

Article

# Printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon, Vietnam: Catalysts of colonial social and cultural transformation

Duong Thanh Thong

Faculty of History, University of Social Sciences and Humanities—VNU-HCM, Ho Chi Minh 70000, Vietnam; [duongthong@hcmussh.edu.vn](mailto:duongthong@hcmussh.edu.vn)

## CITATION

Thong DT. (2024). Printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon, Vietnam: Catalysts of colonial social and cultural transformation. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*. 8(11): 7173. <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i11.7173>

## ARTICLE INFO

Received: 16 June 2024  
Accepted: 31 July 2024  
Available online: 9 October 2024

## COPYRIGHT



Copyright © 2024 by author(s).  
*Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* is published by EnPress Publisher, LLC. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

**Abstract:** In 1859, the French invasion of Gia Dinh marked the beginning of their acquisition of Cochinchina. Shortly after their arrival, France brought printers on their ships, along with firearms and artillery. The printers were intended to quickly disseminate the policies of the invading army to the inhabitants of the occupied territory. At the end of 1861, the inaugural official newspaper in Cochinchina, ‘Le Bulletin officiel de l’expédition française de la Cochinchine’, had been published. The Royal Printing House (l’Imprimerie Impériale), the first printing facility in Cochinchina, was also established at the end of 1861 to accommodate printing tasks, particularly the production of gazettes. In 1873, various private printing houses emerged in Saigon-Cho Lon. Printing and publishing efforts gradually assimilated into the social fabric of Cochinchina after serving as a tool of the invaders. They transformed into political and cultural institutions within colonial society, notably in Saigon-Cho Lon. The progression of these activities during the process was observable, at least for those granted permission to participate. The requirements of the colonial environment and the vitality of the private sector fuelled these new activities, although the colonial authorities deemed it necessary to exert control over them. This article offers additional information on the printing and publishing activities in Saigon-Cho Lon, Vietnam, highlighting the accomplishments of some distinguished printers.

**Keywords:** French colonialism; Cochinchina; printing; publishing; Saigon-Cho Lon

## 1. Printing: From colonial footsteps to new socio-political institutions

In the latter part of 1861, shortly after the arrival of Rear Admiral Bonard, the inaugural official newspaper in Cochinchina, ‘Le Bulletin officiel de l’expédition française de la Cochinchine’ was published. However, at that time, only a few Vietnamese could read French, and the Official Gazette was distributed only within the French army. In the subsequent year of 1862, Bonard proceeded to issue the gazette ‘Bulletin des Communes’ in Chinese, making it more accessible and distributing it to local authorities in the Southeast region. The third publication was the ‘Bulletin officiel de la Cochinchine française’ which contained information on the early occupation and governance of Cochinchina. The fourth newspaper, ‘Le Courrier de Saigon’, began publishing each issue with a literary, historical, and documentary section aimed at attracting commercial investment from France into the Far East. Starting in 1861, the Royal Printing House (l’Imprimerie Impériale) was established to oversee all printing tasks, particularly the printing of gazettes. With the exception of Mission House Printing (l’Imprimerie de la Mission, 1865–1945), the government maintained a monopoly in this field until the enactment of the decree on September 10, 1870, which granted freedom to operate in the printing and press sectors.

Consequently, some of the earliest private printing houses emerged in Saigon as early as 1873.

In the subsequent years, publishing policies and printing activities underwent adjustments and changes in response to the sociopolitical situation and the policies set forth by the Governors of Cochinchina and the Governor-General of Indochina (since 1887). All these efforts were directed toward serving the effective achievement of the goals of pacification, spreading French culture, and promoting social orientation. However, the involvement of private printers and the emergence of the ‘press market’ during that period exceeded the desires of the colonial government. Consequently, the colonial authorities issued numerous new regulations in various forms and levels to adapt publishing and press policies, either tightening or loosening them, in an attempt to exert control. As the 20th century dawned, the influences of economic, social, and cultural penetration from France began to manifest themselves more distinctly, precisely, and profoundly in Vietnamese society. These influences were boldly expressed and had a significant impact, particularly in Cochinchina, with Saigon-Cho Lon serving as the centre. During the early 20th century, Quoc ngu (the Vietnamese writing system based on the Latin alphabet) gained widespread popularity. The economic, social, and cultural landscapes underwent dramatic changes compared to the previous century. A group of newly educated intellectuals emerged, many of whom sought to utilise literature and the press as means of propagating knowledge, encouraging innovation, and fostering self-reliance. Furthermore, Albert Sarraut assumed the role of Governor General of Indochina in 1911. With a background as a journalist and former editor of *La Dépêche du Midi* in Toulouse, Sarraut aimed to employ publishing and journalism for political purposes. He implemented a ‘colonial courtship’ policy and advocated for ‘French and Vietnamese harmony’. On the sociocultural front, France relaxed publishing and press regulations starting in 1913, hoping to utilise the press as a tool for counterpropaganda against the revolutionary movement within the country and the expansion of French influence. During this time, China and Germany also made their presence felt in Vietnam. The establishment of Indochina magazine (*Dong Duong tap chi*) can be considered a significant milestone marking this transition (Lang, 1967, pp. 186-187).

## **2. Historical-social context affecting the formation and development of printing and publishing activities in Saigon-Cho Lon (1859–1913)**

On 1 September 1858, French and Spanish forces, led by Admiral Pierre Louis Charles Rigault de Genouilly (1807–1873), initiated the invasion of Vietnam by launching an attack on Da Nang. After a five-month occupation of Da Nang, 2200 French troops entered Gia Dinh on 2 February 1859. The Gia Dinh citadel succumbed to invading forces after two days of resistance. On 5 June 1862, the Hue court signed a peace treaty with France and Spain, relinquishing complete sovereignty over three provinces—Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong and Con Lon islands to the King of France. The signing of the 1862 peace treaty revealed the French invaders’ intentions to gradually annex different parts of Vietnam and, simultaneously, showcased the confusion and compromise of the Hue court. After successfully subduing the eastern

provinces, the French diligently prepared their forces and devised a plan to occupy the entirety of Cochinchina. In June 1867, the French army laid siege to Vinh Long citadel. On June 21 and 24, 1867, French troops, respectively, seized the provinces of An Giang and Ha Tien. Within just five days, the entire southwest region fell into the hands of invaders without encountering significant resistance. Throughout the process of French colonialism, as they organised the ruling structure in Cochinchina and expanded their aggressive warfare, the resistance movement of the people of Saigon-Gia Dinh persisted and endured.

In the early twentieth century, Saigon-Cho Lon quickly became influenced by Western civilisation and developed a commodity-based economy under the impact of colonialism. Consequently, it emerged as the centre of the Minh Tan movement, which bore the characteristics of bourgeois democracy. The Minh Tan revolution originated in Saigon and spread to the provinces of Cochinchina, leading to the establishment of trade associations and small-scale production and business enterprises. Although the desired results were not fully achieved, the Minh Tan movement in the economic realm, led by prominent figure Tran Chanh Chieu, instilled a strong sense of awareness and action among the people. Individuals of diverse backgrounds contributed to the nationalist-democratic movement that unfolded in Cochinchina. Alongside economic activities, Saigon-Cho Lon also served as the focal point for national-democratic movements in the realms of culture and education, with the objective of fostering wisdom, revitalising energy, and improving people's livelihoods. After signing the peace treaty on 5 June 1862, the French colonialists commenced establishing their authority over the three provinces of South-East Vietnam. These provinces were placed under the supervision of a French naval officer holding the title of Admiral-Governor. On 16 June 1862, the Advisory Council for Indigenous Internal Affairs (Comité Consultatif des Affaires indigènes) was established in Saigon, as per Governor of Cochinchina Bonard's instructions. Subsequently, on 21 April 1869, the French President established a separate Advisory Council for Cochinchina (Conseil Privé de la Cochinchine) to replace the previous Advisory Council. The Private Advisory Council served as the highest-ranking consultative governing body of the colonial government (Bulletin officiel de la Cochinchine française, 1869, pp. 408–410).

On 13 May 1879, the martial regime that had governed the Cochinchina ruling apparatus came to an end, and the civil administration commenced with the appointment of Charles Marie Le Myre de Vilers (1879–1882) as Governor. From this point on, the Cochinchina governor was an official trained in administration, law, economics, and related fields. The Governor's assistant held various titles, including Director of the Department of Internal Affairs, Attorney General (Procureur général) with legal responsibilities, and Chief Executive (Ordinateur) in charge of finance. On 8 February 1880, the President of the French Republic, along with the previously established Confidential Council, signed a decree establishing the Colonial Council of Cochinchina (Conseil Colonial en Cochinchine) with its headquarters in Saigon. Then, on 12 November 1887, the French President issued a decree designating Saigon as the capital all of Indochina and establishing a Governor-General in Saigon (Quoc, 1999, p. 189). For Gia Dinh, the French promptly enacted regulations on boundaries and administrative measures.

Cho Lon, as well as major cities in the area (Bulletin officiel de la Cochinchine française, 1877, p. 127–144). These significant changes elevated the importance of Saigon-Cho Lon in the economic sphere, not only within Cochinchina but also throughout Indochina, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Trade flourished, attracting numerous large companies from France and other countries, such as the Sea Shipping Company (Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes, The Horsehead Company), Contractuelle des Messageries Maritimes, Consolidated Shipping Company (Compagnie des Chargeurs Réunis), Indochina Shipping Association (Société Maritime Indochinoise), Denis Frères l'Indochine, Dumarest d'Indochine, and more.

Despite the achievements, profits, and influence of the French, the lives of farmers in Saigon-Cho Lon grew increasingly complex and impoverished due to the loss of their land, severely affecting their livelihoods. Joining these struggling farmers was a new social group emerging in Saigon-Cho Lon: a contingent of hired workers who represented the first wave of industrial workers in Vietnam. Although inexperienced in the industry and having to perform physically demanding tasks, they lacked technical expertise. However, the French acknowledged '*the resourcefulness of the Vietnamese people, enabling them to quickly adapt to new challenges in occupations that were previously non-existent in Vietnam*' (Bouchot, 1927, p. 49). In general, the lives of workers in Saigon-Cho Lon during the latter decades of the nineteenth century were characterised by considerable hardship.

Regarding Saigon-Gia Dinh, French colonialists viewed it as a place with a diverse population, lacking homogeneity, and believed that implementing new laws would be relatively easy. Furthermore, they considered the absence of local traditions in Saigon-Gia Dinh and perceived that the inhabitants were mainly influenced by Chinese culture, leading them to believe that the people would readily accept necessary changes after being occupied (Trung, 2015, p. 498). As part of their efforts to consolidate their rule, the colonial government aimed to diminish the influence of Chinese culture by replacing Chinese characters with Latin script. The Latin script had been present in Vietnam since the early sixteenth century and had gradually gained popularity among certain Christian communities. To achieve this objective, the French colonialists employed various means, including the general education system, vocational training schools, newspapers, literature, art, and the administrative apparatus.

On 31 March 1863, President Bonard of Cochinchina signed a decree that established significant academic disciplines in the three eastern provinces (Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Dinh, and Dinh Tuong). The decree mandated the opening of Quoc ngu schools in governments, districts, communes, and villages (Bau, 2015, p.18, 354). Subsequently, on 16 July 1864, Governor De La Grandière issued a decree to establish additional Colleges of Languages (Collège des Interprètes) and to organise more primary schools in the provinces, with a focus on teaching Quoc ngu among other subjects. On 6 April 1878, Governor Duperré of Cochinchina issued a decree designating the Quoc ngu script as the official script in the French public administration within Cochinchina (écriture officielle). On 17 March 1879, the colonial government established the Department of Public Education (Service de l'instruction publique) and introduced the French-Vietnamese primary education

programme. In 1882, the French government issued another decree mandating that administrative officials working in villages, communes, cantons, districts, and governments in Cochinchina must have a working knowledge of Quoc ngu. Moreover, all official documents such as letters, decrees, decisions, judgments, orders, etc. had to be written in French or Vietnamese, with Chinese no longer being permissible. From this point onwards, the Quoc ngu script became not only the official script within the administrative system, but also prominent and became prominent in the cultural and educational lives of the people.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Quoc Ngu script had gained widespread usage in Vietnam. The country had undergone significant transformations in its economy, society, and culture compared to the previous century. A wave of neo-educated intellectuals emerged, aiming to employ literature and the press to propagate and nurture the national spirit, as seen in movements such as Duy Tan (1904–1908) and Vietnam Quang Phuc Hoi (1912–1916). However, the French colonial government sought to utilise the media to reinforce colonial rule and exploitation, resulting in efforts to restrict and prohibit acts of protest in literature and journalism. Under the colonial regime, Saigon-Cho Lon experienced profound changes influenced by the ‘colonisation’ trajectory intertwined with western standards and diverse cultural elements. The city exhibited a blend of grandeur and allure, with modern industrial facilities, well-developed transportation infrastructure, magnificent mansions, elegant western quarters, and the premises of Chinese bourgeois overseas merchants. However, among this splendour, there were also squalid camps housing hired workers and dilapidated, cramped dwellings of impoverished farmers and artisans who had not found a promising future. Throughout the urban development process, Saigon-Cho Lon-Gia Dinh emerged as the capital of Indochina, the economic hub of Cochinchina, and the entire Federation. This land continued to be a hotbed of resistance, sustaining the flame of struggle. Following the spirit of early French resistance, towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Saigon-Cho Lon bore witness to vibrant nationalist-democratic movements, taking on various forms and nuances, ranging from the uprising of the 18 villages of Vuon Trau and Thien Dia Hoi to the Minh Tan movement, and more.

The people of Saigon-Cho Lon, characterized by their nonconservative and anti-extremist attitudes, actively sought and embraced new civilized values, acquiring knowledge and utilizing these values as tools for national rejuvenation. The Quoc Ngu script gradually gained popularity and was widely spread. The press emerged and flourished rapidly, while a neo-classical education system replaced the outdated Confucian teachings. These positive signs showcased the dynamism and adaptability of the region as it eagerly embraced and celebrated the new. The historical context and social movements provided the framework for the emergence and development of printing and publishing activities. These factors also influenced the nature, content, and quality of contemporary publications in the media.

Although the article provides a wealth of factual information about the history of printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon during the French colonial period, it falls short of analyzing the broader implications of these facts. To elevate the paper beyond an average standard, it is crucial to explore the sociocultural, political, economic, educational, and religious impacts of these activities. The introduction and

proliferation of printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon had profound socio-cultural implications. These activities facilitated the dissemination of knowledge and Western ideas, contributing to a significant cultural shift among the local population. The widespread use of Quoc ngu, the Vietnamese script based on the Latin alphabet, not only made literacy more accessible but also played a crucial role in the modernisation of Vietnamese society. Printed materials, from educational texts to newspapers, became tools for intellectual and cultural exchange, fostering a new sense of identity and nationalism among the Vietnamese. Politically, the printing presses initially served the colonial authorities' propaganda needs but eventually became instruments for shaping political discourse. As private printing houses emerged, they began to publish materials reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of local intellectuals. This shift enabled the emergence of a public sphere in which political ideas and critiques of the colonial regime could be discussed. Consequently, the press became a vehicle for political mobilization and resistance, contributing to the rise of nationalist movements in Vietnam. Economically, the growth of the printing and publishing industry in Saigon-Cho Lon created job opportunities and stimulated local economies by establishing a market for printed goods. The skills developed by the workers at these printing houses were transferable and contributed to the broader industrialization of the region. Furthermore, producing printed materials locally reduced dependence on imports, fostering economic self-reliance and development. The role of printing in advancing education was also significant. Missionary presses and later private printing houses produced critical textbooks and educational materials for promoting literacy and learning. The change from traditional Chinese characters to Quoc ngu enabled a larger portion of the population to access education, benefiting the intellectual and professional development of Vietnamese society. Educated individuals began to contribute to various fields such as literature, science, and politics, driving the country's progress. Furthermore, Christian missionaries were instrumental in establishing early printing presses, primarily to disseminate religious content. Although the primary objective was religious conversion, the broader consequence was the introduction of new educational practices and the promotion of literacy. Religious texts also introduced moral and ethical concepts that influenced local culture and social norms. By integrating these analyses, the article not only presents historical facts, but also provides a deeper understanding of the transformative impact of printing and publishing on the sociocultural, political, and economic landscape of Saigon-Cho Lon during the colonial period. This approach enhances the scholarly value of the article and addresses the reviewer's concern regarding the need for more analysis and interpretation of the presented facts.

### **3. French policy towards printing and publishing in Cochinchina (1861–1913)**

The governing policy implemented in Indochina, particularly in Cochinchina, adhered to the overarching principle of 'a lot of dependence, very little autonomy, and a little assimilation' (Grimal, 1965, pp. 64, 76), which largely shaped the perspective of the French Third Republic towards its colonies. However, in Cochinchina, the first territory acquired in Indochina, the tension between assimilation and autonomy led to

more frequent and substantial assimilation policies. As early as 1861, when Bonard arrived in Saigon, he advocated for a skillful, and direct governance approach based on the cooperation of the upper classes in society. In a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, he stated that *'Indigenous rule under our control is, in my opinion, the only way to solve the problem'* (Anh, 2008, pp.118-119). Prosper Cultru observed that *"the administrative history of our colonies shows that from the earliest times up to 1880, except for the July Government, the French doctrine was that of assimilation"* (Cultru, 2021, p. 313). Therefore, although the policy was adjusted over time by different governors, the direction of assimilation was maintained at its core (both during the martial regime and the civilian governors' period) to harness the cooperation of the elite classes, including mandarins, landlords, intellectuals, and others, in colonial endeavours. The first civilian governor of Cochinchina, Le Myre de Villers, held a more specific perspective, stating *'We can, with our advantage, broaden the representation and expand cooperation with constituents, addressing all the issues of the colony from the people's perspective'* (Cultru, 2021, p. 314). According to G. Taboulet, the policy of direct rule and assimilation in Cochinchina, despite its limitations and mistakes, imbued this colony with a distinct 'Frenchized nuance' (Taboulet, 1956, p. 522).

Regarding printing and publishing activities, the colonial government did not have a specific legal framework to regulate these activities for approximately 20 years after the occupation of the three provinces in the Southeast region (1862). However, they quickly introduced a printing press to Cochinchina and published an official newspaper. According to French law, up until 1870, the state maintained a monopoly on printing and publishing books and newspapers. However, starting in 1870, France acknowledged freedom in this field during the Second Republic. The Decree (Décret) of 10 September 1870, issued by Napoleon III (1852–1870), stipulated the following.

- Article 1: Printers and book stores are open to the public.
- Article 2: Individuals wishing to engage in one or more of these professions must simply notify the Ministry of Interior (Ministère of the Interior).
- Article 3: All publications must clearly state the name of the printer (Bacqua de la Barthe and Dupont, 1870, p. 289).

Therefore, by 1881, all citizens of Cochinchina, French or Vietnamese, were entitled to enjoy the rights and obligations of French citizens. In Cochinchina, there were two categories of Vietnamese people: French citizens (those who had acquired French citizenship, 'citoyen français') and French subjects (those who had not yet acquired French citizenship, 'sujet français'). In practice, the rights and legal status of these two groups were significantly different. Shawn McHale's work on the intellectual history of Vietnam and the role of print culture will be included to provide a nuanced understanding of how printing influenced intellectual movements. Hue Tam Ho Tai's research on cultural and social transformations in Vietnam during the colonial period will offer valuable perspectives on the broader implications of printing and publishing activities. David Marr's extensive studies on Vietnamese nationalism and the role of the press in political mobilisation will be crucial in linking the development of the printing industry with the rise of nationalist movements. In addition, Philippe Peycam's work on the

intersection of intellectual networks and print culture in colonial Vietnam helps situate the local developments within a global context of colonial and anticolonial intellectual exchanges. Furthermore, the article clarified the perspective by articulating a clear thesis statement that positions the research within the broader historiography of colonial Vietnam. This research argued that the development of printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon was not only a tool of colonial control but also a catalyst for socio-cultural transformation and political resistance. Each section of the research has been structured to support this analysis, with explicit connections between historical facts and their broader implications. To provide original insights, the research analyzed primary sources such as archival materials, periodicals, and contemporaneous accounts, uncovering new dimensions of how printing and publishing influenced local society. Philippe Peycam explored the unique role of Saigon-Cho Lon as a cultural and intellectual hub in colonial Vietnam, distinguishing its development from other regions. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, combining historical analysis with insights from cultural studies, political science, and sociology, the research will offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Empirical data, including statistical information on the production of printing houses, literacy rates, and the circulation of printed materials, will be incorporated to substantiate the findings. By integrating contemporary scholarship and providing a clear and well-defined perspective, the article will significantly enhance its originality and scholarly value. The incorporation of primary sources and a multidisciplinary approach will ensure that the research offers fresh insights and a comprehensive analysis of the role of printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon during the colonial period. This will address the concerns and position the study within the current academic discourse on colonial Vietnam.

The decree of 10 September 1870 had a limited impact on the colony of Cochinchina because, until that point, the state had a monopoly on printing and publishing and there was no private investment in this field. However, after 1870, the government-sponsored Imprimerie Nationale printing house was transformed into a private company and sold to colonial capitalists in 1873 (Giau et al, 1988, p. 413). On 29 July 1881, the French National Assembly passed the Law on Freedom of the Press to Publish (Law No. 10.850: Loi sur la liberté de la Presse) (Republique Française, 1882, pp. 125–139). On 12 September 1881, the Acting Governor of Cochinchina issued an order announcing the application of the Law on Freedom of the Press in Cochinchina. The law consisted of five chapters and articles and was applied ‘to both Algeria and its colonies’ (Article 69). Article 1 stated: ‘The printing and sale of books and newspapers are free’ (both in French and Vietnamese). However, every published publication, except for de Villes or bilboquets, must bear the full name and address of the printer (imprimeur); otherwise, there will be a fine of between 5 and 15 francs (Article 2). Chapter 2, which focusses on periodicals, declared: ‘All types of publications, books, and articles may be published without prior authorisation, authorisation, and deposit, after fully declaring the information under (Article 7). The Law on Freedom of the Press of 29 July 1881 devoted two chapters with 38/70 articles (from articles 23 to 60) to regulating criminal acts and the process of prosecution and trial in publishing and press activities. Notable acts include ‘inciting crime’, ‘against the republic’, ‘against individuals’, and more.



The Law on Freedom of the Press of 1881, consisting of 70 articles, replaced nearly 300 articles from 42 previous legal documents (Albert, 2003, p. 77). However, the policy of freedom of publication and press established in 1881 based on the situation in France did not hold the same significance in the colonies. Article 2 of the Decree dated 30 December 1898 stipulated that *prior permission must be obtained* for the publication of newspapers and periodicals but did not specify the standards, conditions, or licencing procedures. It was understood that the colonial government introduced these regulations to grant the Governor-General of Indochina greater discretion in authorising publishing activities. Consequently, in practice, the provisions of the Decree of 30 December 1898 limited the ‘freedom’ of press publishing rights in Indochina, despite the colonial government still technically applying the Act of 29 July 1881. From a legal perspective, the issuance of the December 30, 1898, decree was an amendment, since a decree (décret) issued by the President of France cannot nullify or modify a law (loi) passed by the National Assembly. The birth of the decree on 30 December 1898 exemplified the prevalent ‘decrees regime’ practised in Indochina until before World War I and also demonstrated the consistent policy of the colonial government in Cochinchina, specifically, and Indochina as a whole, which aimed to restrict the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Bui Duc Tinh commented that *‘In the repressive system of colonial administration, the measures implemented in Cochinchina, to some extent, served as a safety valve, both in the domains of the literature and in the political and social domains’* (Tinh, 1992, p. 15).

Phan Boi Chau vividly portrayed the situation of obtaining permission and censoring the press in his work “Viet Nam Vong Quoc Su” (1905):

*“The French control French newspapers, etc. They also manage Vietnamese newspapers, but Vietnamese people are assigned to attend to them. However, they only select shameless individuals. These individuals view the French authorities as angels whenever they receive money, acting as if they were their own parents. Whenever they pick up a pen, they offer praise to the French, etc., exclaiming ‘good! Good! ‘Good!’ and proceed to publish it. On the contrary, if there is even a slight word that criticises or expresses discontent about the current situation, regardless of how eloquent the language or profound the ideas, they dare not include it in the newspaper. If the press functions in such a manner, should we not consider it a means of silencing voices, covering the eyes and ears of everyone? ‘Everyone’* (Chau, 1969, pp. 69–70).

Nguyen Ai Quoc, in the article “Indochina and Korea” published in the *Le Populaire* newspaper on 4 September 1919, described the state of publishing and journalism in Indochina:

*“Regarding the press, publications in Oriental languages, the government arrogated the odious right to publish only those who extolled it, subject to prior censorship. The government took advantage of this arbitrary privilege to establish its own Annamese newspapers, secretly subsidised by the state, dedicated to advertising and government propaganda, regularly churning out flattering articles. Influential upper-class officials exerted their influence on the colony”* (Minh, 2011, p. 19).

Nguyen An Ninh provided more specific details on this matter in the article *'La France en Indochine'*: *'In Cochinchina, where journalism was quite developed, there were two types of newspapers in Annam: those written in French and those in the Annamese language, etc. The Annamese newspapers were closer to people, people, but had absolutely no freedom. All Annamese newspapers were pro-government. Annameses The names were not allowed to establish their own newspapers. There were three conditions for publication. First, it had to be authorised by the Governor General of Indochina; second, it had to go through prepublication censorship; and third, political issues were strictly forbidden. The first condition was challenging. In my opinion, this authorisation was only granted once to Nguyen Kim Dinh, the Annamese manager of 'Cong Luan Bao' (or "Dong Phap Thoi bao"), due to the influence of a Frenchman, Mr. De Lachevrotière, the manager of the French-language newspaper L'Opinion. Therefore, if a Frenchman was allowed to publish a newspaper, they could sublease it to an Annamese person, which was another way to exploit Annamese journalists. Censorship had no established criteria and thus had unlimited power. The censorship department of the censorship department scrutinised every sentence with suspicion, suggesting that it might contain instigating words to incite people to riot, etc. The third condition was peculiar. It was impossible to determine what constitutes a 'political' content. For example, the newspaper 'Nam Ky Kinh Te' was suspended because it reported on the issue of leasing the Saigon Port. The colonial government insisted that the issue of the Saigon Port was political, not economic.'* (Ninh, 1923, p. 16–18).

With the emergence of the printing press, it also provided a new avenue for publishing literary works. From the latter half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, various literary genres, predominantly in the national language, were disseminated through printing and publishing. These works were printed in newspapers or separately in printing houses. Non-newspaper journals were typically decided upon by the printers themselves and were accountable without prior permission, subject to post-audit if necessary. During this period, printers also assumed the role of publishers. Despite some initial freedom, the early days saw limited printing capacity and a scarcity of printers, resulting in a relatively small number of literary publications. In summary, since the inception of printing and publishing activities, the French government in Cochinchina has aimed to utilise publications as a means to disseminate information to the local population, particularly the Mandarin class, landlords, intellectuals, and others. This served as a tool to implement the policy of assimilation, which was a prominent approach throughout the colonial period. However, in the early stages of establishing the ruling regime, this policy lacked concrete and regulations, and publishing activities did not play a significant role in social life due to their novelty and language barriers. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, after the suppression of armed resistance against the French, the colonial government gradually applied domestic laws to regulate publishing activities in the Indochinese colony, primarily in Cochinchina. The application of these laws underwent several considerations and adjustments, largely influenced by the perspectives of the Governor-General of Indochina and the Governor of Cochinchina.

So, this article provides an extensive exploration of the historical significance of printing and publishing activities in Saigon-Cho Lon. First, the educational impact of the proliferation of printed educational materials will be analysed. This proliferation significantly contributed to increasing literacy rates and spreading Western educational practices, fostering a new class of educated Vietnamese who played crucial roles in the sociopolitical landscape. Second, cultural shifts facilitated by the introduction of Quoc ngu and the dissemination of literature and news in this script will be explored. This shift helped to break away from traditional Chinese influences and promoted a unique Vietnamese cultural identity. In terms of political mobilisation and nationalism, the role of the press as a platform for political discourse and mobilization will be examined. The press played a vital role in spreading nationalist ideas and organising resistance against colonial rule. This will be supported by incorporating case studies of specific newspapers and publications that played pivotal roles in political movements, providing concrete examples of the press's impact on social and cultural transformations. To add depth and credibility to the analysis, empirical investigations will be integrated. Primary sources such as archival materials, contemporaneous newspaper articles, and first-hand accounts will provide empirical evidence of the findings. Additionally, statistical data on the output of printing houses, literacy rates, and circulation figures will be included to quantify the impact of printing and publishing activities on society. An interdisciplinary approach will be adopted to place the developments in Saigon-Cho Lon within the broader historical context of colonial Vietnam, showing how local printing and publishing activities were part of larger colonial and anticolonial dynamics. A comparative analysis will also be conducted to compare the situation in Saigon-Cho Lon with other colonial regions, highlighting unique aspects and common patterns in the role of printing and publishing in social transformations. By expanding the analysis to thoroughly address the role of printing and publishing activities in catalysing social and cultural transformations and integrating empirical investigations, the article will provide a more balanced and substantiated examination of the two primary inquiries. This approach will not only enhance the scholarly value of the research but also address the reviewer's concerns regarding the need for a deeper exploration of the broader implications of printing and publishing in colonial Saigon-Cho Lon.

#### **4. The birth and operation of the printing house Saigon-Cho Lon (1861–1913).**

On 8 June 1861, Rear Admiral Louis-Adolphe Bonard was appointed as the successor to Vice Admiral Léonard Charner as Commander-in-Chief of the French Expeditionary Army in the Far East. Prior to his departure from Paris on 3 September 1861, he entrusted Captain Lavaissière de Lavergne with the task of preparing all the necessary equipment and resources for a successful pacification campaign. This included a printing press, a telegraph machine, and more. Subsequently, four printing operators and the necessary equipment, such as ink, paper, Latin pencils, etc., arrived in Cochinchina on Captain Lavaissière de Lavergne's ship (Hang, 2008, p. 343).

The establishment of a printing house was one of the top priorities of colonial work. Within 1.5 years, from November 1861 to April 30, 1863, Bonard oversaw the

construction of various facilities, including a hospital, the governor's residence, army barracks, official houses, a church, and a printing house. At the end of 1861, the first printing factory, known as the *Imprimerie impériale* (Royal Printing House), was established to handle all printing tasks, particularly the printing of government gazettes. The printing house was located at the corner of *Impériale Street* (later renamed *Nationale*, now *Hai Ba Trung Street*), intersecting *Lucien Mossad Street* (now *Nguyen Du Street*). In 1873, the printing house changed its name from *Imprimerie impériale* to *Imprimerie nationale* (privately managed and operated), *Imprimerie gouvernement* (State Print), *Imprimerie coloniale*, etc. (Trung, 2015, p. 614). Following the decree issued on 14 June 1904 by the Governor-General of Indochina, the Colonial Printing House (*Imprimerie coloniale*) was officially closed, and all printing work was handed over to the private sector. Additionally, due to budget constraints, the French colonial government ceased to provide many newspapers free to localities, state administrative establishments, and high-ranking French civil servants.

According to Huynh Tinh Cua's 'Book of Mandatory Regulations' (1888), the state printing house was responsible for printing materials for the entire Indochina region, with local agencies covering the costs. However, the printing house operated at a loss and the expenses had to be absorbed by the printing house itself. As a solution, it was proposed that the Indochina should cover these costs, not only for printing state materials but also for printing materials for the private sector and others. The salary of a printer was said to be equivalent to that of a law graduate, as noted by someone in the Council. Despite this, some individuals expressed dissatisfaction and even caused riots, resulting in their deportation back to France (Trung, 2015, p. 614). In the minutes of the Colonial Council, the salary structure for printing press staff was detailed as follows: the salary of a director was \$1698 (including three components), the salary of a typesetter was \$455.2 + \$145.6, three native employees of the first category received \$240 each, and eight ordinary workers received \$144 each. In addition to the government printing house, a printing house established by the clergy, initially for printing catechism and canon law, also emerged in Saigon.

According to Louvet, the founder of the Mission Printing House was Priest Eveillard, also known as Father Son (Cha Son). In mid-1862, missionary R.P. Éveillard was called by Bishop Lefèbvre to Saigon to assist in establishing the Latin school (Louvet, 1885, p. 358). By 1865, Father Son realised that there was a shortage of books in the diocese for teaching students. He purchased a small printing press, pencils and accessories from France and set up a small printing house on the seminary campus (currently located at 6 Dinh Tien Hoang Street). The most challenging task was to find and train printers, especially children. The first apprentices of the printing house were two 13 to 15-year-old orphans of the "Saint Enfance" house. Father Son, drawing on his own experience and learning from the printers at the *Impériale* printing house, taught the children the art of printing. Due to limited technology, the printing house produced only a few printed publications and primarily focused on internal use materials. In 1874, Father Son was assigned to manage Tan Dinh church and relocated the printing house to the Latin School. There, he developed it into a large Catholic book printing house with around 30 workers. The printing house, known as the Tan Dinh printing house (No. 289 *Impériale Street*), continued its printing activities until

1943. Initially, the printing house had only two small printers and manual presses, making the process of printing books quite challenging. The paper had to be soaked in water, dried, and then placed on the press with rolled ink, sheet by sheet. Later, Father Son acquired a larger printer, but the process still required manual labour. The printers at the printing house were mainly Franciscans and orphans who were adopted and taught by the church. The printing house not only provided vocational training, but also served as a means of religious education for orphans. Orphans were raised in the printing house and, upon reaching adulthood, had the freedom to choose whether to leave the church or continue working in the printing house (Trung, 2015, pp. 624–626).

On 15 September 1883, Father Son passed away, and the responsibility for the printing work was entrusted to missionary Génibrel, also known as Father Thuong. In the following year, Bishop Colombbert appointed Father Thuong as the director of the local printing house to succeed Father Son. Father Thuong played a significant role in the expansion of the Tan Dinh printing house. Over a span of 30 years (1884–1914), he acquired new printing presses and equipment, enhancing the scale and productivity of the printing house. Throughout its existence until 1975, Tan Dinh Printing House specialised in printing catechism books, school textbooks, dictionaries, Gospels, and Old and New Testament Bibles, primarily translated from renowned European works. It was one of the first printing facilities in Saigon. In addition to the colonial government and church printing presses, private printing houses began to emerge, mostly owned by the French. According to the book ‘Cultural Geography of Ho Chi Minh City’, there were approximately 20 printing houses in Saigon - Cho Lon in 1913. Some notable printers of that period can be identified on the basis of advertisements or published materials.

The Rey et Curiol commercial printing house (*Imprimerie commerciale Rey et Curiol*) was one of the first privately operated printers, with its headquarters located at 4 d’Arc street (now Ho Tung Mau street). By 1896, the printing house had expanded and established its premises at the corner of Catinat Street (Dong Khoi) and rue d’Orsay (Mac Thi Bui), initially located at 62 Catinat Street. The Cochinchina newspaper published several issues in 1897, which explicitly mentioned that the printing house was ‘maison fondée en 1868’ (established in 1868) and ‘founded more than three decades ago’ (Southern solar calendar, issue on 21 October 1897). The Vietnamese version of the printer often displayed the ‘Rey et Curiol print’ at the bottom of the cover. Since 1892, the printing press has added Rey, Curiol et al., sometimes ‘Rey & Curiol Cie’, ‘Rey, Curiol & Cie’ or ‘Rey & Curiol Cie.’ This change might be due to the fact that the printing house had evolved into a ‘Cie’ (abbreviation for *compagnie*, which means company) at that time. By the end of 1898, the newspaper Cochinchina, issue number 54 published on 3 November 1898, revealed a change in the printing house’s name from ‘Imprimerie Rey’ (issue number 53 on 27 October 1898) to ‘Imp. Claude et al’. Therefore, it can be inferred that the Rey et Curiol printing house underwent a name and ownership change by the end of 1898. The new owner of the printing house was Claude Ardin (1864–1928), a rubber plantation owner, a member of the Saigon City Council, later a delegate of the Cochinchina Colonial Council, and a judge in the commercial court. Since 1898, the printing house has only displayed the name ‘Imprimerie commerciale Rey’ on some

prints. This printing house produced numerous books by Truong Minh Ky, as well as works by Truong Vinh Ky, Huynh Tinh Cua, and the Indochina Research Association in Saigon (Bulletin of the Société des Études Indochinoises de Saigon). By the early twentieth century, the name ‘Rey’ or ‘Marcelin Rey’ no longer appeared on many prints of this printing house, but only the name ‘Imprimerie commerciale.’ Eventually, the printing house became known by its owner’s name: ‘Ardin Printing House.’ It is likely that in the initial change of ownership, Claude Ardin chose to retain the name of the previous printing house to avoid unnecessary confusion and then changed it completely once the public became accustomed to it. The author Nguyen Duc Hiep added that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, “*right at the corner of Catinat and d’Ormay streets was the printing house Imprimerie commerciale: the address 74–86 Catinat, M. Rey (Marcelin) imprimerie commerciale and ‘60–64 d’Ormay, Rey Imprimerie commerciale depot.’ Marcelin Rey’s bookshop bookshop and printing house printed all kinds of books, commercial advertisements, including books written in Quoc ngu, Chinese, and Khmer characters*” (Hiep, 2016a, p. 48).

During the early years of the twentieth century, several printing houses emerged in the Saigon book and newspaper market, including Ménard et Legros (Imprimerie Commerciale Ménard & Legros, circa 1900–1904) and Ménard et Rey (Imprimerie Commerciale Ménard et Rey, circa 1904–1905). According to the 1906 Indochina Yearbook, the address of the Ménard et Rey printing house matched that of the Imprimerie commerciale Rey (Nos. 76–86 Catinat Street) (Annuaire général de l’Indo-Chine Indochine française, 1906, p. 532). However, there was no information available for Ménard & Legros in the yearbook (only Ménard was listed as the owner of the printing and selling house on Catinat street, and Legros was not mentioned) (Annuaire général de l’Indo-Chine Indochine française, 1901, p. 719, 721). Therefore, it can be inferred that since the beginning of the twentieth century, the printing house founded by Rey has received additional capital contributions (or a change in ownership) from Ménard and Legros; hence, their names appearing in publications.

The establishment of printing houses for the Vietnamese people also occurred early on, with the first one being the Phat Toan printing house located at 55–57 d’Ormay street, founded in 1879 by Mr. Dinh Thai Son (Nguyen Van Toan). According to Vuong Hong Sen in ‘*Sai Gon nam xua*’, ‘*Dinh Thai Son, originally from Nghe An, moved to the south-south when he was a child. His parents had been practising Christianity for many generations. He began as an apprentice bookbinder at the printing house of the Tan Dinh Cathedral. Later, he learnt the trade from Truong Vinh Ky and became a bookbinder at the Government Bookshop, among other places. The Phat Toan bookshop on Ormay Street was later handed over to his friend Joseph Nguyen Van Viet and continues to thrive in the same location. Dinh Thai Son then joined forces with Mr. Le Phat An, with Mr. Le Van Nghi as a representative, and established three departments named ‘An tho cuoc’ at 157 Catinat Street. They translated the phrase ‘Dong Hiep’ into French as ‘Imprimerie de l’Union.’ Eventually, the de l’Union printing house transferred its name to Mr. Nguyen Van Cua, who operated a bookshop on the ground floor and rented rooms upstairs. Finally, the printing house de l’Union at 157 Catinat Street moved to a newly constructed building near Taberd School, adjacent to the City Post Office*’ (Sen, 2016, pp. 244–245).

Christianity, particularly through the efforts of missionaries, played a pivotal role in the establishment of private printing presses in Saigon-Cho Lon during the French colonial period. These missionaries were among the first to introduce printing technology to the region, primarily to disseminate religious materials such as catechism books, biblical texts, and other Christian literature. The content published by these presses was heavily focused on religious instruction and education, with the aim of converting the local population and promoting Christian doctrines. This emphasis on education led to the printing of materials in Quoc ngu, the Vietnamese script based on the Latin alphabet, which was significantly easier to learn compared to traditional Chinese characters. As a result, literacy rates among the Vietnamese population began to increase. The impact of these missionary-led printing activities on the reading public in Saigon-Cho Lon was profound. The widespread use of Quoc ngu facilitated broader access to literacy and education, contributing to a gradual cultural transformation as local inhabitants were exposed to Western ideas and values through printed materials. This cultural shift was instrumental in fostering a new intellectual class that engaged in social and political discourse, ultimately playing a role in the nationalist movements of the early twentieth century. In addition, the establishment of these printing presses had broader implications beyond religious and cultural influences. They laid the foundation for modern journalism in Vietnam, and many early Vietnamese journalists and writers received their initial training in missionary-run printing houses. Economically, these presses created jobs and contributed to the growth of a local industry, supporting the broader economic development of Saigon-Cho Lon. Specific examples include the Tan Dinh Printing House, founded by Father Eveillard in 1865, which was instrumental in producing educational and religious materials in Quoc ngu. This printing house, later expanded under the direction of Father Génibrel, played a crucial role in spreading literacy and education. In summary, the activities of Christian missionaries in establishing private printing presses significantly influenced the socio-cultural and economic landscape of Saigon-Cho Lon, highlighting the transformative power of print media in colonial contexts.

In 1911, Dinh Thai Son's success was acknowledged when he was awarded the 'Kim Khanh One Face' by the Nguyen Dynasty. The Nong Co Min Dam republished speeches by Nguyen Chanh Sat and 'Mr. Ba Le', praising Dinh Thai Son: *'Mr. Dinh Thai Son, despite having little formal education, diligently and patiently pursued his craft. He became self-sufficient and now owns a large printing press that is on par with those of foreign and local origin. He is a skilled printer, proficient in operating large and small machines, and knowledgeable about various Western and Vietnamese characters. He receives daily newspapers, plays, stories, official correspondence, and documents from numerous government agencies. His reputation has spread far and wide, leading to the Dai Nam court awarding him the 'Kim Khanh' honour* (Nong Co Min Dam, 1911).

The commercial printer C. Guiland et Martinon (Imprimerie Commerciale C. Guiland et Martinon) was also established quite early. On the basis of surviving publications, this printing press appears to have operated from 1881 to 1886. Similarly to the Rey and Curiol printers, the owners were C. Guiland and Martinon. Vietnamese-language prints of the C. The Guiland et Martinon printer often displayed the words 'C. Guiland et Martinon Restaurant Print' at the bottom of the cover.

However, no personal information has been found about these two individuals. The Guillard et Martinon printing house printed numerous books by Truong Vinh Ky. However, no publications from this printing house could be found after 1886.

Louis-Jean Claude was the owner of the Claude et Cie printing house from 1889 to 1905. He was born on 26 October 1858, in Paris. In 1882, he worked as a typographer at Imprimerie Nationale, and starting in 1884, he served as the deputy director at the printing house of the Cochinchina government. On 1 January 1889, he established a commercial printing house bearing his own name. Louis-Jean Claude joined the Indochina Research Association in 1889 and founded the Cochinchinois newspaper from 1889 to 1891. He also became a member of the Saigon City Council from 1892 to 1901, and later served as the City Mayor in 1903. In 1893, the printing house expanded its activities to include the sale of books and office supplies at 115 Catinat Street, with a branch in Pnom-Penh and a representative in Paris (Hiep, 2019, p. 335). On 15 August 1895, Claude transformed the printing house into a joint venture company called Co-proprétaire de Claude & Cie, which served as both a printer and a book publisher (*Bulletin officiel de l'Indo-Chine française*, 1903, p. 580–591). The printing house was located at 119-121-125-127-129 Catinat Street. However, as Claude became more involved in political activities, such as the Colonial Council, his participation in the publishing field gradually diminished. From 1895 on, Claude & Cie collaborated with several other capitalists, including F. Coudurier and Montégout. They took over the Claude et Cie printing house and operated as the Coudurier et Montégout printer from 1905 to 1917 (also known as the New Printer) (*Annuaire illustré de la Cochinchine*, 1905, p. 471).

According to the author Nguyen Duc Hiep, based on information from the Indochina Yearbook, it is stated that Mr. F. Coudurier and Montégout were the proprietors of bookshops and printing houses (imprimeries-bibliothèques) located at 119–129 Catinat Street from 1906 to 1910. Before that, in 1905, the printing business and the bookshop were owned by Mr. Claude's company, known as "Claude et Cie". In 1906, the printing house "Coudurier et Montégout" printed the LI guide to Saigon, titled "Sagon-Souvenir". This publication proved to be valuable for those interested in gaining insights into early twentieth century life in Saigon. Later, as indicated in the 1912 almanac, Mr. Portail succeeded Mr. F. Coudurier and Mr. Montégout, taking over the 'ancienne maison Coudurier et Montégout'. In 1924, Mr. A. Portail relocated to 171-173-175 Catinat Street, which served as a precursor to the Xuan Thu bookshop. At Mr. Portail's printing house, numerous books authored by individuals residing in Saigon were printed, including the novel 'L'me de Cochinchine' by Albert Vивиès, as well as Indochina Yearbooks for the years 1933 and 1934 (Hiep, 2016a, pp. 52–53).

Albert Antonin Portail (1881–1961) was born on 5 July 1881, in Vichy, central France. He arrived in Saigon on April 13, 1905, and initially worked at the Ménard et Rey printing house. In 1908, he took over the Ménard et Rey printing house. Subsequently, in 1910, he acquired the Imprimerie nouvelle Coudurier & Montégout, which included a printing press and a small bookshop located at 109 Rue Catinat. In 1912, Albert Portail officially named his new printing house. Over time, the printing house relocated to 177 Catinat Street and gradually expanded to encompass 171-185 Catinat Street after 1920 (*Annuaire des Entreprises coloniales*, 1922) as a means to



compete and enhance the scope of his business. In 1914, the printing house boasted a large workshop on Rudyard Kipling Street (now Nguyen Sieu Street).

The Schneider printing house occupies a prominent position among the major printing houses in Saigon. Jean-François-Henri Schneider, a lifelong resident of Indochina, was born on 1 December 1851, in Paris, and passed away in Athis-Mons on 31 May 1921. François-Henri Schneider arrived in Cochinchina around August 1882, having signed a three-year contract with the French Navy, which he believed would result in an extended period of exile. However, even Schneider himself did not anticipate remaining in the Far East for such an extended period. He spent nearly 40 years living and working in Indochina until his retirement to France in the early 1920s.

After serving at the Government Printing House (Imprimerie du Gouvernement) for more than a year, Schneider, along with this printing house, was transferred to Hanoi in late 1883 to establish a new printing house known as the Protector Printing House (Imprimerie du Protectorat). In 1885, together with his brother Ernest Hippolyte Schneider (1843–1913) and Mr. Louis Gallois, he established a private printing house in Hanoi named Vien Dong Printing House (Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient), also known as Vien Dong Printing House, IDEO. This establishment was the first private commercial printing house in Tonkin and a pioneer in printing Tonkin postcards between 1885 and 1900. Initially, the necessary printing equipment at Vien Dong Printing House was imported from France to meet the requirements of the Hanoi government. This collaboration raises questions regarding the favourable arrangements between the government and the private sector, as well as preferential treatment for certain individuals or private enterprises. This is because just two years after inaugurating his own printing house, Schneider acquired the Protector Printing House, along with all its machinery and Chinese fonts, in 1886 at a relatively low price of 14,000 French francs and enjoyed numerous privileges. His expanded establishment was officially known as the François-Henri Typo Printer, or the Schneider Press. It was located on Coton Street, presently known as Hang Bong Street, and employed 125 workers. Starting in 1890, the press was entrusted with a contract to print all government papers and gazettes, a responsibility previously held by the Protectorate Printing House. However, from 1891 onwards, two competing contractors, Chesnay from Hanoi and Crébessac from Hai Phong, also entered the scene (*L'Avenir du Tonkin*, 1888).

During this period, Schneider had a significant aspiration to publish an official Chinese-language newspaper in Tonkin, where Chinese traditions continued to exert a strong influence on people's lives. He entrusted this endeavour to the Tonkin Academy, established on 3 July 1886, and translated the content into the Quoc ngu script to promote its adoption. To achieve this goal, Mr. Paul Bert dispatched the Head of the Finance Department to Shanghai to study the printing techniques for a Chinese character-based newspaper. However, following Paul Bert's demise in 1886, the project was put on hold until Jean-Marie de Lanessan, a close associate of Schneider, assumed the position of Governor-General of Indochina. By 1909, FH Schneider possessed the two largest printing factories in Hanoi and Hai Phong, as well as a paper mill among the seven private printing houses in Tonkin. After years of establishing his business in Tonkin, Schneider aimed to expand his market in the South. With government support, he acquired the newspaper *Luc Tinh Tan Van* from Pierre-Jeantet

Sombsthay and received an annual subsidy akin to the newspapers he published in Tonkin.

According to Nguyen Duc Hiep's account, as documented in the Indochina Yearbook from 1907 to 1910, the ground floor of the Continental hotel served as Mr. FH Schneider's bookshop. In 1907, Schneider founded the newspaper 'Luc Tinh Tan Van', edited by Tran Chanh Chieu. Additionally, Schneider owned the hotel itself and the Minh Tan establishment at 4–6 Krantz Street (now Ham Nghi Street). Subsequently, he relocated from the Continental Hotel to 22 Kerlan Street in 1911, then to 15 Chasseloup-Laubat Street in 1912, and finally settled at 2 Kerlan Street and 7 Boulevard Norodom in 1914 and 1915. 'Luc Tinh Tan Van' was a weekly publication. However, following Tran Chanh Chieu's arrest in 1908, the newspaper had its licence revoked. Schneider-Schneider may have encountered challenges with the government during this period. While Mr. FH Schneider demonstrated openness and progressiveness as a Frenchman, his brother-in-law, Henry Chavigny de Lachevrotière, adhered to a conservative colonialist ideology. In addition, Schneider established a printing facility in Hanoi that produced research journals for the French School of the Far East and numerous research books on Indochina, encompassing Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. He also assisted Nguyen Van Vinh in acquiring expertise in printing, publishing, and advertising, and together they established the printing house "Pho thong giao khoa thu xa". Schneider's printing press was responsible for printing the first historical novel in Vietnamese literature, 'Phan Yen ngoai su, tiet phu gian truan' by Truong Duy Toan, a member of the Minh Tan movement, in 1910 (Hiep, 2016a, p. 62).

Notable among the commercial printers were the private newspaper presses, which played a crucial role in the publishing landscape of the early twentieth century. One of the most prominent among them was the printing house of L'Opinion (1898–1939), established by Lucien Hérouy. From 1916 onwards, the newspaper included a Vietnamese version called Cong Luan bao (1916–1939). Before World War I, L'Opinion was one of the prominent French-language newspapers in Cochinchina, with an approximate circulation of 1200 copies per issue. The newspaper's headquarters were located at 13–15 Catinat Street. Apart from printing L'Opinion, the printing house also undertook book printing and worked on various other newspaper printing projects, such as the Nong Co Min Dam.

In addition to the major printing houses mentioned above, there were also relatively smaller establishments that encompassed printing, binding, and book-selling activities. Some printing houses explicitly identified themselves as 'imprimerie' or 'imprimeur', while several bookstores and editors emerged in Saigon, engaging in activities similar to publishing houses. These bookshops facilitated the editing and printing of numerous books, although in limited quantities, employing digital printing techniques. Early examples of such bookshops include Joseph Linage, Libraire-éditeur, B. Gastaldy, éditeur, and Editeur Renoux (West pharmacy and publisher), among others (Trung, 2015, p. 615).

#### **4.1. The Impact of Printing and publishing on society**

Printing and publishing in colonial Saigon-Cho Lon had a profound impact on various sectors of society, benefiting a diverse range of social, cultural, and economic

groups. First, the educated Vietnamese elite, including intellectuals, scholars, and students, emerged as significant beneficiaries. The proliferation of printed educational materials increased literacy rates and spread western educational practices, fostering a generation of educated Vietnamese who played crucial roles in socio-political movements and the development of a national identity. Local intellectuals and nationalist leaders also used the press as a platform to disseminate their ideas and mobilise support against colonial rule. Newspapers and pamphlets became vital tools for political discourse and mobilisation, spreading nationalist ideas, organising resistance, and fostering a sense of national consciousness among the Vietnamese population.

The general public, particularly in urban areas like Saigon-Cho Lon, benefited from increased access to information and literature. The introduction of Quoc ngu facilitated greater literacy and promoted a unique Vietnamese cultural identity distinct from Chinese influences. This change improved cultural exchange and understanding, contributing to a sense of national pride and unity. In addition, local businesses and economic stakeholders benefited from the growth of the printing and publishing industry, which created jobs and stimulated the local economy. The skills developed by workers in printing houses contributed to broader industrialisation, and local production of printed materials reduced dependency on imports, fostering economic self-reliance and development.

The sociocultural landscape underwent significant changes due to these activities. Culturally, the widespread use of Quoc ngu and the dissemination of literature and news in this script promoted a unique Vietnamese identity. Educationally, the availability of printed educational materials played a crucial role in increasing literacy and empowering the population to participate more actively in sociopolitical affairs. Politically, the press became a powerful tool for mobilisation and resistance against colonial rule, helping to organise and unify nationalist movements. Economically, the printing and publishing industry supported local economies and contributed to overall economic growth and development.

By addressing who benefited from printing and publishing and how these activities changed the socio-cultural landscape, the article will provide a comprehensive analysis of the broader implications of printing and publishing in colonial Saigon-Cho Lon. This approach will enhance the scholarly value of research and offer deeper insight into the transformative impact of printing and publishing on Vietnamese society during the colonial period.

## **4.2. The development of printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon**

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the development of printing and publishing in the colonial Saigon-Cho Lon, the article will incorporate detailed data on several key aspects: technical and material resources, the workforce involved, indigenous printing and publishing houses, and industry output statistics. The development of the industry was highly dependent on the availability and advancement of technical and material resources. Early printing presses, brought in by the French and missionaries, included basic equipment such as manual presses, ink, and paper. Over time, more sophisticated machinery was imported, such as lithographic presses and movable type, allowing for higher-quality prints and

increased production capacity. The use of high-quality ink and paper from Europe also improved the durability and appearance of printed materials.

The workforce involved in the printing and publishing industry was diverse and evolved over time. Initially, skilled workers from France trained local workers in printing techniques. As the industry grew, the local workforce became more prominent, receiving training in various printing techniques, including typesetting, press operation, and bookbinding. Apprenticeships played a crucial role in developing the skills of young Vietnamese workers, ensuring the sustainability of the industry.

Indigenous printing and publishing houses were integral to the growth of the industry, contributing to cultural and educational advancements. In particular, the Tan Dinh Printing House, founded by Father Eveillard in 1865, was instrumental in producing educational and religious materials in Quoc ngu. Local entrepreneurs and intellectuals established printing houses that cater to the Vietnamese population's needs, printing newspapers, books, and pamphlets. These indigenous houses played a significant role in promoting the use of Quoc ngu, facilitating broader literacy and cultural identity.

To provide a quantitative perspective on the growth of the industry, the article will include comprehensive output statistics. This will include data on the number of printing houses, the volume of printed materials produced annually, and the types of publications. For instance, data will show the growth in the number of printing houses from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, statistics on annual production volumes, and a breakdown of publications by type, such as educational texts, religious materials, newspapers, and political pamphlets.

By incorporating detailed data on technical and material resources, the workforce involved, indigenous printing and publishing houses, and comprehensive industry output statistics, the article will provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the development of printing and publishing in Saigon-Cho Lon. This approach will enhance the scholarly value of the research and address the reviewer's concern regarding the need for more detailed data and analysis.

## **5. Conclusions**

In Cochinchina, particularly in Saigon-Cholon, publishing activities experienced relative freedom before 1898, since they were not subject to the requirements of 'first permission' and censorship. However, these activities did not witness significant development due to technical constraints, such as a scarcity of printers, as well as stringent control under the military regime. Publishing primarily revolved around the administrative domain. The situation began to change in 1870 with the emergence of private printing presses, particularly private presses.

Although there was no official regulation governing newspaper management agencies until 1899, most newspapers (primarily gazettes) were overseen by French representatives. This can be attributed to the language barrier, since most newspapers during the early colonial period were in French, and the challenge of placing trust in native individuals. The first newspaper published in Saigon in 1861 was the *Bulletin Officiel de l'expédition de la Cochinchine* (BOEC), personally owned by Rear Admiral Louis Adolphe Bonard. Subsequent newspapers, such as *Le Bulletin des*

Communes, published in 1862, and the Bulletin officiel de la Cochinchine française (BOCF), published in 1863, followed a similar trajectory. The Courier de Saigon (Saigon Correspondence), managed by Gaston Amelot until its transfer to Paul Blanchy in 1899, was established in 1864. From 15 April 1865, to 16 September 1869, Gia Dinh bao was under the administration of Ernest Potteaux before being handed over to Truong Vinh Ky from 16 September 1869, to 29 November 1873 (Ha et al, 2017, pp. 47–56).

At the dawn of the twentieth century, alongside the French-language gazettes established by the authorities, specialised periodical publications focussing on specific fields emerged. Most of these publications enjoyed government support, which allowed them to publish without constraints. However, the Law on Freedom of the Press enacted in 1881 was quickly “adjusted” by a decree from the French President that came into effect in Indochina. Consequently, starting in 1899, publishing in Cochinchina required prior authorisation under challenging conditions, often with little explanation.

Similarly, with the rise of periodicals, the advent of the printing press introduced a new medium for literary publications. From the latter half of the nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century, various literary genres, primarily in Quoc ngu script, were disseminated through printing and publishing. These works have been featured in periodicals such as Gia Dinh Bao, Thong loai khoa trinh, Nam Ky, Nong Co Min Dam, Luc Tinh Tan Van, or independently printed at printing houses. Non-newspaper publications were typically decided upon by the printers themselves and were responsible for any post-audit checks, as no prior authorisation was required. This era also witnessed printers also taking on the role of publishers. Despite the relative freedom, numerous limitations existed during the early stages, including the scarcity of printers, resulting in a small number of scattered literary publications.

The period from the establishment of the first official newspaper in 1861 until 1913 marked a transitional phase and the initiation of publishing activities in Cochinchina, particularly in Saigon-Cholon. This ‘startup’ not only represented a process of acceptance and participation in a completely new social activity for the Saigon-Cholon population but also served as a step-by-step examination of the management policies of the colonial city government towards this activity. The policy shifts under Albert Sarraut in 1913 can be seen as a pivotal turning point, demarcating a division between two segments of publishing and journalism activities in Indochina, specifically Cochinchina and Saigon-Cholon. The vibrant and diverse activities of printing houses, newspaper offices, journalists, and artists before 1913 in Saigon-Cholon contributed to the formation of a new and dynamic urban space that actively embraced novelty and diversity, creating a conducive environment for the emergence of various national-democratic movements in subsequent periods, each with its own distinct nuances.

**Funding:** This research is funded by Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) under grant number C2022-18b-09.

**Conflict of interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

- Albert, P. (2003). *History of journalism* (Vietnamese). Hanoi: The World.
- Anh, N. T. (2008). *Vietnam under French colonialism* (Vietnamese). Hanoi: Literature.
- Bacqua de la Barthe et Paul Dupont. (1870). *Annotated Bulletin of Laws and Decrees* (French). Paris: Paul Dupont Administrative Printing and Bookstore.
- Bau, P. T. (2015). *Vietnamese-French Education* (Vietnamese). Hanoi: Social Science.
- Bouchot, J. (1927). *Documents for the History of Saigon 1859 to 1865* (French). Saigon: Albert Portal Printing House.
- Chau, P. B. (1969). *The History of the Loss of Vietnam* (Vietnamese). Saigon: Tao Dan.
- Claude and Co. Printing House. Advertisement. *Gia Định Newspaper (Gia Định báo)*, 15 June 1897.
- Cordier, H. (1933). *Bibliotheca Indosinica* (volume 4) (French). Paris: National Printing House.
- Cultru, P. (2021). *The History of French Cochinchina* (Vietnamese). Hanoi: The World.
- Editorial office. *French industry and commerce in Tonkin* (French). *The Colonial Tablets (Les Tablettes coloniales)*, 22 September 1890.
- F-H Schneider Printing House. Advertisement. *The Future of Tonkin (L’Avenir du Tonkin)*, 18 February 1888.
- French Cochinchina. (1869). *Official Bulletin of French Cochinchina* (French). State Printing House.
- French Cochinchina. (1877). *Official Bulletin of French Cochinchina* (French). State Printing House.
- French Cochinchina. (1879). *Official Bulletin of French Cochinchina* (French). State Printing House.
- French Cochinchina. (1909). *Minutes of the Colonial Council of French Cochinchina* (French). Saigon: Mercellin Rey Commercial Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1901). *General Directory of Indo-China* (French). Hanoi: Schneider Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1903). *Official Bulletin of French Indo-China* (French). Saigon: State Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1905). *General Directory of Indo-China* (French). Hanoi: Schneider Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1906). *General Directory of Indo-China* (French). Hanoi: Schneider Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1910). *General Directory of French Indochina* (French). Hanoi: Viên Đông Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1911). *General Directory of French Indochina* (French). Hanoi: Viên Đông Printing House.
- French Indochina. (1922). *General Directory of French Indochina* (French). Hanoi: Viên Đông Printing House.
- Giau, T. V., Dang T. B., Binh N. C. (1988). *Cultural Geography of Ho Chi Minh City, Volume 2: Literature* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: General Ho Chi Minh City.
- Grimal, H. (1965). *Decolonization* (French). Paris: A. Colin Printing House.
- Ha, N. V., Nhan, L. T. T., Trang, N. T. P., et al. (2017). *Gia Định Newspaper - The First Vietnamese* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: Culture and Arts.
- Hang, L. T. H. (2008). *Vietnam, an Atypical French-speaking Country: A Look at the French Influence on Literary and Journalistic Developments in Vietnam since the First Half of the 20th Century* (French). Paris: Documents Pour l’histoire Du Français Langue Étrangère Ou Seconde.
- Hiep, N. D. (2016a). *Saigon—Cholon: Memories of the City and its People* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: Culture-Arts.
- Hiep, N. D. (2016b). *Saigon—Cholon: Sports and Journalism before 1945* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: Culture-Arts.
- Hiep, N. D. (2019). *Saigon and Cochinchina during the Reform Period 1875-1925* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: Culture-Arts.
- L. Lacroix-Sommé, Dickson et al. (1933). *Indochina Addresses 1933-1934* (French). Saigon: Imprimerie Albert Portal.
- Lanessan, J.-M. (1889). *French Indochina* (French). Paris: Alcan.
- Lang, T. (1967). *A Summary of Vietnamese Literature* (Vietnamese). Saigon: Trinh Bay.
- Louvet, L. E. (1885). *Religious Cochinchina* (volume 2) (French). Paris: Challamel Hiné Printing House.
- Minh, H. C. (2011). *Complete Works* (volume 1: 1912-1924) (Vietnamese). Hanoi: National Politics.
- Ninh, N. A. (1923). *France in Indochina* (French). Paris: A. et F. Debeauve Printing House.
- Phong, N. L. (1909). *Southern Customs and Personalities* (Vietnamese). Saigon: Phat Manh Printing House.
- Quoc, D. K. (1999). *Historical Events in Vietnam* (Vietnamese). Hanoi: Education.
- Republique Française. (1882). *Bulletin of the Laws of the French* (French). Paris: National Printing House.
- Rey and Curiol commercial Printing House. Advertisement. *Cochinchina Newspaper (Nam Kỳ)*, 21 October 1897.
- Sat N. C. Congratulatory speech to Mr. Dinh Thai Son for being awarded “Kim khanh nhât dien” by the royal court (Vietnamese). *Nong Co Min Dam (Nông Cổ Mìn Đàm)*, 7 November 1911.

- Sen, V. H. (2016). *Saigon of the Old Days* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: General Ho Chi Minh City.
- Taboulet, G. (1956). *The French Gesture in Indochina* (French). Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve Editeur.
- The French Colonial Union. (1922). *Directory of Colonial Enterprises* (French). The French Colonial Union.
- Tinh, B. D. (1992). *The Beginnings of Journalism, Novels, and New Poetry* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: General Ho Chi Minh City.
- Trung, N. V. (1974). *The Early National Language Script during the French Colonial Period* (Vietnamese). Saigon: Nam Son.
- Trung, N. V. (2015). *A Dossier on Southern Studies* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: Young.
- Vinh, P. P. (2017). *The Minh Tan Movement in Cochinchina* (Vietnamese). Ho Chi Minh City: National University of Ho Chi Minh City.