domination by a top-down structure. Even in the height of state-building and consolidation, the communities persisted with self-governance in adapted and modified forms. Self-governance was essential to keep the town running. State functions, despite being behemoth and imposing, were most efficient when they allowed certain continuation of self-governance, even though such governance were bypassed by official records.

⁴⁵⁷ Translation of “Nếu Sài Gòn là mặt ngoài sân khấu, thì hậu trường Chợ Lớn có bao nhiêu chuyện phức tạp, bừa bãi diễn ra thường trực ngày đêm.” Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định*, 349.

⁴⁵⁸ Reid, *Expansion and Crisis*, 251-264.

Among these communities, several cultural commonalities between the Vietnamese and the ethnic Chinese explain the difficulty in pinpointing one single Sino-Vietnamese Minh Hương identity or group. Yet this nebulous identity attested to shaping Cholon's local culture. Such local culture was so prevalent in Cholon that it in turn enabled the success of leaders and governments of particular qualities. These qualities included the ability to cooperate with community leaders; to allow communities some degree of autonomy; to favour certain local interests at the expense of higher directives; and to manage the changing tides of the floating population.

Given the difficulty in pinpointing the trajectories of these communities, a municipal history is important. The small scale sharpened the focus on an elusive part of the records: the semi-official, informal, behind-the-scene forces that manifested their influence in more subtle ways. The results of the officially recorded projects seemed to be determined by state actors, but the projects' development bore the mark of the significance of forces other than state actors. Thus, the narrow lens of the municipal history allows a better zoom on the finer details of not just authoritative colonial actions, but also of the rather discreet necessity to allow local elements to shape municipal development, in effecting concrete changes to the town. The town was built not just by the colonial government, but also by the communities. Howard Dick claims that Surabaya kampungs, not Jakarta high-rise modernism, hold the future of Indonesia;⁴⁵⁹ Cholon's alleys, not Saigon's boulevards, held the necessary and constraining factors to the trajectory of colonial Cochinchina.

Given such elusive community leadership and governance, contemporary society mirrors colonial society in their low regard for Cholon's value. Rita Padawangi says that "urban heritage preservation is a fascination with physical structures and districts in constructing the city's

⁴⁵⁹ Howard Dick, *Surabaya, City of Work: A Socioeconomic History, 1900-2000* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), conclusion.

identity.”⁴⁶⁰ The Album of Cholon in 1909 constructed the identity of the city mainly with municipal welfare buildings, while giving due recognition to the structures that defined the city: the temples, the schools, and the quayside rice mills. Fast forward a hundred years later, the contemporary identity of Ho Chi Minh City is not seen to be constructed by any structures in Cholon;⁴⁶¹ Saigon’s landmarks define the popular perception of the city. Yet, similarly to colonial times, Cholon’s hospitals, and markets, i.e. the “vernacular urban fabric”⁴⁶², continue to provide for the commercial and medical needs of a large portion of the urban residents. The urban heritage preservation in Ho Chi Minh City highlights the Saigon spectaculars, and detaches from the vernacular life of the city.⁴⁶³

The contemporary lack of glorification of Cholon's urban heritage reinforced the colonial view, albeit in the post-colonial world, that the urban area is a ‘foreign’ and ‘unruly’ place. Despite the numerous heritage sites, Cholon’s culture is excluded from the national culture, standing instead for its own peculiarity with a potential for being corrupted. As articulated in the latest edition of Son Nam’s work: “Only until 30 April 1975, the ‘colony of Cholon’ was finally retrieved back into the territory of our country. All shady business culture, the connections with international interests to hoard away resources, that had been present since the Nguyễn era, were finally eradicated.”⁴⁶⁴ Published posthumously by Trẻ Publishing House in 2009, this latest edition of the city confirms that

⁴⁶⁰ Rita Padawangi, ‘The Vernacular and the Spectacular: Urban Identity and Architectural Heritage in Southeast Asian Cities’, in *Asian Cities: Colonial to Global*, ed. Gregory Bracken (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 261–78, 274.

⁴⁶¹ Only 3.4% of the people surveyed nominate Cholon as a symbol for the metropolitan. Survey result of “Urban dwellers and urban space in Ho Chi Minh City’s urbanisation” (*Cư dân đô thị và không gian đô thị trong tiến trình đô thị hóa ở TP.HCM*), by the Institute for Development Studies, HCMC. Cited in Trần Hữu Quang, *Hạ Tầng Đô Thị*, 180–81.

⁴⁶² William Logan, ‘Heritage in Times of Rapid Transformation: A Tale of Two Cities – Yangon and Hanoi’, in *Asian Cities: Colonial to Global*, ed. Gregory Bracken (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 279–300, 273.

⁴⁶³ As similarly to how urban heritage preservation is conceived and executed in Southeast Asia. Rita Padawangi, ‘The Vernacular and the Spectacular: Urban Identity and Architectural Heritage in Southeast Asian Cities’, in *Asian Cities: Colonial to Global*, ed. Gregory Bracken (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 261–78, 274.

⁴⁶⁴ Son Nam, *Đất Gia Định*, 395.

the state tries to assimilate the foreignness of Cholon by a denial and an erasure of the history of its trans-local network.

On a wider scale, Cholon was interwoven into a commercial, social, and cultural network of diasporic Southeast Asian–ethnic Chinese groups since its founding. Since 1986, however, Vietnam’s quest to rejoin this world could have started with rekindling and recognising the trans-local flows that had once driven the growth of its port-cities. The successful development projects of the new urban area in Phú Mỹ Hưng by Hong Kong and Taiwan corporations can be seen as not just a manifestation of the reach of the Asian Tigers, but also might be alternatively seen as rekindling the connections between Saigon-Cholon and these former port-towns.

A history of Cholon also recovers the forgotten relationship between urban life and waterways. Kelly Shannon and Chen Yiyong state, “As one looks back on urban history, water has disappeared from the urban realm, visually and as a collective conscious of urbanites, whether it be in the West or the East. The nineteenth-century epoch of ‘clean urbanism’ began with the visual banishment of water.”⁴⁶⁵ The filling of canals all over the urban territory has been done with an hygienic aim: clean up the waterways to make way for colonial projects and ideals of modern urbanism; clean up the nests of infectious diseases; clean up the sampan dumping place to make ways for boulevards and market expansion.

After a century of such cleaning up, the waterways remain a central issue in urban life, and a prominent feature in the townscape. This is shown in the frequent flooding in the wet season, the major highways and roads following the courses of the four main waterways, the capitalisation and commercialisation of waterfronts by development projects. The continuing presence of waterways in the inner suburbs signified the degree to which the city was being ‘planned’ according to modern

⁴⁶⁵ Kelly Shannon and Yiyong Chen, ‘(Recovering) China’s Urban Rivers as Public Space’, *Footprint: Delft Architecture Theory Journal* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 27–44, 36.

ideals. One important task the maps have done is to display the prevalent presence of waterways in the urban territory, which indicated the prevalence of the former water-reliant way of life that has only begun to change in the recent decades.

Limitations

The study's key limitations stem from its heavy reliance on French sources. Attempts have been made to inject both Vietnamese and Chinese sources into the narrative to counter this imbalance. This unevenness has persisted, especially due to the unavailability of relevant Chinese sources, which are apposite for any study of the diaspora. Further fieldwork is necessary to locate more sources that better represent Cholon's trans-local situation.

By focusing on the narrow scope of a town, the study seems to exceptionalise Cholon's way-of-life from its wider Vietnamese and regional context. But this is unintentional. The study could benefit more from comparison with port-towns with which associations in Cholon had intimate connections, such as Mytho, Phnom Penh, Singapore, Hong Kong, or comparable towns in Indochina, such as Haiphong. A more detailed comparison between Saigon and Cholon would also be fruitful.

Implications

Cholon's former territory now comprises districts 5 and 6 in Ho Chi Minh City. During the century following the merger with Saigon, Cholon has gone through political upheaval and wars. These historical changes shrunk trans-local influence in Cholon. By the 1980s, several private schools had been driven underground, and trans-local community buildings had been reappropriated for municipal use. The central state's agency in Cholon has become much more powerful. Indeed, the central state has implemented policies that have actively assimilated trans-local elements into a state-defined national identity that denies or vilifies such links. Thus, Cholon's surviving private associations no longer exert any marked influence on public affairs.

Nevertheless, Cholon's distinctive way of life still remains recognisable. Commerce and manufacturing continue to attract people to these districts. Several newer markets have joined the Bình Tây Market as specialised wholesale hubs that gather and distribute commodities to other urban markets. Now serving as tourist attractions, the temples are preserved as heritage sites. They still host religious festivals; they still receive donations by community members who come from not only from Asia, but also from more distant places such as the United States, France, and Australia. Many trans-locals people have left Cholon, but some have also returned to reconcile old links.

Confronting these changes, the importance of an autonomous Municipality, and the active roles of the trans-local associations in pushing for urban growth, must be stressed. This study has sought to redress to the unfortunate changes that occurred in the later twentieth century, when political disruption and wars modified the present understanding of Cholon's significance compared with Saigon. Often assumed to be a part of Saigon, thus sharing its lifestyle and demography, Cholon's historical role has proved to be very different from this assumption.

This study, therefore, wants to raise Cholon's importance in regard to Vietnam's history. Cholon is one of the oldest urban areas in southern Vietnam; it forms the core of the largest metropolitan area in Vietnam today. Unfortunately, such importance has not been duly recognised because of Cholon's trans-local origin. The exclusion of the diaspora from national history reflects Logan's observation, that "there is a concentration in most countries on the cultural legacies that are said to be 'original', by which is normally meant the legacies belonging to the dominant group around which the modern state has been formed".⁴⁶⁶ Thus, this study suggests that the heterogeneity in Cholon was as much a local tradition as any other nationally recognised heritage.

⁴⁶⁶ William Stewart Logan, ed., *The Disappearing 'Asian' City: Protecting Asia's Urban Heritage in a Globalizing World* (Hong Kong ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), xvi.

Moreover, by recognising trans-local historical importance in Cholon, the study puts the town on the regional map of urban connectivity. The study highlights how urban growth in Southeast Asia was pushed not by any one agent, but by overlapping interests between the state, locals and trans-locals. Indeed, Cholon most resembles Semarang, Penang, and Bangkok in the ways that their diversity has been accommodated, in the continuation of an urban culture that existed before Western colonisation, in shaping the towns' evolution.⁴⁶⁷

Future research

Future research needs to explore the nuances in the interactions between the local state, locals and trans-locals in other colonial towns in Indochina such as Hải Phòng, Hà Nội, and Phnom Penh. In particular, there is more scope for examining trans-local influences in the Tonkin region. Not only were there seafaring merchants in Tonkin, but also a variety of ethnic minority groups, bandits, and other people. Tonkin witnessed interactions between the colonial state and trans-locals, in addition to those between its locals and the Chinese state.

With the possibility of using non-official sources, it would be beneficial to probe ways in which various social groups defined themselves and others, their mutual perceptions, and degrees of cooperation, and competition. Inquiries into how they perceived, navigated, and managed the urban society in which they lived, together with how they reached into the hinterland and foreland, would help to reshape our understanding of port-towns from the perspective of their residents, to balance the previous pre-occupation with the imperial state.

⁴⁶⁷ William Stewart Logan, ed., *The Disappearing 'Asian' City*.

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‘Dossier Relatif au Règlement en Intérieur et Activités du Cercle des Commerçants et Propriétaires Annamites à Cholon’, 1875-1894. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/3594.

‘Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939’. Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

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Landes, Antony. ‘Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon’, 1880. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH GOUCOCH ML2/4435.

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'Naturalisation Des Chinois. Question de Principe', 1904. ANOM INDO GGI 20506.

'Naturalisation des Chinois. Questions de Principe', 1908. ANOM INDO GGI 20527.

Registre des Actes de l'État Civil, no.17, 1881-1916. Ville de Cholon, Cochinchine française. ANOM.

'Renseignement Généraux sur les Villes des Saigon et Cholon et Leur Banlieus', 1895-1897. ANOM INDO GGI 5737.

'Réponses aux Enquêtes N° 2 Sur l'Habitat des Indigènes', 1938. FR ANOM 130COL88/FM/GUERNUT//88.

'Transport Des Riz Par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon', 2 November 1907. FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

National Library of Australia

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'Plan de Saigon-Cholon'. Saigon: Editions J. Aspar, 1945-1949. Nla.obj-233303069. National Library Australia. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233303069/view>.

'Yết Thị'. *Gia Định Báo*. 1 January 1876, sec. Phần tạp vụ.

Public Records Office, Hong Kong Historical Archives

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 57405.

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Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45863.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45859.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 53987.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45787.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 27573.

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‘Li Cheung’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 11 April 1909. HKRS144-4-2771.

‘Michel Ly Lap’s Personal Will’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 5 May 1931. HKRS144-4-3857.

‘Ong Ka Tiong’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 27 July 1897. HKRS144-4-1335.

‘Un Lai Chuen’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 8 March 1911. HKRS144-4-2613.

‘Un Chung Wo’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 14 December 1909. HKRS144-4-2409.

APPENDIX 1

Figure 1.1 The Water Frontier in Maritime East Asia

Cooke, Nola, and Tana Li, eds. *Water Frontier : Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*. Lanham, MD; Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004.

Chin-Keong Ng, “Map of Maritime East Asia and Trading Ports/Regions in Historical Perspective,” in *Boundaries and beyond: China’s Maritime Southeast in Late Imperial Times* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), xviii.

Figure 2.5 Map of Cholon, circa 1858-1860.

The base map and the planned streets in the western area:

Rossigneux, Bernard. “Rapport Sur La Situation Financiere de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant Les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés Depuis 1880.” Dossier Relatif Aux Délibérations de La Commission Municipale de La Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939. Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

Temples’ locations and the extent of the market site:

OpenStreetMap. ‘District 5, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam’. Accessed 24 December 2019.

<https://www.openstreetmap.org/search?query=district%205%2C%20ho%20chi%20minh%20city%20#map=15/10.7512/106.6641>.

Li Tana, and Nguyễn Cẩm Thúy, eds. *Bia chữ Hán trong hội quán người Hoa ở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh*. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1996.

Trịnh Hoài Đức. *Gia Định Thành Thông Chí*. Saigon: Phủ Quốc Vụ Khanh Đặc Trách Văn Hóa, 1820. Reprinted 1972.

Waterways:

Trần Văn Học. 'Bản Đồ Gia Định Năm 1815'. 1815. Virtual Saigon. <http://virtual-saigon.net/Maps/Collection?ID=1135>.

Villages's names (an educated guess):

The stone inscriptions of the Cantonese temple from 1858 to 1860. Li Tana, and Nguyễn Cẩm Thúy, eds.

Bia chữ Hán trong hội quán người Hoa ở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1996.

Nguyễn Đình Đầu. *Nghiên Cứu Địa Bạ Triều Nguyễn: Gia Định*. Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1994.

Figure 3.3 Map of Cholon 1880

The base map and the planned streets in the western area:

Rossigneux, Bernard. 'Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant Les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880'. Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939. Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

Mayor of Cholon. Letter to Director of the Interior. 'Dossier Relatif au Recensement de la Population, la Superficie Cultivée, des Écoles, des Moyens de Transports de la Ville de Cho Lon', 15 September 1880. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4435.

The urban limit:

Roger, V. 'Plan Général de La Ville de Cholon'. 1874. 1/6000. Belle Indochine. <http://belleindochine.free.fr/images/Plan/Cholon1874Roger.JPG>.

'Travaux de la Commission Chargé de la Mission des Impôts Fonciers Appliqués à la Ville de Cholon'.

Dossier Relatif à la Constitution d'un Terrain Domanial en Propriété Communale, au Plan de la Ville

de Cholon, aux Travaux de la Commission Chargée de la Revision des Impôts Fonciers de la Ville de Cholon, 1871-1875. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH ML2/8830.

Names of streets and waterways:

‘Extrait de Carte de la Ville de Cholon. Projet d’Exécution. Prolongement dans Cholon jusqu’au Marché de Binh Tay du Tramway de Saigon à Cholon par la Route Basse’. 1/5000. Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l’Électrification du Tramway Saigon – Cholon (Route Basse) (1882-1913). Saigon: Compagnie Française de Tramways (Indochine), 16 July 1912. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386.

Figure 4.2 Map of Cholon 1896

Base map and constructed streets since 1880s:

Rossigneux, Bernard. ‘Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant Les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880’. Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939. Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

Names of streets and waterways:

‘Extrait de Carte de la Ville de Cholon. Projet d’Exécution. Prolongement dans Cholon jusqu’au Marché de Binh Tay du Tramway de Saigon à Cholon par la Route Basse’. 1/5000. Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l’Électrification du Tramway Saigon – Cholon (Route Basse) (1882-1913). Saigon: Compagnie Française de Tramways (Indochine), 16 July 1912. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386.

Urban limit and waterways:

Rossigneux, Bernard. ‘Rapport sur la Situation Financière de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant Les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés depuis 1880’. Dossier Relatif aux Délibérations de la Commission Municipale de la Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939. Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 4648.

Thuillier, L. 'Plan de Cholon'. 1/2000. Le Tour du monde : nouveau journal des voyages, July 1893.

Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Le Bret. 'Saïgon-Cholon et Environs'. 1/50 000. Cochinchine: Service du cadastre et de la topographie,

1912. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53075544f/f1.item.zoom>.

Tramways:

'Plan d'Ensemble. Transport des Riz par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon'. 2 November 1907. FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

'Dossier Relatif à l'Exploitation du Chemin de Fer Saigon Mytho et du Tramway Saigon-Cholon 1895-1911'. 1910. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5375.

'Extrait de Carte de la Ville de Cholon. Projet d'Exécution. Prolongement dans Cholon jusqu'au Marché de Binh Tay du Tramway de Saigon à Cholon par la Route Basse'. 1/5000. Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l'Électrification du Tramway Saigon – Cholon (Route Basse) (1882-1913). Saigon: Compagnie Française de Tramways (Indochine), 16 July 1912. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386.

Temples' locations:

Le géomètre en chef, Chef du Service du Cadastre et de la Topographie. 'Cartes des Villes de Saigon et Cholon et Leurs Environs'. 1/20 000. Renseignement Généraux sur Les Villes des Saigon et Cholon et Leur Banlieus 1895-1897. Saigon, 14 May 1897. ANOM, INDO GGI 5737.

Le Van Luu. *Pagodes Chinoises et Annamites de Cholon*. Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinoise, 1931.

Rice mills' locations:

'Plan d'Ensemble. Transport des Riz par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon'. 2 November 1907. FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

'Liste des Principaux industriels et commerçants de la Ville de Cholon'. In *Annuaire de l'Indo-Chine française Ire partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge*, 548–62. Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897.

Map of trade distribution in Cholon's centre:

‘Liste des Principaux industriels et commerçants de la Ville de Cholon’. In *Annuaire de l’Indo-Chine française Ire partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge*, 548–62. Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897.

Table 4.2 Rice mills and associates in Cholon 1896

The sources on which this table is compiled are detailed below.

‘Liste des Principaux industriels et commerçants de la Ville de Cholon’. In *Annuaire de l’Indo-Chine française Ire partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge*, 548–62. Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897.

娜. ‘尋找法屬越南南方的華人米商’. *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 4 (2010): 189–201.

Li, Tana. ‘Saigon’s Rice Exports and Chinese Rice Merchants in Hong Kong, 1870s -1920s’. Hong Kong, 2016.

Rossigneux, Bernard. ‘Rapport Sur La Situation Financiere de 1880 à 1895 Inclus et Plan Indiquant Les Travaux de Voirie Exécutés Depuis 1880’. Dossier Relatif Aux Délibérations de La Commission Municipale de La Ville de Cho Lon Années 1881-1939. Ville de Cholon: Conseil Municipal, 1896. GOUCOCH 4648. TTLTQG2.

The Directory & Chronicle for China, Japan, Corea, Indo-China, Straits Settlements, Malay States, Siam, Netherlands India, Borneo, the Philippines, &c. Hongkong: The Hongkong Daily Press Office, 1899, 399.

‘Un Chung Wo’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 14 December 1909. HKRS144-4-2409.

‘Li Cheung’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 11 April 1909. HKRS144-4-2771.

‘Ong Ka Tiong’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 27 July 1897. HKRS144-4-1335.

‘Un Lai Chuen’s Personal Wills’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 8 March 1911. HKRS144-4-2613.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 27573.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45863.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45859.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 53987.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 45787.

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Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 57405.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 27573.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 27749.

Table 5.3 Rice mills in 1913

Table 5.1 was modified from table 4.1, with additional information from the sources below.

Li, Tana. ‘The Tomb Inscription of Tjia Mah Yen, a Hokkien Businessman of French Cochinchina’.

Southern Chinese Diaspora Studies 4 (2010): 223–24.

Annuaire général de l’Indo-Chine française, 1905, 555.

‘Plan d’ensemble. Transport Des Riz Par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon’. 2 November 1907. FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

‘Michel Ly Lap’s Personal Will’. Hong Kong: Public Records Office, Probate Administration Bonds, Probate Jurisdiction Will File, 5 May 1931. HKRS144-4-3857.

Hong Kong Historical Archives, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 34001.

Figure 5.3 Map of Cholon 1913

Base map, names of streets and waterways:

‘Extrait de Carte de la Ville de Cholon. Projet d’Exécution. Prolongement dans Cholon jusqu’au Marché de Binh Tay du Tramway de Saigon à Cholon par la Route Basse’. 1/5000. Dossier Relatif au Prolongement et à l’Électrification du Tramway Saigon – Cholon (Route Basse) (1882-1913). Saigon: Compagnie Française de Tramways (Indochine), 16 July 1912. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5386.

‘Dossier Relatif à l’Exploitation du Chemin de Fer Saigon-Mytho et du Tramway Saigon-Cholon’, 1895-1911. TTLTQG2, GOUCOCH 5375.

Temples’ locations:

Le géomètre en chef, Chef du Service du Cadastre et de la Topographie. ‘Cartes Des Villes de Saigon et Cholon et Leurs Environs’. 1/20 000. Renseignement Généraux Sur Les Villes Des Saigon et Cholon et Leur Banlieus 1895-1897. Saigon, 14 May 1897. ANOM INDO GGI 5737.

Le Van Luu. *Pagodes Chinoises et Annamites de Cholon*. Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinoise, 1931.

Rice mills’ locations:

‘Plan d’ensemble. Transport Des Riz Par Voie Ferrée de Cholon à Saigon’. 2 November 1907. FR ANOM 91COL576/FM/1TP/576.

New facilities’ locations:

Le Bret. ‘Saïgon-Cholon et Environs’. 1/50 000. Cochinchine: Service du cadastre et de la topographie, 1912. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53075544/f1.item.zoom>.

Figure 6.1 Map of Cholon 1930

‘Plan de Saïgon-Cholon’. Hanoi: Service géographique de l’Indochine, 1923.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53065091z/f1.item.r=hanoi.langEN.zoom>.

‘Plan de Saigon-Cholon’. Saigon: Editions J. Aspar, 1949 1945. Nla.obj-233303069. National Library Australia. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233303069/view>.

‘Plan de la Region de Saigon-Cholon. Plan des Quartiers’. 1/20 000. Dossier relatif à la réorganisation du statut, élection, démission, prorogation des mandats des chefs de quartiers de Saigon, Cholon, 1935. GOUCOCH 4653. TTLTQG2.

Temples’ locations:

Le géomètre en chef, Chef du Service du Cadastre et de la Topographie. ‘Cartes des Villes de Saigon et Cholon et Leurs Environs’. 1/20 000. Renseignement Généraux sur les Villes des Saigon et Cholon et Leur Banlieus 1895-1897. Saigon, 14 May 1897. INDO GGI 5737. Archive Nationale d’Outre Mer.

Le Van Luu. *Pagodes Chinoises et Annamites de Cholon*. Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinois, 1931.

APPENDIX 2

List of principal merchants in Cholon 1897:

Source:

“Liste des Principaux industriels et commerçants de la Ville de Cholon”. In *Annuaire de l’Indo-Chine française Ire partie : Cochinchine et Cambodge*, 548–62. Saigon: Imprimerie Coloniale, 1897.

INDUSTRY/TRADE	NAME OF PROPRIETOR OR MANAGER	STREET	No.
Marchand en détail de riz et paddy	Trac Chanh Tuyen	9e quartier (Binh Dong)	n/a
Entrepreneur des bouages et vidanges	Embry	avenue Jaccaré	1
Bijoutiers à facon	Tran Duong Dao	avenue Jaccaré	9
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Huynh Tau	avenue Jaccaré	11
Pousse-pousse	Tay Chow Beng	avenue Jaccaré	58
Courtier en marchandises	Embry, représenté par Dauboeuf	avenue Jaccaré	n/a
Cabaretier	Mmes Lépin	avenue Jaccaré	n/a
Cabaretier	Mmes Mallet	avenue Jaccaré	n/a
Constructeur de Bateaux	Chung Phu Co	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Dang Khoa	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Giang Tung	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Hoac Nham	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Hua Hoa	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Huynh Thi Que	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Phan Ba	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	To Huu Cai	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Tran Cuu	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Tran Mau	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Constructeur de Bateaux	Tran Phat	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Constructeur de Bateaux	Tran Tang	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Tran Thanh	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Constructeur de Bateaux	Tran Ung	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Trieu Dan	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Trinh Gia	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Constructeur de Bateaux	Tu Truong Hiep	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a

Radoubeur de Bateaux	Vang Thang	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Vuong Duong	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Radoubeur de Bateaux	Vuong Duong	Bassin de Lanessan	n/a
Laitier	Ana Ajagappane	Boulevard de Thuan Kieu	n/a
Laitier	Ana Soupana	Boulevard de Thuan Kieu	n/a
Laitier	Mou Soumougapoullé	Boulevard de Thuan Kieu	n/a
Laitier	Na Letchoumane	Boulevard de Thuan Kieu	n/a
Laitier	Rangassamy	Boulevard de Thuan Kieu	n/a
Laitier	Sou Mouttounoupene	Boulevard de Thuan Kieu	n/a
Transport fluviaux	An Phu	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Duong Vo	Cholon ville	n/a
Armateurs au cabotage	Fiere	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Giang Minh Thach	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Hau Vinh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Huynh Cong Luc	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Huynh Khai	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Huynh Thanh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Huynh Thi Que	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Huynh Thien	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Huynh Toai	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Lam Chau	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Lam Duc	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Le Tai	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Lu Tuyen	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Luong dieu	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Luong Phu Bi	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Ly Hoai	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Ly Kham	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Ly Trang Loi	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Ngo Nhut	Cholon ville	n/a
Fermier	Pajamappatévane	Cholon ville	n/a

Transport fluviaux	Phung Cau	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Phung Hieng	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Phung Nghi	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Phung Nhut	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Phung Nhut	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Phung Quan	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Quan Ba	Cholon ville	n/a
Fermier	Rajagobalouchetty	Cholon ville	n/a
Armateurs au cabotage	Richardson	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Sam Linh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	San Lanh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Sanh Long et Sam Lanh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Ta Chi Sum	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tang Cang	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Thanh Tuyenh et Cam Chieu	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tran Khon Sanh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tran Phu	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tran Tang	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tran Thai Hung	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tran Thanh Minh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tran Van Sang	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Trat Ky/Lin Yo Moh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Trieu Hoi	Cholon ville	n/a
Armateurs au cabotage	Truong Quan Thanh	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Truong Thiet Quan	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Truong Thuong	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Tu Gia	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Vuong Tam Phu	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Vuong Tien	Cholon ville	n/a
Transport fluviaux	Vuong Tien	Cholon ville	n/a
Charcutier	Chau Hao	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Chau Hoa	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Chung Cuu	Marché central	n/a

Charcutier	Dang Tong	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Dao Thi	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Du Huu	Marché central	n/a
Boucher	Ha Dat	Marché central	n/a
Changeurs de monnaie	Ha Lac	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Ha Lien	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Ha Loi	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Ho Huu	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Huynh Anh	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Huynh Anh	Marché central	n/a
Boucher	Huynh Boi	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Huynh Chieu	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Huynh Co	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Huynh Tau	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Huynh Thang	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Huynh Tuan	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Huynh Tuong	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Lu Hoa	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Lu Vinh	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Luong duong	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Luong Thai	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Ly Hoc Tuyen	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	O Hoan	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Quang Co	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Quang Phuoc	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Quang Tham	Marché central	n/a
Changeurs de monnaie	Ta Mac	Marché central	n/a
Epicier	Thi Mau	Marché central	n/a
Boucher	Thien Hoa	Marché central	n/a
Boucher	Thien Toan	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Tran Phieu	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Tran Si	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Tran Thang	Marché central	n/a

Charcutier	Tuan Vi	Marché central	n/a
Échoppier	Vu Chau	Marché central	n/a
Charcutier	Dam Dat	Marché de Binh Tay	n/a
Charcutier	Lao Chi	Marché de Binh Tay	n/a
Charcutier	Ta Nghiep	Marché de Binh Tay	n/a
Pharmacien asiatique	Trach Linh	Quai au riz	5
Marchand en demi-gros	Kloss	Quai au riz	7
Teinturier	Nguyen Thi Kien	Quai de Bonnard	n/a
Teinturier	Truong Thi Vi	Quai de Bonnard	n/a
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Ly Ngoc	Quai de Cambodge	9
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Ly Hung	Quai de Cambodge	11
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Ly Dong	Quai de Cambodge	12
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Ly Tu Hiep	Quai de Cambodge	12
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Ly Lung	Quai de Cambodge	18
Teinturier	Ly Thi Hao	Quai de Cangioc	n/a
Marchand en demi-détail	Lam Hoa, représenté par Ong Phong Hoa	Quai de Hoi Cui	11
Pharmacien asiatique	Truong Xuyen	Quai de Hoi Hiep	5
Bijoutiers à facon	Thai Hong Huong	Quai de Hoi hiep	10
Ferblantiers	Luc Cang	Quai de Hoi Hiep	12
Imprimeurs au tampon	Nguyen Thi Nguu	Quai de Hoi Hiep	14
Bijoutiers à facon	Tran Van Chuoc	Quai de Hoi hiep	19
Bijoutiers à facon	Nguyen Thi Ngoi	Quai de Hoi hiep	51
Bijoutiers à facon	Nguyen Van Vo	Quai de Hoi hiep	53
Médecin asiatique	Hua Ky	Quai de Hoi Hiep	55
Forgerons	Vuong an	Quai de Hoi Hiep	56
Teinturier	Chung Su Vang	Quai de la Distillerie	n/a
Chaudronnier	Huynh Chanh	Quai de la Distillerie	n/a
Fabricants de Cartes à jouer	Quach Giang Bang	Quai de la Distillerie	n/a
Charbonnier	Tran Kha	Quai de la Distillerie	n/a
Médecin indigene	Vo Van Chien	Quai de Lanessan	12
Bijoutiers à facon	Tran Van Thé	Quai de l'Annexion	16
Briqueterie	Bonnet	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a

Briqueterie	Hiep Hoa	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Briqueterie	Luc Dong	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Briqueterie	Luong Vi	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Briqueterie	Ly An	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Marchand de Poteries	Duong Long	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Marchand de Poteries	Luong Minh Cang	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Marchand de Poteries	Trieu Phan	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Rotinier	Van Quan	Quai de Lo Gom	n/a
Négociant	Luu Luc	Quai de Mytho	8
Avironniers	Tran Thi Hon	Quai de Mytho	9
Négociant	Tran Nghiem Nhu	Quai de Mytho	10
Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Mau	Quai de Mytho	11
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Diep Tu Dinh	Quai de Mytho	12
Marchand en demi-gros	Chau Trac	Quai de Mytho	14-15
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Nhieu Tan Hien	Quai de Mytho	17
Marchand en détail	Ta Dat Than	Quai de Mytho	20
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Chau Trach	Quai de Mytho	23
Marchand de Poteries	Phung Nhut	Quai de Mytho	24
Marchand en demi-détail	Lieu Sieu	Quai de Mytho	27
Marchand en demi-détail	Luc Thuong, représenté par Mach Huong	Quai de Mytho	28
Marchand en demi-détail	Ho Nhue	Quai de Mytho	29
Marchand de Poteries	Phung Duong	Quai de Mytho	30
Marchand de Poteries	Luong Minh Cang	Quai de Mytho	31
Marchand en demi-détail	Phung Oai	Quai de Mytho	32
Marchand en demi-détail	Truong Tich Quan	Quai de Mytho	32
Marchand en demi-détail	Vuong Tong Ky, représenté par Vuong Dong	Quai de Mytho	34
Marchand de Poteries	Quang ich	Quai de Mytho	35-36
Marchand en détail	J. Kadersah	Quai de Mytho	38
Marchand en détail	J. Ababakarsah	Quai de Mytho	39
Marchand en demi-détail	Tiet Luong	Quai de Mytho	40

Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Duy Minh, représenté par Lam My Phong	Quai de Mytho	40
Négociant	Mach Kiet	Quai de Mytho	41
Marchand en détail	Ngo Tac Nhu	Quai de Mytho	42
Marchand en détail	Ly Cao	Quai de Mytho	43
Marchand en détail	Ly Tong Bang	Quai de Mytho	45
Marchand en détail	Ha Thi Hao	Quai de Mytho	48
Marchand en détail	Ly Than hTran	Quai de Mytho	49
Ferronnier	Ngo Kien	Quai de Mytho	51
Marchand en détail	Tran Cam Tuong	Quai de Mytho	53
Marchand en détail	Duong Thi Bien	Quai de Mytho	54
Marchand en détail	Do Khai Duc	Quai de Mytho	55
Pharmacien asiatique	Tran Khanh	Quai de Mytho	56
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Tran Chi, représenté par Tran Su Canh	Quai de Mytho	56-57
Armateurs au cabotage	Do Thang/To Sing	Quai de Mytho	57
Marchand en demi-gros	Phung Hien	Quai de Mytho	57
Marchand en détail	Quach Thiep Sang	Quai de Mytho	58
Marchand en demi-détail	Dam Kien	Quai de Mytho	59
Marchand en demi-détail	Tang Tich	Quai de Mytho	60
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Lai Thuan	Quai de Mytho	61
Marchand en détail	Le Huu Khanh	Quai de Mytho	63
Marchand en détail	Ha Dieu	Quai de Mytho	64
Marchand en demi-détail	Banh Qua	Quai de Mytho	65
Marchand en détail	Luu Nguon Thoai	Quai de Mytho	68
Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Nguyen	Quai de Mytho	69
Marchand en demi-détail	Tu Duong	Quai de Mytho	70
Marchand en détail	Nham Tien	Quai de Mytho	71
Marchand en demi-détail	Tri Binh Quan	Quai de Mytho	72
Marchand en détail	Kha Huu	Quai de Mytho	73
Marchand en détail	Vo Thi Mai	Quai de Mytho	74
Marchand en détail	Ho Thi Tuong	Quai de Mytho	75
Marchand en détail	Hua Thong	Quai de Mytho	76
Marchand en demi-détail	Quach Tuyen	Quai de Mytho	77

Marchand en détail	Si Mougamadoucassine	Quai de Mytho	78
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Tong Hien	Quai de Mytho	79
Marchand en détail	Tran Ngai	Quai de Mytho	80
Marchand en demi-détail	Mach Dong Sanh	Quai de Mytho	81
Marchand en détail	Huynh Bao	Quai de Mytho	82
Marchand de Poteries	Truong Luong	Quai de Mytho	82
Marchand en demi-détail	Lam Dieu Thang	Quai de Mytho	83
Marchand en détail	Chau Tan	Quai de Mytho	84
Pâtissier sans four	Chau Tan	Quai de Mytho	84
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran The Nguyen	Quai de Mytho	85
Pâtissier sans four	Tran Khuong	Quai de Mytho	86
Ferblantiers	Pham Thiem	Quai de Mytho	87
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Ly Chieu	Quai de Mytho	87-88
Marchand en demi-gros	Tran Thi Nguyen	Quai de Mytho	90
Marchand en demi-gros	Do Bang Di	Quai de Mytho	92
Négociant	Duong Thanh Ton	Quai de Mytho	93
Marchand en détail	Loi Chu	Quai de Mytho	94
Marchand en demi-détail	Duong Khon	Quai de Mytho	97
Marchand en demi-détail	Lieu Tan Duc	Quai de Mytho	98
Ferblantiers	Ly Thanh	Quai de Mytho	98
Changeurs de monnaie	Ta Truong	Quai de Mytho	101
Marchand de Poteries	Nguyen Quan Huy	Quai de Mytho	102
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Giai Thach	Quai de Mytho	103
Pharmacien asiatique	Huynh Phan	Quai de Mytho	104
Avironniers	Tang Nghiep Hiep	Quai de Mytho	105
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Van hoi	Quai de Mytho	106
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Oc	Quai de Mytho	107
Marchand en demi-détail	Hua Phong, représenté par Tran Huan	Quai de Mytho	108
Marchand en détail	Huynh Cau, représenté par Huynh Kham	Quai de Mytho	110
Marchand en détail	Tran Diem	Quai de Mytho	112
Marchand en demi-détail	Truong Thi	Quai de Mytho	113-116
Négociant	Thai An	Quai de Mytho	117-120

Marchand en demi-détail	To Thoai Sanh	Quai de Mytho	119
Tailleur de pierres	Phung Phat	Quai de Mytho	120
Teinturier	Vuong Cang	Quai de Mytho	121
Teinturier	Truong Ngai Hiep	Quai de Mytho	123
Avironniers	Tran Trao	Quai de Mytho	125
Marchand en détail	Vuong Khanh	Quai de Mytho	130
Pâtissier sans four	Luu Lien Khoa	Quai de Mytho	131
Tailleur de pierres	Le Trinh tuong	Quai de Mytho	132
Tailleur de pierres	Lieu Phuoc	Quai de Mytho	133
Tailleur de pierres	Luu Quoi	Quai de Mytho	134
Avironniers	Tran Ly	Quai de Mytho	135-136
Marchand en détail	Du Doan	Quai de Mytho	137
Pharmacien asiatique	To Minh Khanh	Quai de Mytho	139
Bijoutiers à facon	Nguyen Huu Chuong	Quai de Mytho	141
Tailleur de pierres	Banh Luc	Quai de Mytho	143
Tailleur de pierres	La Kieu	Quai de Mytho	145-146
Tailleur de pierres	La Tu	Quai de Mytho	149
Avironniers	Nguyen Thi The	Quai de Mytho	151-152
Teinturier	Ong Buu Hoa	Quai de Mytho	153
Fabricants d'Amulettes	To Thoai Sanh	Quai de Mytho	155
Négociant	Hoan Bang Sa	Quai de Mytho	156
Marchand en détail	Vuong Hau	Quai de Mytho	160
Fondeur	Khuu Van My	Quai de Mytho	161
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Diep Thien Tuyen	Quai de Mytho	165-166
Pâtissier sans four	Tat Gia	Quai de Mytho	171
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Ong Ka Tiong, associé avec Khuu Thien Sang	Quai de Mytho	177-179
Pharmacien asiatique	Lam Ba Huan	Quai de Mytho	178
Teinturier	Lim Thian Sang	Quai de Mytho	178
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Lam Chan Thai	Quai de Mytho	182
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Lam Dia	Quai de Mytho	184
Gargotier	To Loa	Quai de Mytho	185

Gargotier	Ho Tu	Quai de Mytho	188
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Truong Doan	Quai de Mytho	206
Commissionnaire en marchandises	Ong Ka Tiong	Quai de Mytho	208-209
Marchand en détail	Banh Kham	Quai de Mytho	210
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Ta Ma Dien/Tjia Mach Yen	Quai de Mytho	221-222
Forgerons	Thai Giem	Quai de Mytho	231
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Ly Hiep	Quai de Mytho	238-239
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Le Hue	Quai de Mytho	241
Échoppier	Ho Chi	Quai de Mytho	245
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Do trinh	Quai de Mytho	248
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ong Huu Hoa	Quai de Mytho	248-249
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Lac Hanh	Quai de Mytho	252
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Giang Chieu	Quai de Mytho	255
Décortiqueurs de paddy	True Trien	Quai de Mytho	256
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Banh Le	Quai de Mytho	257
Marchand en détail	To Phat	Quai de Mytho	257
Marchand en détail	Tran Thé	Quai de Mytho	257
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Gian Xuan	Quai de Mytho	261
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Do nang	Quai de Mytho	262-263
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Le Ky	Quai de Mytho	265
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Thang Luan	Quai de Mytho	266-267
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Huynh Nam, représenté par Lu Hoa	Quai de Mytho	268-269
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Tang Trach	Quai de Mytho	271
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Do Trinh	Quai de Mytho	272
Négociant	Khuu Hoan Tuyet/Khoo Heng Sech	Quai de Mytho	273
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Tran Xan	Quai de Mytho	274
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Tran Van Cuong	Quai de Mytho	275
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Tran thiem	Quai de Mytho	277
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Au E	Quai de Mytho	278
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Ngoc Ky	Quai de Mytho	280

Marchand en demi-détail	Quan Mien	Quai de Mytho	281
Marchand en demi-gros	Luu Kiet	Quai de Mytho	284-285
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ngo Huyen	Quai de Mytho	286-287
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Hong Tac Trinh	Quai de Mytho	290-291
Bijoutiers à facon	Le Van DAT	Quai de Mytho	292
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ly Chieu, représenté par Phan Luc	Quai de Mytho	297
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ly Chieu, représenté par Luu Giau	Quai de Mytho	301
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Luu Cau	Quai de Mytho	303
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Huynh Binh	Quai de Mytho	307
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ly Phuoc, associé avec Luu Luc	Quai de Mytho	308-309
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Vuong duc Ky	Quai de Mytho	311-312
Échoppier	Dong Lam	Quai de Mytho	314
Riz. Rizerie Man Cheong Yen	Luu Luc, directeur	Quai de Mytho	316-317
Riz. Usine Ban Joo Quan & Cie	Ong Ka tiong, directeur	Quai de Mytho	316-317
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Ly Hung Loi	Quai de Mytho	337-338
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	To Van Chieu	Quai de Mytho	339-340
Ferblantiers	Truong Hung	Quai de Mytho	340
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Lieu Chau	Quai de Mytho	341
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Tran Anh Tai	Quai de Mytho	342
Marchand en demi-détail	Nhom My	Quai de Mytho	344
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ngo Chung Hoan, représenté par Ngo Ung Giau	Quai de Mytho	346-347
Marchand en demi-détail	Lam Binh Dinh	Quai de Mytho	353
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Lu Phai	Quai de Mytho	353
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Ngo Chan Trieu	Quai de Mytho	365-366
Marchand en détail de riz et paddy	Nguyen Van tanh	Quai de Mytho	367
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Khuu Tuyet, représenté par Tran Van	Quai de Mytho	370
Marchand en détail de riz et paddy	Le Van Nguyet	Quai de Mytho	373

Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Duong Thi Chi	Quai de Mytho	375
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Khuu Tuyet, représenté par Ong Ba Loc	Quai de Mytho	376
Décortiqueurs de paddy	Lam Le	Quai de Mytho	378
Marchand en demi-détail	Ha Son	Quai de Mytho	382
Marchand en demi-détail	To Van Chieu	Quai de Mytho	383
Marchand en détail de riz et paddy	On Phong	Quai de Mytho	387
Marchand en demi-détail	Quan Van Dong	Quai de Mytho	388
Marchand en détail de riz et paddy	Vo Thi Tu	Quai de Mytho	390
Marchand en demi-détail	Lam Cam Duong	Quai de Mytho	392
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Tran Nhon	Quai de Mytho	392
Marchand en demi-gros de riz et paddy	Luu Kiet	Quai de Mytho	393-394
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Lam Thi	Quai de Mytho	396
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Tran Trong Tri	Quai de Mytho	397
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Trinh Thiem An	Quai de Mytho	398
Marchand en demi-détail de riz de paddy	Ngo Ung Giai, représenté par Tuyen	Quai de Mytho	399
Échoppier	To Hung Lam	Quai de Mytho	405
Ferblantiers	Dam Dinh	Quai de Pékin	3
Fabricant de poudre de riz	Ha Lac	Quai de Pékin	3
Marchand en détail	Truong Chieu	Quai de Pékin	16
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Tran Dai Y	Quai de Pékin	26
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Tang Sung Lien	Quai de Pékin	27
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Vi thanh	Quai de Pékin	28
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Diep Tu Hiep	Quai de Pékin	30
Imprimeurs au tampon	Ly Hien	Quai de Pékin	31
Imprimeurs au tampon	Nguyen tHi Don	Quai de Pékin	31
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Diep Truong Mau	Quai de Pékin	33
Pharmacien indigène	Vo Van Khue	Quai de Phong Phu	n/a
Briqueterie	Trieu Si Vi	Quai de Phu huu	n/a
Briqueterie	Trieu Si Vi	Quai de Phu huu	n/a
Teinturier	Chung Hoa Ky	Quai de Phuoc Kien	8-9-10

Bijoutiers à facon	Vo Van Truong	Quai de Phuoc Kien	25
Teinturier	Ngo Thanh Chanh	Quai de Phuoc Kien	27
Teinturier	Tran Van Hoi	Quai de Phuoc Kien	46
Fabricant de sucre indigène	Thiem Liem	Quai de Phuoc Kien	73
Marchand en détail	Thien Lien	Quai de Phuoc Kien	73
Bijoutiers à facon	Tran Van Loi	Quai de Phuoc Kien	80
Pharmacien indigène	Dang Van Chau	Quai de Phuoc Kien	93
Marchand en détail	Duong Phu Mien	Quai de Yunnam	2
Marchand en détail	Vuong Canh Vinh	Quai de Yunnam	5-6
Imprimeurs au tampon	Tran Thi Loc	Quai de Yunnam	8
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Tran Tu Son	Quai de Yunnam	11
Marchand en détail	Lam Phat, représenté par Lam Phuong	Quai de Yunnam	12
Négociant	Goh Sin Toh, représenté par Ngo Ung Giai	Quai de Yunnam	13-14
Négociant	Sanh Lanh, représenté par Quan Sanh	Quai de Yunnam	18-20
Marchand de Poissons	Lam Hien	Quai de Yunnam	21
Marchand en demi-gros	Ngo Thanh Thuan	Quai de Yunnam	27-28
Teinturier	To Mac Lang	Quai de Yunnam	30
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Tran Bai	Quai de Yunnam	33
Négociant	Hen Siem	Quai de Yunnam	32-33
Marchand de Poissons	Hiap San Thai	Quai de Yunnam	34
Fabricant de Nuoc mam	Le Thi Cuong	Quai des Chantiers	n/a
Médecin indigène	Nguyen Van Quoi	Quai des Chantiers	n/a
Forgerons	Ho Van Tan	Quai des Jonques	n/a
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Tang Khanh	Quai des Jonques	n/a
Échoppier	Tran Khuu	Quai des Jonques	n/a
Charbonnier	Truong Thi De	Quai des Jonques	1
Charbonnier	Nguyen Van Tho	Quai des Jonques	2
Constructeur de Bateaux	Dang Bieu	Quai des Jonques	10
Charbonnier	Tong Van Hoan	Quai des Jonques	11
Charbonnier	Ha Quoi	Quai des Jonques	12

Imprimeurs au tampon	Nguyen thi Nguu	Quai des Jonques	14
Charbonnier	Trieu Thien	Quai des Jonques	19
Fabricant d'huile du pays	Le Thi Man	Quai des Jonques	24
Charbonnier	Le Thi Quyen	Quai des Jonques	34
Scieur de long	Luong Nam	Quai des Jonques	40
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Le Mai	Quai des Jonques	41
Fabricants de fils à soie (industriels)	Dam Doan	Quai des Jonques	43
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Ly Cao	Quai des Jonques	44
Scieur de long	Huynh Hoc	Quai des Jonques	45
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Dai Phat	Quai des Jonques	48
Forgerons	Diep Dinh	Quai des Jonques	51
Fabricant de sucre indigène	Huynh Trac	Quai des Jonques	51
Forgerons	Ly Cu	Quai des Jonques	51
Scieur de long	Huynh Lam	Quai des Jonques	59
Teinturier	Quach Giang	Quai des Jonques	62-64
Teinturier	Truong Hung Cang	Quai des Jonques	84
Teinturier	Ly Van Lam	Quai des Jonques	86
Marchand en détail	Lam Dang	Quai des Jonques	92
Fabricant des Chaux à bétel	Le Thieu Quan	Quai des Jonques	95
Marchand de Cochons	Ly Thi Thanh	Quai des Jonques	97
Marchand de Cochons	Nguyen Van Muoi	Quai des Jonques	97
Fabricant des Chaux à bétel	Le Van Truoc	Quai des Jonques	96-98
Fabricant des Chaux à bétel	Vo Thi Lua	Quai des Jonques	96-98
Scieur de long	Ho que	Quai des Jonques	99
Scieur de long	Huynh Vinh Chung	Quai des Jonques	100
Menuisier à facons	Le Van Tai	Quai des Jonques	101
Médecin indigène	Nguyen Van Khoa	Quai des Jonques	105
Fabricant de sucre indigène	Luong Quang	Quai des Jonques	108
Scieur de long	Luu Luc, représenté par Luu Cam	Quai des Jonques	119
Riz. Usine Seng Quan	Ngo Chung Hoan, directeur	Quai des Jonques	120-121
Fabricant des Chaux à bétel	Nguyen Thi Lich	Quai des Jonques	130
Fabricant des Chaux à bétel	Nguyen Van Hien	Quai des Jonques	130

Fabricant des Chaux à bétel	Truong Van Luong	Quai des Jonques	130bis
Scieur de long	Huynh Hoa	Quai des Jonques	131
Menuisier à facons	Nguyen Van Hoa	Quai des Jonques	132
Menuisier à facons	Nguyen Van My	Quai des Jonques	134
Riz. Rizerie Orient. Burned down in 1896, rebuilding	Speidel & Cie, agents généraux	Quai des Jonques	166
Marchand en détail	Thai Duc Phuoc	Quai des Jonques	172
Marchand en détail	Vo Thi Buong	Quai des Jonques	172
Marchand en détail	Dong Te	Quai des Jonques	183
Riz. Usine Khoo-Tech-Pye	Khuu Tuyet, représentant	Quai des Jonques	184
Teinturier	Huynh Sum, représenté par Huynh Toan	Quai des Minh Huong	3
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Thang Ho Thai	Quai des Minh Huong	9
Teinturier	Nhuan Tan	Quai des Minh Huong	10
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Lam Tam	Quai des Minh Huong	14
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Luu Quang	Quai des Minh Huong	15
Blanchisseur	Phung Giang	Quai des Minh Huong	21
Menuisier à facons	Tran Tong	Quai des Minh Huong	33
Teinturier	Tang su Bien	Quai des Minh Huong	47
Teinturier	Duong Binh	Quai des Minh Huong	57
Marchand en détail	Trach Chau Tuyen	Quai du Cambodge	15
Marchand en détail	Lam Du, représenté par Duong Huat	Quai du Cambodge	17
Teinturier	Tran Thi Hau	Quai du Cambodge	19-20
Teinturier	Tran Thi Thanh	Quai du Cambodge	26
Teinturier	Loi Hoai	Quai du Cambodge	29
Pharmacien indigène	Vo Van Giau	Quai du Cambodge	40
Fabricants de cercueils	Nguyen Van Huong	Quai du Cambodge	41
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Phut	Quai du Cambodge	n/a
Marchand en détail	Luu Thanh Hiep	Quai du Commerce	1-2
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Huynh Dai De	Quai du Commerce	11
Marchand en détail	Huynh Duc Vinh	Quai Gaudot	2
Marchand en demi-détail	Diep Nghi Xuong	Quai Gaudot	18
Marchand en détail	Lam Nghi Xuong	Quai Gaudot	31
Bijoutiers à facon	Phan Van Buu	Quai Gaudot	35

Teinturier	Truong Huynh	Quai Gaudot	37
Teinturier	Buu Hiep	Quai Gaudot	54
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Tang My Toan	Quai Gaudot	55-56
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	La Sung	Quai Gaudot	65
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Tran Xuan	Quai Gaudot	66
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Quach Diem	Quai Gaudot	69
Fabricants de fils à soie (industriels)	Co Nhuam	Quai Gaudot	70
Pharmacien asiatique	Ly Kim	Quai Gaudot	70
Marchands des Cornes et peaux	Lam Huy Quan	Quai Gaudot	71
Marchand en gros de riz et paddy	Ong Phong Hoa	Quai Gaudot	76
Médecin asiatique	Tiet Hien Tham	Quai Gaudot	87
Imprimeurs au tampon	Tran Thi Co	Quai Gaudot	88
Bijoutiers à façon	Pham Van Thanh	Quai Gaudot	89
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Tran The Nguyen	Quai Gaudot	90
Coquetier	Trinh Tong Cam	Quai Gaudot	n/a
Médecin asiatique	Ngo Kim Chuong	Quai Testard	5
Bourellier	Huynh Van Cuu	Quai Testard	66
Laitier	Ka Varavane	Route de Bienhoa	n/a
Charcutier	Du Vinh	Route de Binh Tay	1
Gargotier	Chan Hang Hue	Route de Binh Tay	3
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Banh Hang	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Banh Nhut	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Banh Phuoc	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Banh Tu	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Duong chau	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Duong Ngu	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Pho Danh	Route de binh Tay	12

Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Pho Trinh	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Trinh Thuc	Route de binh Tay	12
Marchand de sacs d'emballages	Trinh To	Route de binh Tay	12
Bijoutiers à facon	Le Van Nen	Route de Binh Tay	n/a
Tourneur	Buu Van xich	Route de Mytho	n/a
Forgerons	Chau An	Rue de Barbet	51
Bourelrier	Tran Nguyen	Rue de Cai Mai	12
Bourelrier	Huynh Nha	Rue de Cai Mai	14
Menuisier à facons	Ly Tu	Rue de Cai Mai	15
Bourelrier	Tang Truong Thai	Rue de Cai Mai	17
Forgerons	Tang si	Rue de Cai Mai	27
Forgerons	Huynh Phu	Rue de Cai Mai	35
Bourelrier	Thai Trung	Rue de Cai Mai	39
Forgerons	Huynh Hoan	Rue de Cai Mai	43
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Tran Thiem	Rue de Cai Mai	44 & 48
Bourelrier	Lieu Lien	Rue de Cai Mai	45
Forgerons	La Van Hien	Rue de Cai Mai	47
Forgerons	Truong Le	Rue de Cai Mai	63
Bijoutiers à facon	La Van Dat	Rue de Cai Mai	94
Forgerons	Phung Nghi	Rue de Cai Mai	99
Bijoutiers à facon	Nguyen Van Dong	Rue de Cai Mai	133
Bijoutiers à facon	Huynh Nhut Thanh	Rue de Cai Mai	136
Bijoutiers à facon	Chau Van Thoai	Rue de Cai Mai	163
Bijoutiers à facon	Cao Huu Kiem	Rue de Cai Mai	189
Médecin indigène	Tran Van Tuan	Rue de Cai Mai	194
Entrepreneurs de pompes funèbres	Lai Huu Le	Rue de Cai Mai	223
Ferblantiers	Tieu Phuong	Rue de Canton	1
Marchand en détail	Trieu Vinh	Rue de Canton	2 & 4
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Tran La Tho	Rue de Canton	5
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	La Duong	Rue de Canton	6
Horloger rhabilleur	Tran An	Rue de Canton	7
Horloger rhabilleur	Tran Duy Nam	Rue de Canton	7

Marchand en demi-détail	Dang Loi	Rue de Canton	9 & 11
Marchand en détail	Tran Bai	Rue de Canton	13
Marchand en demi-détail	Tang Nguon	Rue de Canton	13 & 15
Taillandier	Cao Tu	Rue de Canton	14
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Lam	Rue de Canton	15
Horloger rhabilleur	Dang Dich	Rue de Canton	16
Marchand en détail	Ta Vinh	Rue de Canton	17
Marchand en demi-détail	Luong Mang	Rue de Canton	18
Marchand en détail	Luong Phuong	Rue de Canton	19
Marchand en demi-détail	Ngo Vinh Tong	Rue de Canton	21
Marchand en détail	Quan Te	Rue de Canton	21
Marchand en demi-gros	Phung Nhut	Rue de Canton	22
Marchand en demi-détail	Le Tay	Rue de Canton	23
Marchand en demi-détail	Trieu Bat, représenté par Nan Tho	Rue de Canton	24
Marchand en demi-détail	Duong Ham, représenté par La An	Rue de Canton	25
Marchand en demi-détail	Sam Phieu	Rue de Canton	26
Marchand en demi-détail	Lieu Duong	Rue de Canton	27
Marchand en demi-détail	Ta Vinh	Rue de Canton	28
Marchand en demi-détail	La Huu	Rue de Canton	30
Pharmacien asiatique	Ly Dang	Rue de Canton	31
Marchand en demi-détail	Duong Thuan	Rue de Canton	33
Marchand en demi-détail	Sam Lanh, représenté par Sam Ba	Rue de Canton	34
Marchand en demi-détail	Quang Cuu	Rue de Canton	35
Marchand en demi-détail	Truong Dinh	Rue de Canton	36
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Ngoan	Rue de Canton	37
Marchand en détail	Truong Phuoc	Rue de Canton	38
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Thien Khanh	Rue de Canton	39
Marchand en détail	Lam Ut dinh	Rue de Canton	40
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Dang	Rue de Canton	41
Marchand en détail	Nham Vi	Rue de Canton	42
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Thao	Rue de Canton	43
Marchand en détail	Quan Hoan	Rue de Canton	44
Marchand en détail	Ly Kien	Rue de Canton	45

Marchand en détail	Ou Binh	Rue de Canton	46
Marchand en demi-détail	Duong chau	Rue de Canton	47
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Duong Chau	Rue de Canton	47
Marchand en détail	Lu Bang	Rue de Canton	48
Marchand en détail	Ou Sien	Rue de Canton	49
Marchand en détail	Truong Tich Quang	Rue de Canton	51
Marchand en demi-détail	Sam Lanh, représenté par Sam Ba	Rue de Canton	52
Marchand en détail	Quan Quyen	Rue de Canton	53
Pharmacien asiatique	Chau Tu Tam	Rue de Canton	54
Marchand en détail	Mach Nghieu	Rue de Canton	55
Marchand en détail	Huynh Thien	Rue de Canton	56
Horloger rhabilleur	Dang Truong	Rue de Canton	57
Marchand en détail	Lu Kiet	Rue de Canton	58
Marchand en détail	Phung Nghieu	Rue de Canton	61
Armateurs au cabotage	Do Thi	Rue de Canton	62
Marchand en détail	O Thuan	Rue de Canton	63
Pharmacien asiatique	Tang Nam	Rue de Canton	64
Pharmacien asiatique	Truong Thang	Rue de Canton	64
Ornementiste	An Trang	Rue de Canton	65
Marchand en détail	Quan Hoan	Rue de Canton	66
Menuisier à facons	Tran Xan	Rue de Canton	67
Marchand en détail	Tien Giam	Rue de Canton	68
Menuisier à facons	Vu an	Rue de Canton	71
Restaurateur	Ly Hoc Tuyen	Rue de Canton	72
Fondeur	Diep tu Dinh	Rue de Canton	74
Rotinier	Luu Hanh	Rue de Canton	75
Marchand en détail	Tran Phuong	Rue de Canton	76
Marchand en détail	Vuong Vinh	Rue de Canton	77
Horloger rhabilleur	Thieu Minh	Rue de Canton	79
Bijoutiers et joailliers (sans magasin)	Ta Quang	Rue de Canton	80
Pharmacien asiatique	Tang Huyen	Rue de Canton	82
Rotinier	Diep Dung Vuong	Rue de Canton	83

Horloger rhabilleur	Vuong Khanh	Rue de Canton	85
Brocanteur	Huynh Khanh	Rue de Canton	88
Rotinier	Duong Ngoc	Rue de Canton	89
Brocanteur	Du Quynh	Rue de Canton	92
Bijoutiers et joailliers (sans magasin)	Tieu Thang	Rue de Canton	94
Marchand en détail	Luu Ba	Rue de Canton	96
Horloger rhabilleur	Quach Luu	Rue de Canton	97
Pharmacien asiatique	Ngu Thoai	Rue de Canton	98
Tonnelier	La Loi	Rue de Canton	99
Rotinier	Phung Do	Rue de Canton	129
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Xa Thuong	Rue de Gia phu	n/a
Ferblantiers	Truong Canh	Rue de Gialong	7
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Tan An	Rue de Gialong	8 & 10
Tonnelier	Luong Dieu	Rue de Gialong	12
Taillandier	Thai Tuong	Rue de Gialong	16
Taillandier	Tieu Duong	Rue de Gialong	17
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Le Thanh	Rue de Gialong	18 & 20
Bijoutiers et joailliers (sans magasin)	Ta Hoa	Rue de Gialong	19
Marchand en détail	Sam Lanh	Rue de Gialong	21
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Hoac Kiet	Rue de Gialong	22 & 24
Tonnelier	Huynh Truoc	Rue de Gialong	28
Taillandier	Co tu Ky	Rue de Gialong	29
Pâtissier sans four	Thai Binh	Rue de Gialong	29
Ferronnier	Ly Vinh Thuan	Rue de Gialong	30 & 32
Pâtissier sans four	Huynh Huu Luong	Rue de Gialong	31
Marchand en détail	Vuong Nguon	Rue de Gialong	31
Pharmacien asiatique	Luu Luc	Rue de Gialong	33
Tonnelier	Tang dong	Rue de Gialong	34
Bijoutiers et joailliers (sans magasin)	Phung Kinh	Rue de Gialong	35
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Tang Hanh	Rue de Gialong	36 & 38

Pâtissier sans four	Ngo Van Son	Rue de Gialong	37
Marchand en détail	Ly Vinh Thiem	Rue de Gialong	39
Tonnelier	Huynh Thuan Quoi	Rue de Gialong	40
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Hoac Hien Hanh, représenté par Tang Hanh	Rue de Gialong	42
Forgerons	Tang Hanh	Rue de Gialong	46
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Hoac Nang	Rue de Gialong	47
Pharmacien asiatique	Luu Cang	Rue de Gialong	49
Marchand en détail	Pho Ton Huu	Rue de Gialong	49
Taillandier	Ngu Truc	Rue de Gialong	50
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Hoac Thuan	Rue de Gialong	52
Pâtissier sans four	Huynh Duc Vinh	Rue de Gialong	53
Restaurateur	Ly Thuan	Rue de Gialong	53 & 55
Tonnelier	Lieu Phong	Rue de Gialong	56
Menuisier (avec approvisionnements)	Tran Dang, représenté par Tran Loi	Rue de Gialong	57
Rotinier	Doan Nam	Rue de Gialong	58
Pâtissier sans four	Uong Ngu	Rue de Gialong	60
Pharmacien asiatique	Li Van	Rue de Gialong	62 & 64
Ferblantiers	Tong Chieu	Rue de Gialong	73
Marchand en détail	Ho Bao	Rue de Gialong	79 & 80
Forgerons	Hoac Chi	Rue de Gialong	86
Imprimeurs au tampon	Huynh Linh	Rue de Gialong	98
Pâtissier sans four	Duong Triet	Rue de Gialong	102
Teinturier	Lam Toan Tai	Rue de Gialong	112
Bijoutiers à facon	Nguyen Van Yen	Rue de Gocong	29
Teinturier	Hua Hau	Rue de Gocong	31
Bijoutiers à facon	Huynh Van Tien	Rue de Gocong	31
Fabricants de cercueils	Pham Van Long	Rue de Gocong	71
Teinturier	Dang Thi Ngoam	Rue de Gocong	n/a
Teinturier	Huynh Thi Hoa	Rue de Gocong	n/a
Teinturier	Lam Thanh Hung	Rue de Gocong	n/a
Théâtre ambulant	Nguyen Thi Huu	Rue de Gocong	n/a

Forgerons	Nguyen Van Hien	Rue de Gocong	n/a
Théâtre ambulant	Thai Loc	Rue de Gocong	n/a
Ferblantiers	Huynh Anh	Rue de la Pagode	6
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Vien Kieu	Rue de la Pagode	8
Marchand en détail	Tran Huu Thoai	Rue de la Pagode	9
Marchand en détail	Phu Thoan	Rue de la Pagode	10
Marchand en détail	Huynh Chan Dai	Rue de la Pagode	11 & 12
Marchand en détail	Ly Van	Rue de la Pagode	13 & 14
Marchand en détail	Huynh Quoi Sum	Rue de la Pagode	15
Marchand en détail	Huynh Giap Tien	Rue de la Pagode	17
Marchand en détail	Trinh Tru	Rue de la Pagode	18
Marchand en détail	To Tue	Rue de la Pagode	19
Échoppier	Khuu Dat	Rue de la Pagode	25
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Vien Kien	Rue de la Pagode	25
Marchand en détail	Chung Hung	Rue de la Pagode	30
Ferblantiers	Truong Binh	Rue de la Pagode	48
Teinturier	Chung Bich Hung	Rue de l'Abattoir	n/a
Teinturier	Ly Thanh Trau	Rue de Lapelin	n/a
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Lam Hoa	Rue de Palikao	5
Théâtre ambulant	Le Thi Thien	Rue de Palikao	n/a
Tailleur de pierres	Ly tu	Rue de Paris	1
Menuisier à facons	Dang Truong	Rue de Paris	5
Tailleur de pierres	Dai Nham Huu	Rue de Paris	7
Pâtissier sans four	Tong Quang	Rue de Paris	8
Tailleur de pierres	Truong Thang	Rue de Paris	9
Menuisier à facons	Tran Tue	Rue de Paris	10
Forgerons	Ta Truong	Rue de Paris	11
Menuisier à facons	Phan Luc	Rue de Paris	12
Forgerons	Luu Thach Chuong	Rue de Paris	13
Marchand en détail	Lam Duc	Rue de Paris	14
Forgerons	Ly Nhi Dong	Rue de Paris	15
Menuisier à facons	Tran Dang	Rue de Paris	16
Pharmacien asiatique	Truong Luong	Rue de Paris	18

Pharmacien asiatique	Quach Thuong Ngoc	Rue de Paris	21
Menuisier à facons	Lam Dat Quan	Rue de Paris	25
Forgerons	Ta Sam	Rue de Paris	27
Pâtissier sans four	Thi An	Rue de Paris	28
Théâtre ambulant	Luong Huu	Rue de Paris	32
Teinturier	Lam Chau Ngai	Rue de Paris	33 & 35
Pharmacien asiatique	Luong Chuyen Thuy	Rue de Paris	36
Bijoutiers à facon	Nguyen Quan Huy	Rue de Paris	37
Forgerons	Lam Phat	Rue de Paris	41
Échoppier	Ly Vinh	Rue de Paris	42
Ferblantiers	Chung Thang	Rue de Paris	42 & 44
Forgerons	Luong Phong My	Rue de Paris	43
Pharmacien asiatique	Kiem Tap	Rue de Paris	45
Ferblantiers	Dinh Tu	Rue de Paris	46&48
Pâtissier sans four	Lam Thuan Sanh	Rue de Paris	50
Pâtissier sans four	Tang Nghiep	Rue de Paris	54
Échoppier	Phan Luc	Rue de Paris	55 & 57
Théâtre ambulant	Huynh Long	Rue de Paris	60
Théâtre ambulant	Vien Thanh	Rue de Paris	60
Médecin asiatique	Duong Thoai	Rue de Paris	61
Échoppier	Banh Vinh	Rue de Paris	62
Marchand en détail	Hiep Dich	Rue de Paris	66
Pâtissier sans four	Lam Bich	Rue de Paris	68
Pharmacien asiatique	Dang Luong	Rue de Paris	69
Gargotier	Du Hien	Rue de Paris	71
Gargotier	Bach Khon	Rue de Paris	72
Marchand en détail	Nham Luong	Rue de Paris	73
Pâtissier sans four	To Nhieu	Rue de Paris	79
Échoppier	Luc Pham	Rue de Paris	83
Échoppier	Tran Diem	Rue de Paris	83
Ferblantiers	Ly Hoc Tuyen	Rue de Paris	86
Marchand en détail	To Sang	Rue de Paris	91
Échoppier	Bach Dat	Rue de Paris	95

Échoppier	Vang Binh	Rue de Paris	95
Cabaretier	Quan Hue	rue de Paris	101
Teinturier	Hua Thiep Cao	Rue de Paris	108
Blanchisseur	Duong That	Rue de Paris	115
Pharmacien indigène	Le Van Cua	Rue de Paris	129
Bijoutiers à facon	Cao Van Que	Rue de Paris	150
Médecin indigène	Tran Van Tu	Rue de Paris	164
Fondeur	Nguyen Van Quoi	Rue de Peiho	n/a
Tonnelier	Dau Tan	Rue de Sanh hoa	2
Ferblantiers	Lac xuong	rue de Sanh hoa	5
Horloger rhabilleur	Dang Hai	rue de Sanh hoa	6
Ferblantiers	Tien Duc	rue de Sanh hoa	8
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Nam Van dien	Rue de Sanh hoa	10
Tonnelier	Ngu Nhut	Rue de Sanh hoa	11
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Chau Thanh	Rue de Sanh hoa	14
Marchand en détail	Chau Binh Thanh	Rue de Sanh hoa	17
Marchand en détail	Truong Nhut	Rue de Sanh hoa	18
Marchand en détail	Huynh Giap Tien	Rue de Sanh hoa	22
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Ly Tho	Rue de Sanh hoa	23
Marchand en détail	Du Khai	Rue de Sanh hoa	24
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Giang Vinh	Rue de Sanh hoa	25
Ferblantiers	Ma BA	rue de Sanh hoa	25
Marchand en détail	Huynh Thuan Dinh	Rue de Sanh hoa	28
Forgerons	Tong Bang	Rue de Sanh Hoa	29
Tonnelier	Tang Tan	Rue de Sanh hoa	31
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	truong Tai	Rue de Sanh hoa	33
Marchand en détail	Huynh Khoan	Rue de Sanh hoa	34
Ferblantiers	Luong Si	rue de Sanh hoa	35
Tonnelier	Dao Bon	Rue de Sanh hoa	36
Horloger rhabilleur	Dang dong	rue de Sanh hoa	46
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Ong Phuoc	Rue de Sanh hoa	47
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	On Phuoc	Rue de Sanh hoa	50
Teinturier	Chiem Sum	Rue de Thap Muoi	n/a

Teinturier	Le Thi Khoe	Rue de Thap Muoi	n/a
Théâtre ambulant	Nguyen Van Cu	Rue Dellefosse	n/a
Cordonnier	Dang Tran Kien	Rue des Ébénistes	1 & 3
Cordonnier	Dang Tuong	Rue des Ébénistes	4
Cordonnier	Khuu Mai	Rue des Ébénistes	5
Tonnelier	Trac Xa	Rue des Ébénistes	11
Cordonnier	Dang Nhuan Sanh	Rue des Ébénistes	12
Cordonnier	Tao Hi	Rue des Ébénistes	13
Cordonnier	Tran A Cau	Rue des Ébénistes	14
Cordonnier	Diep Noi	Rue des Ébénistes	16
Menuisier à facons	Tran Co	Rue des Ébénistes	18
Cordonnier	Diep Hen	Rue des Ébénistes	20
Menuisier à facons	Loi Binh	Rue des Ébénistes	21
Menuisier à facons	Tran an	Rue des Ébénistes	21
Cordonnier	Dang Tu Kieu	Rue des Ébénistes	22
Cordonnier	Dang Quoi Huu	Rue des Ébénistes	24
Menuisier à facons	Lat Lam	Rue des Ébénistes	25
Menuisier à facons	Truong Thoai	Rue des Ébénistes	25
Cordonnier	Ly Thi Cang	Rue des Ébénistes	26
Tonnelier	Phan Kieu	Rue des Ébénistes	27
Cordonnier	Huynh Thi Hao	Rue des Ébénistes	28
Menuisier à facons	Mach Cu	Rue des Ébénistes	29
Cordonnier	Dang Nhuan Sanh	Rue des Ébénistes	30
Cordonnier	Lu Nhon	Rue des Ébénistes	30
Cordonnier	Tran Van	Rue des Ébénistes	32
Marchand en détail	Sé Semadoumoumadou	Rue des Jardins	3
Marchand en détail	S. Nemamougamadou	Rue des Jardins	4
Marchand en détail	S. Neinamougamadou	Rue des Jardins	6
Pâtissier sans four	Lam Dinh	Rue des Jardins	8
Marchand en détail	Tang Mien Trach	Rue des Jardins	9
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Que Thien, représenté par Tran Cu	Rue des Jardins	9
Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Oc	Rue des Jardins	11

Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Meo, représenté par Huynh Thinh	Rue des Jardins	12
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Thi	Rue des Jardins	13
Marchand en détail	Tang Si	Rue des Jardins	14
Marchand en détail	Huynh Viet Giang	Rue des Jardins	15
Ferblantiers	Luong Thinh	Rue des Jardins	16
Marchand en demi-gros	Duong Thanh, représenté par Duong Tai	Rue des Jardins	17
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Phu Nam	Rue des Jardins	19
Marchand en demi-gros	Ly Tuong	Rue des Jardins	21
Ferblantiers	Luong Thanh	Rue des Jardins	22
Marchand en demi-détail	Lam Truong Nhu	Rue des Jardins	23
Ferblantiers	Tang Tuong	Rue des Jardins	24
Marchand en détail	Nghi Chau Sang	Rue des Jardins	25
Marchand en demi-détail	Ho Truong	Rue des Jardins	27
Marchand en demi-détail	Loi Gia	Rue des Jardins	29
Marchand en demi-détail	Dang Yen Huong	Rue des Jardins	33
Marchand en demi-détail	Ha Tam Chi	Rue des Jardins	35
Marchand en demi-détail	Quan Tho	Rue des Jardins	37
Marchand en demi-détail	Ngo Can	Rue des Jardins	43
Gargotier	Tran Van Hung	Rue des Jardins	43
Ferblantiers	Vuong Le Ky	Rue des Jardins	45 & 47
Pharmacien asiatique	Huynh anh	Rue des Jardins	49
Marchand en demi-détail	Phung Phan	Rue des Jardins	51
Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Tan, représenté par Truong Doan	Rue des Jardins	55 & 57
Marchand en demi-détail	Ly Tay	Rue des Jardins	61
Marchand en détail	Tang Nhu	Rue des Jardins	63
Marchand en détail	Huynh Thuong	Rue des Jardins	67
Boulangier	Luu Quoi	Rue des Jardins	69
Marchand en détail	Thien Chung	Rue des Jardins	71
Marchand en détail	Quach Quan bang	Rue des Jardins	75
Marchand en demi-gros	Luong Hong, représenté par Luong Dien	Rue des Jardins	77
Marchand en détail	Huynh Tuyen	Rue des Jardins	81

Pharmacien asiatique	Le Thanh Vien	Rue des Jardins	85
Marchand en détail	Khoa Kim Phan	Rue des Jardins	87
Pâtissier sans four	Ly Ke	Rue des Jardins	89
Marchand en détail	Huynh Bau	Rue des Jardins	93
Marchand en détail	Ong Luong Vinh	Rue des Jardins	95
Boulangier	Du Truong	Rue des Jardins	97
Pharmacien asiatique	Trieu Toan	Rue des Jardins	99
Restaurateur	Do Nang/Kiet Chuong	Rue des Jardins	105
Fabricants de Cartes à jouer	Tran Tran	Rue des Marins	8
Forgerons	Vien Hung	Rue des Marins	23
Gargotier	Thoi Vien	Rue des Marins	58
Marchand en détail	Lac Mang	rue des Marins	62
Gargotier	Long Nghieu	Rue des Marins	66
Jeux de baques	Chung Van	Rue des Marins	83
Ornementiste	Ly Chieu	Rue des Marins	84
Marchand en détail	Chung Thung	rue des Marins	85
Menuisier à facons	Dang quan	Rue des Marins	85
Échoppier	Ta Thai	Rue des Marins	86
Ornementiste	Truc Tang	Rue des Marins	86
Jeux de baques	Chung Hoa	Rue des Marins	87
Marchand en détail	Hong Bi	rue des Marins	91
Échoppier	Quan Hanh Tchiong	Rue des Marins	100
Tonnellier	Lac Boi An	Rue des Marins	102
Échoppier	Luu Quang	rue des Marins	104
Pharmacien asiatique	Ho Dao	Rue des Marins	106
Bijoutiers à facon	Dinh Hoan Chuong	Rue des Marins	108
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Hoac An	Rue des Marins	109
Marchand en détail	Lu Yen Hong	rue des Marins	111
Menuisier à facons	Dang Chan	Rue des Marins	112
Menuisier à facons	Mao Chuong	Rue des Marins	112
Marchand en détail	To Huyen/Hon You	rue des Marins	115
Photograph	Dang bich	Rue des Marins	116
Blanchisseur	Phu Dieu	Rue des Marins	118

Marchand en détail	Luu Dong	rue des Marins	123
Mont-de-piété de Cholon	Mach Kiet	Rue des Marins	123
Blanchisseur	Phung Xuan	Rue des Marins	124
Gargotier	Ma Ta	Rue des Marins	125
Gargotier	Huynh Boi	Rue des Marins	131
Marchand en détail	Luong Sanh	rue des Marins	132
Logeur d'ouvrier	Ta Boi	Rue des Marins	133
Marchand en détail	Diec Minh	rue des Marins	135
Pharmacien asiatique	Luong Luc	Rue des Marins	136
Échoppier	Lam Cam	rue des Marins	143
Pharmacien asiatique	Truong Khac Tien	Rue des Marins	147
Ornementiste	Ly Quan	Rue des Marins	149
Échoppier	Lao Hi	Rue des Marins	151
Bijoutiers à facon	Ninh Phan	Rue des Marins	156
Théâtre ambulant	Vuong Tinh	Rue des marins	159
Fabricants de Cartes à jouer	Lam Phan	Rue des Marins	166 & 168
Échoppier	Luu Hoa	Rue des Marins	167
Tailleur d'habits asiatiques	Tu So	Rue des Marins	171
Brocanteur	Luong Anh	Rue des Marins	183&185
Photograph	Luong anh	rue des Marins	185
Bijoutiers à facon	Truong Van Co	Rue des Marins	193
Pharmacien indigène	Ca Huu Duc	Rue des Marins	230
Laitier	Pham Thi Hon	Rue des Marins	259
Laitier	Le Thi Soi	Rue des Marins	261
Entrepreneurs de pompes funèbres	Lam Thi Kiem	Rue des Marins	n/a
Théâtre ambulant	Tran Ngoc Phuong	Rue des Marins	n/a
Teinturier	Diep Thi Giau	Rue des Roses	18 & 32
Fabricants d'Amulettes	Ha Dat	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a
Tanneur	Ha Kiet	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a
Tanneur	Huynh Nam	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a
Tanneur	Nguyen Thi Mang	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a
Fondeur	Nguyen Van Vien	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a

Tanneur	Thai Thin	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a
Tanneur	Thien Hoang	Rue des Tanneurs	n/a
Marchand en détail	J. Kadersah	Rue du Marché	4
Ferblantiers	Dang Chi	Rue du Marché	6 & 8
Marchand en détail	Tang Ich Hien	Rue du Marché	14
Marchand en détail	Anagadoubaermarecane	Rue du Marché	16
Marchand en détail	Phung Hau	Rue du Marché	18
Marchand en demi-détail	Tang Chi	Rue du Marché	18
Marchand en demi-détail	Quan Tinh	Rue du Marché	20
Marchand en détail	Ly Thiem Mai	Rue du Marché	24
Ferblantiers	Ly Tinh	Rue du Marché	24
Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Tan	Rue du Marché	26
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Thien Khanh	Rue du Marché	32 & 34
Marchand en demi-détail	Phung Toan	Rue du Marché	36
Marchand en demi-détail	Tang Khanh	Rue du Marché	38
Marchand en demi-détail	Lichthion	Rue du Marché	40
Marchand en demi-détail	Huynh Minh	Rue du Marché	42&44
Aubergiste	Tran Duc	Rue du Marché	46
Marchand en demi-détail	Tran Duy Huu	Rue du Marché	48 & 50
Échoppier	Luong Kiem	Rue du Marché	52
Bijoutiers à facon	Tran Van DAT	Rue du Marché	60
Ferblantiers	Ha Hau	Rue du Marché	64
Gargotier	Chau Dinh	Rue du Marché	68
Pâtissier sans four	Dong Kinh	Rue du Marché	72
Pâtissier sans four	Ly Long	Rue Lareynière	2
Pharmacien asiatique	Ngan Van Nam	Rue Lareynière	11
Tonnelier	Dao Thang	Rue Lareynière	16
Marchand de Poteries	Vuong Chanh	Rue Lareynière	18
Marchand en détail	Lam Ba Huan	Rue Lareynière	19
Marchand en détail	Ong Phong Hoa	Rue Lareynière	21 & 23
Marchand en demi-détail	Ha Lai Minh	Rue Lareynière	22 & 24
Marchand en détail	Tang Hien	Rue Lareynière	25
Marchand en détail	Lieu Binh Quang	Rue Lareynière	29

Cordonnier	La Van Quang	Rue Lareynière	30 & 32
Marchand en détail	Truong Giam	Rue Lareynière	33
Marchand en détail	Hua Binh Khe	Rue Lareynière	35
Tailleur de pierres	Banh A Tu	Rue Lareynière	45
Tailleur de pierres	La Phuoc	Rue Lareynière	47
Imprimeurs au tampon	Diep Tham	Rue Lareynière	48
Ferblantiers	Trinh Hoa	Rue Lareynière	58
Forgerons	Thai Tho	Rue Lareynière	60
Tailleur de pierres	Ho Sanh	Rue Lareynière	98 & 100
Pâtissier sans four	Tang Phung	Rue Lareynière	119
Bijoutiers à facon	Ly Van My	Rue Lareynière	137
Forgerons	Luu Tan	Rue Lareynière	140
Théâtre ambulant	Luong Van Tai	Ruelle du théâtre	n/a
Entrepreneur de grands travaux et travaux divers	Giong Hao	Saigon ville	n/a
Fermier	Giang Phu	Saigon ville	n/a
Teinturier	Vo Van Minh	Village de Phu Lam	n/a