

# The Bishop's Map

## Vietnamese and Western Cartography Converge

by Harold E. Meinheit

*Although this map is not without errors, yet I think it is and may be . . .  
the best and most detailed that has as yet appeared.*

—Monseigneur Jean-Louis Taberd, Apostolic Vicar of Cochinchina

A rare 19<sup>th</sup>-century map of Vietnam, little noted in the West, is receiving renewed attention in Vietnam. The map, published in 1838, is one of those being cited to support Vietnam's claim to sovereignty over the Paracel Islands. However, its significance goes well beyond any evidentiary value in Vietnam's current struggle with China over the Paracels. More broadly, the map is a striking fusion of traditional Vietnamese administrative cartography and Western mapping. It also offers a revealing snapshot of Indochina in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Nguyễn Dynasty consolidated its rule over a newly unified Vietnam and before French colonialism took hold later in the century.

### THE MAP

The map's title, *Annam Đại Quốc Họa Đồ* ("Map of the Empire of Annam"),<sup>1</sup> is printed in three different forms: in the elegant Chinese characters used by Vietnam's literati; in Latin; and in *chữ Quốc Ngữ*, the system of romanization developed by Western missionaries and used in today's Vietnam. It depicts an expansive view of the Nguyễn Dynasty's empire, covering all of Vietnam, the eastern half of Cambodia, the small Lao principalities, and a large area to the west of the Mekong River in what is now northeastern Thailand. Published in Calcutta by the Oriental Lith. Press, the map measures 84 x 45 cm. and has an unusually large amount of detail, including many toponyms, printed in proper Vietnamese Quốc Ngữ. As such, it is probably the first European map to publish so much reasonably accurate geographic data on Vietnam and its neighbors. [Figure 1]

### THE BISHOP – VIETNAM'S ANTI-CATHOLIC PERSECUTIONS

The man behind the map was Bishop Jean-Louis Taberd (1794–1840). Born in Saint-Étienne France, Taberd was ordained in 1817 and three years later left for Cochinchina

as a missionary with the Société des Missions-Étrangères de Paris (MEP).<sup>2</sup> He arrived at a difficult time, just after Gia Long, the first emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty (r. 1802–1820), had died and his successor, Minh Mạng (r. 1820–1841), was starting his long reign. Catholics had fared well under Gia Long, largely because of the important role played by the French Apostolic Vicar Pierre Pigneaux de Béhaine (1741–1799) in supporting Gia Long's military struggle to unify Vietnam. Minh Mạng, however, was much less tolerant, and by the mid 1820s Taberd was reporting harassment of local Catholics and clergy.<sup>3</sup> Despite the increasingly hostile environment, Taberd served in several different areas of Cochinchina before Ming Mạng ordered him to Huế in 1827 to work as a translator in a transparent effort to hinder missionary activity. In the same year Taberd's earlier missionary efforts were recognized when he was named Bishop of Isauropolis and Apostolic Vicar of Cochinchina (consecrated in 1830).

Taberd was able to break free of Minh Mạng's court in 1828 through the intercession of Lê văn Duyệt, the semi-independent viceroy of Lower Cochinchina, who governed from the citadel of Gia Định/Saigon. Taberd spent the next several years under Lê văn Duyệt's protective umbrella. But shortly after Lê văn Duyệt's death in 1832, the area erupted in revolt against Minh Mạng, and the emperor suspected local Catholics of supporting the insurrection. The year 1833 turned into a bad year for all Catholics—not only for those in the Gia Định/Saigon area—when Minh Mạng issued a country-wide edict against Catholicism. The bishop thus found it prudent to leave the country. After brief stays in Siam and Penang, Taberd settled in Calcutta, where he was named interim Apostolic Vicar of Bengal in 1838. While in Calcutta, Taberd produced two major dictionaries. He edited and completed the Vietnamese-Latin dictionary started by Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine and produced his own

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**Figure 1.** *Annam Đại Quốc Họa Đồ* [Map of the Empire of Annam], published as an attachment to *Dictionarium latino-anamiticum* by Bishop Jean-Louis Taberd, 1838. 84 x 45 cm. (Courtesy Olin Library Map Collection, Cornell University) (G8005 1838 .T3).



Latin-Vietnamese dictionary, published in Calcutta in 1838. It was in the latter that his map, *Annam Đại Quốc Hòa Đồ*, was inserted as an attachment at the back of the book. At about the same time, two articles appeared in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in which Taberd discussed the geography of Cochinchina and his map.<sup>4</sup> Bishop Taberd died in Calcutta in 1840, shortly after his forty-sixth birthday.

### THE PARACEL ISLANDS

The current conflict over territorial claims in the South China Sea has brought new fame to the Bishop's map, which is now presented as evidence reinforcing Vietnam's claim to the Paracel Islands, occupied by China since 1974.<sup>5</sup> The eastern edge of the map depicts *Paracel seu Cát Vàng* above the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel. [Figure 2] (*Cát Vàng* or "Golden Sands" is one of the early Vietnamese names for the Paracels, now usually called *Hoàng Sa*.) In support of his map's inclusion of the islands, Taberd wrote that Gia Long claimed the islands for Vietnam in 1816. Ironically in view of today's intense dispute over the islands, Taberd saw little value in the Paracels and opined that no one else was likely to dispute Vietnam's claim:

*The Pracel or Paracels, is a labyrinth of small islands, rocks and sand-banks, which appears to extend up to the 11th [sic.] degree of north latitude, in the 107th parallel of longitude from Paris. . . . Although this kind of archipelago presents nothing but rocks and great depths which promises more inconveniences than advantages, the king Gia Long thought he had increased his dominions by this sorry addition. In 1816, he went with solemnity to plant his flag and take formal possession of these rocks, which it is not likely any body will dispute with him.*<sup>6</sup>

In fact, Gia Long did not go in person but rather sent an expedition to the Paracels in 1816. Taberd most likely obtained his information on the Paracels from the memoirs of Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau (1769–1832), a former French naval officer who served as an official in Gia Long's court.<sup>7</sup>

### THE EXPANDING VIETNAMESE EMPIRE

Although Taberd's portrayal of the Paracels has revived interest in his map in today's Vietnam, other features of the map that have received less attention are probably

more significant. In the first place, the map provides a picture of Nguyễn Vietnam's relationship with its neighbors in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Upon assuming power, Gia Long was quick to assert Vietnam's centrality in Southeast Asia, using the Chinese tributary system as a model. This was to bring Vietnam and an expanding Siam into conflict in the weak buffer states of Cambodia and the Lao principalities. Taberd's map shows the "Empire of Vietnam" (*Annam Quốc seu Imperium Anamiticum*) extending well beyond the clear boundaries of Vietnam itself, encompassing half of Cambodia, the small Lao kingdoms, and territory considerably to the west of the Mekong River in what is today's northeastern Thailand (the Korat Plateau).

**Cambodia:** Cambodia had long been losing territory in the Mekong Delta to the Vietnamese, but in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intense rivalry between Siam and Vietnam was being played out, with both states backing rival claimants to the Khmer throne. Going beyond exerting indirect control, Vietnam actually sought to absorb Cambodia, introducing its highly structured system of administration, manned by Vietnamese officials and military officers, to replace the less formal system of rule found in Cambodia and the rest of Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese administrative system was introduced in stages, with the complete structure not in place until 1834, after Taberd had left Vietnam. Nonetheless, Taberd had kept informed of developments in Cochinchina and Cambodia. He writes from Bengal that in 1835 or early 1836, the empire of Annam proclaimed Cambodia—*Nam Vang*—to be under its protection and that he has "reduced the country into prefectures" on his map.<sup>8</sup> [Figure 3]

As depicted on Taberd's map, a boundary line divides Cambodia between Siam on the west (*Bắt Tâm bang*—Battambang—province) and on the east, "the ancient kingdom of Cambodia" (*Antiquum Regnum Cambodiarum*) divided into Vietnamese administrative units. Two territorial units in the eastern sector are labeled as protectorates or *trấn* (*Nam Vang Trấn* and *Gò Sặt Trấn*), and several prefectures or *phủ* are designated (e.g. *Vịnh Thâm Phủ* and *Phổ Phủ*). A number of place names are given in phonetic Khmer and in Vietnamese, such as the port of Kompong Som (*Com Pong Som* or *Vũng Tôm*). The former capital (Udong) is marked (*Vịnh Lung – Locus antiquae Regiae*) and the new capital established under the Vietnamese (Phnom Penh) is labeled *Nam Vang thành*. It was not until

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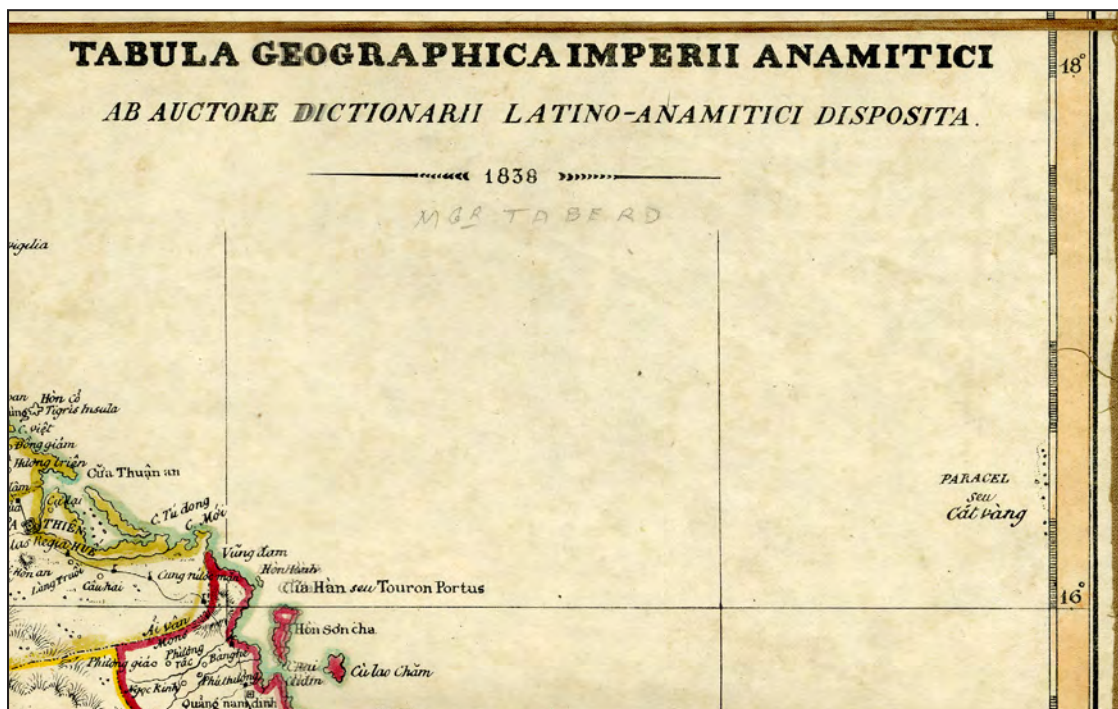


Figure 2. [Detail] *Paracel seu Cát Vàng* [Paracel or the Golden Sands]. The Paracel Islands are shown at the far right, above the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel. Taberd wrote that Vietnam took possession of the islands in an 1816 expedition, but he considered them a sorry addition to Vietnam's territory that nobody else was likely to dispute.

Figure 3. [Detail] **Cambodia under Vietnamese rule.**

Vietnam's highly structuralized administration system (*Trấn* – protectorates and *Phủ* – prefectures) is shown in part. Former Khmer locations have new Vietnamese names (e.g., *Nam Vang thành* for Phnom Penh). The border is marked showing the Siamese-dominated western part of Cambodia. In the 1840s, Vietnam was forced to abandon its effort to absorb Cambodia.





the 1840s that popular uprisings forced the Vietnamese to withdraw, abandoning the political/military administrative structure they had put in place.

**Laos/Mekong River Valley:** The Lao kingdoms identified on the map fall within the broader boundaries of imperial Vietnam, but in contrast to Cambodia, retain their status as separate “kingdoms” (*Regio Laocensis*), presumably as tributary states.<sup>9</sup> [Figure 4] The state of Luang Prabang (*Mường Long Pha Ban*) and the kingdom of Vientiane (*Van Tượng Quốc*) are clearly shown on the map.<sup>10</sup>

In his portrayal of Laos, the Mekong, and a large section of northeastern Siam, Taberd was able to draw on the latest Vietnamese information collected during an important foreign policy crisis facing Vietnam in the late 1820s. Taberd was engaged as a translator in Huế during the 1827–1828 conflict that ignited when Chao Anu, the ruler of the kingdom of Vientiane, launched an ill-fated attack against his Siamese overlords. Siam's ensuing military operations in the Lao region forced Chao Anu to appeal for Minh Mạng's support, drawing the Vietnamese into the struggle. The Vietnamese engineers, whose map Taberd cites as one of his sources, were most likely part of Vietnam's response to the crisis. The influence of Vietnamese cartography can be seen in several areas. For example, Taberd's map is more accurate than earlier maps in its depiction of the actual size of the Lao region. Western maps had previously shown Laos as a fairly narrow band of territory, but Taberd's map revealed it to be much larger.<sup>11</sup> In addition, several important military locations are designated on the map. These include two strategic sites in Nghệ An Trấn—the border post of *Qui Hợp*, which served as a forward headquarters for the Vietnamese military and intelligence operations during the Chao Anu rebellion, and the border district of *Kỳ Sơn*, which was reinforced to defend against Siamese incursions.<sup>12</sup> [Figure 5]

The presence of Vietnamese “engineers” in the Mekong River Valley also contributed to a more accurate representation of the great river on the bishop's map. Taberd himself proudly points to his depiction of the Mekong River as an important feature that distinguishes his map from earlier maps of Indochina. Previous European maps, he notes, represented the Mekong as a more or less straight line until it reached Cochinchina. Taberd, however, sought to portray a more realistic course for the great river, based on “two maps I had with me drawn by engineers of the

country . . . They know the country, they visit it every day and have measured all the windings of the river . . .”<sup>13</sup> In addition, a number of Mekong River towns are still identifiable, despite slightly different spellings. These include Mukdahan (*Mục đà hân*), That Phanom (*Tháp ba canon*) Bassac (*Thành Lào ba thác*), and Nakhon Phanom (under its old name of *Lạc Khon* or *Lakhon*).<sup>14</sup> Despite Taberd's somewhat more accurate rendering of the Mekong, it would be several more decades before the river was accurately surveyed by the French Mekong River expedition of 1866–1868.

The Lao region on the map, shown as part of the Vietnamese empire, extends well into the Korat Plateau on right bank of the Mekong. Historically this region had been under the sway of the ancient Lao kingdom of Lan Sang. With the breakup of Lan Sang, the region with its Lao population became something of a buffer zone between the Siamese and the three successor Lao kingdoms of Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champassak. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Siamese power in the northeast expanded significantly as petty rulers submitted to Bangkok's authority. Influenced by the Vietnamese-Siamese struggle of the late 1820s, Taberd's map reflects the perspective of his Vietnamese (and perhaps Lao) sources, suggesting minimal Siamese authority in the region. Further research would be required to identify most of the toponyms on the Korat Plateau. However, the prominent fortified area of *Lào Phiên pháo*, may refer to the Siamese military headquarters during the Chao Anu rebellion.<sup>15</sup> Also, *Ca Lạ Thiển thanh* is probably the town of Kalasin, a major Lao settlement with a long history.<sup>16</sup>

### TABERD ON VIETNAMESE CARTOGRAPHY

In his writings, Bishop Taberd offers some interesting comments on Vietnamese cartography.<sup>17</sup> As his map shows, Taberd made effective use of traditional Vietnamese cartography, and he acknowledges the contribution of “engineers and draftsmen belonging to his majesty.” Nonetheless, he complains of their limitations, noting that the Vietnamese only depended on chain and compass and did not measure the latitude and longitude of places:

*In drawing their maps they used those made by Europeans which they either reduced or enlarged in scale; then they added the different places omitted or unknown to the Europeans.*



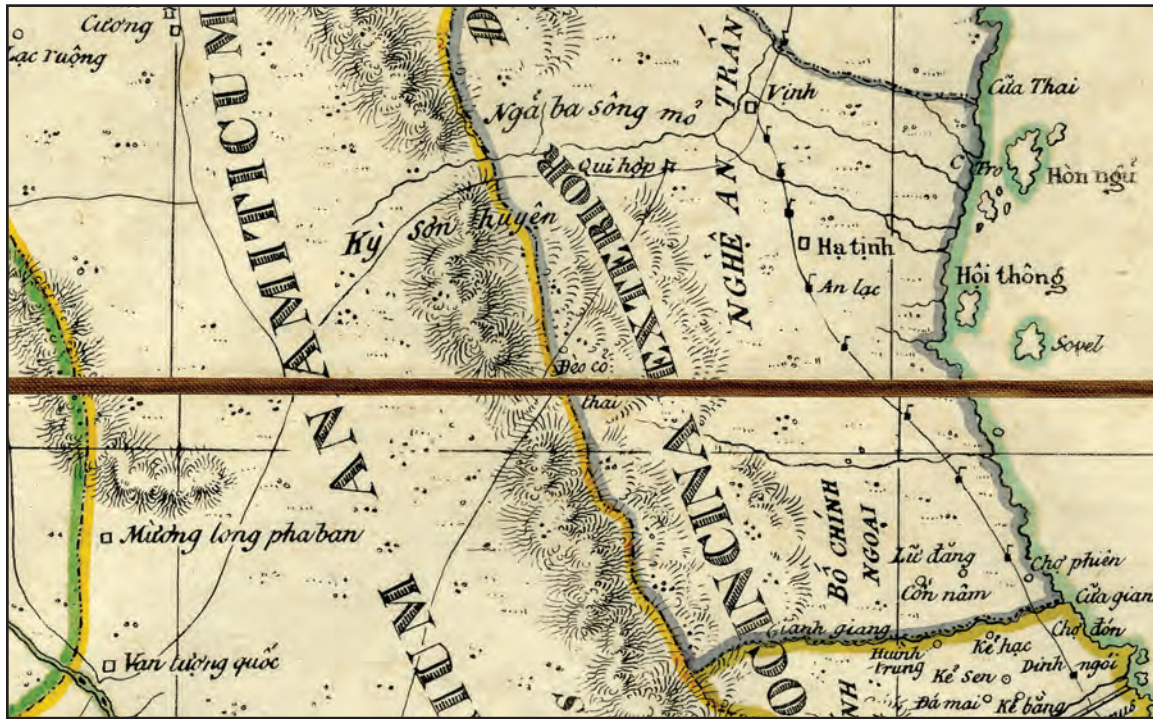
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**Figure 4.** [Detail] **The Lao Region and the Mekong River Valley.** The Lao principalities are depicted as part of the greater Empire of Vietnam (Annam) (*Imperium Anamiticum*) but retain their integrity as tributary states (*Regio Laocensis*). The three main Lao principalities of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century—Luang Prabang (*Mueang Long Pha Ban*), Vientiane (*Van Tuong Quoc*), and Champassak or Bassac (*Thành Lão ba thác*)—are located. The Vietnamese Empire is shown extending well into what is now northeastern Thailand.



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**Figure 5.** [Detail] *Qui Hợp*. The Vietnamese border post of *Qui Hợp* was a vital forward military and intelligence base during the Chao Anu crisis (1827–28) in Laos. It also controlled a long-standing trade route between the Mekong River valley, the city of Vinh, and the port of *Hội Thông* on the South China Sea.

But the limitations of Vietnamese cartographers were not their own fault, Taberd asserts. Rather they were due to the narrow attitudes of the emperors, Gia Long and Minh Mạng. Taberd compares them unfavorably with the *Kangxi* emperor in China, who sponsored Jesuit missionaries to scientifically map all of China's provinces in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. To illustrate his point, Taberd relates the story of the visit of a French frigate, *Le Henri*, in 1818 or 1819. Anchored near Huế, the officers had been well received by Gia Long. However, when they wished to regulate their chronometers and came ashore to prepare an artificial horizon, Gia Long told his assembled council, "It appears that the officers of the frigate are making a map of the country. Order them to discontinue their attempt." Noting that Minh Mạng's attitude towards Europeans was even less accommodating than Gia Long's, Taberd laments, "... what hope can we have of being better acquainted with the interior of this country so long as things are in this state?"

Despite these difficulties, Taberd believed his effort to combine Vietnamese with Western cartography produced "the best and most detailed [map] that has as yet appeared." Commenting on his sources, Taberd cites an

ancient and a modern map designed by "his majesty's engineers" as well as his own knowledge of Cochinchina. For the coast, he used the charts of Jean-Marie Dayot, a French naval officer who joined Bishop Pigneaux de Béhaine in support of the Nguyễn campaign to unify Vietnam.<sup>18</sup> Between 1790 and 1795, Dayot produced the most accurate surveys of the coast of Cochin China made to date. They became the source for many other French and English cartographers well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

### ADMINISTRATIVE CARTOGRAPHY

Taberd's comment on Vietnamese mapmakers depending on chain and compass, although meant to show their limitations, is actually an acknowledgement of one of their strengths. Vietnam's adoption of Chinese bureaucratic forms, as far back as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, required maps for government administration. Chain and compass were important techniques for Vietnamese cartographers, especially in the cadastral surveys of village land and the determination of provincial boundaries. The new government in 1802 continued and expanded the cartographic tradition to encompass its new realm that now stretched from the Chinese border to the Ca Mau Peninsula in the far south.



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**Figure 6. [Detail] Administrative Details and Minorities.** The first *Nguyễn* emperor, Gia Long, divided his newly unified country into military protectorates (*Trấn*). Two *trấn* are shown here, **Bình Hòa** (or **Nha Trang**) and **Bình Thuận**. Capitals (*đình* or *thành*) are identified as are postal stations or rest stops along the main north-south route. Islands and coastal features are noted, including the well-known Cam Ranh Bay. A notation reminds the viewer that this territory had once been part of the Kingdom of Champa (*olim Ciampa*), and a crude rendering of a Cham temple is included south of Cam Rang Bay. Several Highland minority groups (*Mọi bố nông*, *Mọi bố vun*, and *Mọi Vĩ*) are located to the west of the Annamese Mountain chain.

Gai Long divided the country into twenty-three protectorates, *trấn*, and four military departments, *doanh*. The lower levels of administration included prefectures (*phủ*), districts (*huyện*), mountain districts (*châu*), cantons (*tổng*) and village communes (*xã*). In 1831, Emperor Minh Mạng reformed the administrative structure, changing Gia Long's protectorates and departments into provinces (*tỉnh*).<sup>20</sup>

Taberd's map uses Gia Long's earlier administrative designations, dividing the country into *trấn*.<sup>21</sup> [Figure 6] Some of the lower levels of administration are designated, and features such as ports, harbors, and the locations of

government relay or postal rest stations (*trạm*) along the main north-south route are indicated. [Figure 7] Another feature that Taberd borrowed from Vietnamese cartography is the labeling of the names of a large number of rivers and their points of entry into the sea (*cửa biển*) along Vietnam's long coastline.<sup>22</sup> Lines of communication or trade routes are also shown crossing from Vietnam proper into Cambodia and Laos. For example, the strategic border station at Qui Hợp, mentioned above, is shown on the historic trade route linking the Mekong River valley to Vinh and the busy port of Hội Thông on the South China Sea.<sup>23</sup> [Figure 5] Also



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Figure 7. [Detail] **Legenda**. The legend provides a helpful aide for the map, listing symbols used and translating Vietnamese terms into Latin, French and English.

designated are key mountain passes such as Đèo Cù Mông and Đèo Cả linking the coast and the Central Highlands.

Taberd's interest in Vietnam's history is apparent on his map. This appears in references to the long period of division during the civil war between the Nguyễn lords of the south and the Trịnh lords of the north, both claiming to represent the figurehead Lê emperor. The wall separating Nguyễn Cochinchina and Trịnh Tonkin is prominently shown (*Lũu Sậy seu Murus magnus separans olim utrumque regnum*). [Figure 8] In addition, the historical division is reflected in the labeling of Nguyễn Cochinchina as *Annam Đàng Trong* (Inner Annam) and Tonkin as *Đàng Ngoài* (Outer Annam). The birthplace of the Tây Sơn Rebellion that seized control of Vietnam in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is also noted (*Tây Sơn thượng*) in the west of Bình Định Trấn. In the far north, Cao Bằng Trấn is labeled as the site of the former kingdom (*olim Regnum*). (Remnants of the rebel Mạc Dynasty held out in Cao Bằng until being defeated by the Lê-Trịnh Dynasty in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.)

### ETHNIC MINORITIES

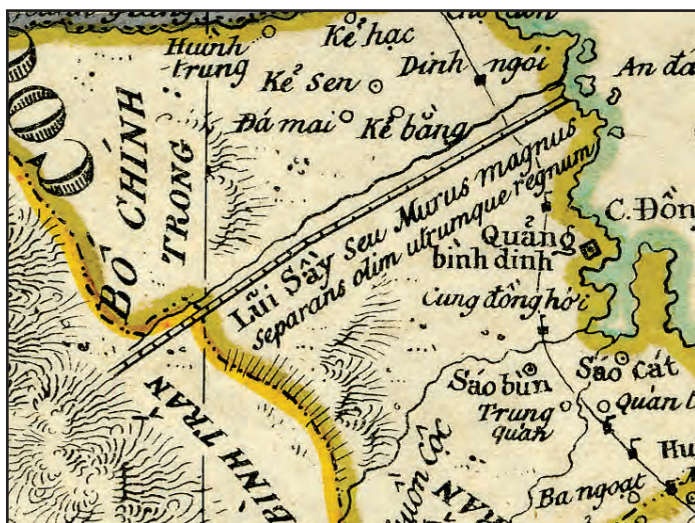
One significant feature on the map separates it from traditional Vietnamese cartography. Vietnamese maps in the 19<sup>th</sup> century often identified upland, minority districts

(often labeled as *châu*) but generally did not identify minority groups by name. The main exception was the Đá Vách (the Hre people) in Quảng Ngãi province, where 19<sup>th</sup>-century Vietnamese maps show a wall, built by General Lê văn Duyệt in 1819 to protect Vietnamese villages from upland minority raids.<sup>24</sup>

Taberd's map represents an evolutionary step forward in Western efforts to map highland minorities in Vietnam using specific names. [Figure 6] Earlier Western maps, beginning with Alexandre de Rhodes' maps of 1650 and 1653, simply labeled the highland people as *Kemoy* or *Rumoi* (from *mọi*, the Vietnamese term for "savages").<sup>25</sup> Well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term appears on many Western maps, such as John Crawford's 1828 "Map of the Kingdoms of Siam and Cochin China." A map published by Father Charles-Émile Bouillevaux in 1851 may be the earliest French map to show the standard names of highland tribes.<sup>26</sup> However, Taberd's map is a predecessor to the Bouillevaux map in that it makes an effort to identify highland groups by name, even though the names do not seem to correspond to modern terms for the groups.<sup>27</sup>

**The Mysterious Stieng Kingdom:** One ethnic minority group given unusual prominence on Taberd's map is

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**Figure 8.** [Detail] *Lũy Sậy seu Murus magnus separans olim utrumque regnum* [The *Lũy Sậy* or the great wall separating the former kingdoms]. The “great wall” was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to protect the Nguyễn lords in the south from the periodic attacks of the Trịnh rulers in the north. It appears on many early European maps and ran from the sea to the mountains, just north of the demilitarized zone that separated North and South Vietnam from 1954 to 1975.

identified as a separate country or nation, *Nước Stiêng*. [Figure 9] (The dictionary definition of the Vietnamese term *Nước* is a country, nation, or state; the legend on Taberd’s map defines it as a *royaume* or “kingdom.”) The Stieng Kingdom is located on the map apart from the seven groups snuggled up against the Cochinchina border. Today the Stieng are a small highland group living along the present border between Vietnam and Cambodia. They have never been a unified kingdom. However, in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the group took on special importance for French missionaries, as the Stieng became the object of what was probably the earliest effort to bring Christianity to the tribal groups of the Central Highlands and northeastern Cambodia. The missionaries conveyed a sense of excitement in their reports, proclaiming the “discovery of a new kingdom named Stieng” and continued to refer to Stieng territory as a *royaume* in their correspondence.<sup>28</sup> However, a short visit to Stieng territory by Father Julien Faulet in 1775–1776 appeared to deflate any exaggerated ideas of a unified Stieng kingdom. In his report, Faulet called the region a “barbarous country” rather than a “kingdom” and stated that the Stieng had no king.<sup>29</sup> Without adequate personnel to follow-up, the missionary effort failed and was sharply criticized by the Société des Missions-Étrangères’s leadership in Paris.<sup>30</sup> Although another priest traveled from Saigon to the region in 1791, he did not stay, and there



**Figure 9.** [Detail] *Nước Stiêng* [the Stieng Nation]. Never a separate nation or kingdom, the Stieng are a tribal group living in today’s Cambodian/Vietnamese border area. They were the target of an unsuccessful missionary effort in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The map shows the route taken by missionaries from the Mekong River town of “Che Long” (modern Chhlong) into Stieng territory. The village of Saat, not shown, was believed to be the most important Stieng settlement. Identification of the *Thành* or fortified town (*Tinh xường*) remains a mystery. Courtesy Library of Congress.

was apparently no further contact between the Stieng and French missionaries for over half a century.

Why Taberd’s map, in 1838, continued to give unusual prominence to the Stieng and label them as a separate nation or kingdom remains a mystery. Also the “fortified town” (*Thành*) of *Tinh xường* in Stieng territory does not appear on later maps. Perhaps Taberd was simply paying respect by acknowledging what had once been a major project for Apostolic Vicar Pigneaux de Béhaine. It is also possible that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the missionaries were interested in renewing their earlier efforts with the Stieng.<sup>31</sup> Whatever the reason for Taberd’s exaggerated emphasis on this group, the Stieng were usually identified on later 19<sup>th</sup>-century French maps, although not as a separate nation or political entity.

### A MAP OF MANY PURPOSES

Bishop Taberd’s map, while not overtly religious, would have had an immediate practical use for missionaries in Indochina and those destined for service there. But Taberd also had a broader intellectual purpose in mind—to serve the “interests of science” by producing the most accurate map yet of the Indochina peninsula.<sup>32</sup> Reaching a wider audience and the attention of European mapmakers, would appear to have been limited by the



map's publication as an insert at the back of Taberd's large Latin-Vietnamese dictionary, not a very accessible source. Nonetheless, support for Taberd from the Asiatic Society of Bengal, especially its secretary, James Prinsep, helped open Taberd's work to the broader scholarly community. In 1848, Dr. Karl Gutzlaff, a well-known German missionary who served in Southeast Asia and China, drew heavily on Taberd's work in a paper read before the Royal Geographical Society of London. Gutzlaff describes Taberd's map as "the most superior and accurate map we possess of the entire Annamese Empire . . ." <sup>33</sup>

Taberd's map went on to serve a broader political purpose as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed. It was a primary source of reasonably accurate geographic and administrative information on the Indochina peninsula as the pressure for European colonies in Southeast Asia grew and before French colonial officials began their own extensive mapping efforts later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A quarter of a century after its publication, Taberd's map took on new life. It was republished in Paris in 1862, the same year that France signed a treaty with the court at Huế, recognizing the French colonial presence in Saigon and the Mekong Delta, and as the French were turning their attention towards Cambodia. Taberd's map was republished at the direction of the Minister of Marine and the Colonies, Prosper de Chasseloup-Laubat, the strongest advocate in the government of Napoleon III for the colonial enterprise in Indochina. And now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Bishop Taberd's map has again taken on a political role in the ongoing clash of conflicting sovereignty claims in the South China Sea.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again, I would like to thank Boris Michev, Maps & Geospatial Information Librarian at Cornell University, who provided invaluable assistance with material from Olin Library's fine map collection. Figure 9 is courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harold E. Meinheit is a former American diplomat who spent much of his career in Asia, including Vietnam. He is currently secretary of the Washington Map Society.

## ENDNOTES

1 Annam was the name commonly used by Europeans for the nation of Vietnam. The name comes from the Chinese for "the pacified south." For most of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century, Vietnam's rulers called the county Đại Nam (Great South).

- 2 Cochinchina was a Vicariate Apostolic under the authority of the Diocese of Macau. It was led by an Apostolic Vicar, who was usually also a titular bishop, appointed to a titular see. When Taberd was appointed Apostolic Vicar in 1828, he was also named bishop for the titular see of Isauropolis. The Vicariate Apostolic of Cochinchina covered a region from Quảng Bình province (about 17° 30' N) in central Vietnam through the Mekong Delta in the south. It also included part of Cambodia. Bishop Taberd's biography may be found in the MEP archives at <http://archives.mepasie.org/notices/notices-biographiques/taberd>.
- 3 Jacob Ramsay, "Extortion and Exploitation in the Nguyễn Campaign against Catholicism in 1830s–1840s Vietnam," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June, 2004, p.315.
- 4 Jean-Louis Taberd, "Notes on the Geography of Cochin China," *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VI-Part II, No. 69, September, 1837, pp. 737–745. (<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.20428348?urlappend=%3Bseq=251>) Taberd's second article is: Jean-Louis Taberd, "Additional Notice on the Geography of Cochinchina," *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VII, No. 76, April 1838, pp. 317–324. (<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015028150624>).
- 5 See, for example: Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *Chủ Quyền Việt Nam Trên Biển Đông và Hoàng Sa – Trường Sa* [Vietnam's Sovereignty Over the Eastern Sea and the Paracels and Spratlys], Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Đại Học Quốc Gia, 2014, pp. 122–123 and p. 125. Also, Trần Đức Anh Sơn (chủ biên), *Tư Liệu về Chủ Quyền của Việt Nam Đối Với Quần Đảo Hoàng Sa* [Materials Concerning Vietnam's Sovereignty with Regard to the Paracel Islands], Hồ Chí Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Văn Hóa – Văn Nghệ, 2014, p. 433.
- 6 Taberd, "Notes on the Geography of Cochin China," p. 745. Taberd writes that the islands "extend up to the 11th degree of north latitude." However his map shows them more or less accurately just above the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel. Either there is a typo in Taberd's article or he is confusing the location of the Paracels with the Spratlys which are further south.
- 7 I owe this observation to Dr. Trần Đức Anh Sơn, who directed me to Chaigneau's *Le Memoire sur la Cochinchine* (c. 1820). Chaigneau wrote, "C'est

- seulement en 1816, que l'Empereur actuel a pris possession de cet archipel." "Jean-Baptiste Chaigeau et sa famille" by A. Salles, *Bulletin des Amis du vieux Hué*, Hanoi, vol. 10, no. 1, 1923, p. 257.
- 8 Taberd, "Additional Notice on the Geography of Cochinchina," p. 318.
  - 9 Taberd himself states that he considered most of the small Lao kingdoms as tributaries of the "Cochinchinese empire." Taberd, "Additional Notice on the Geography of Cochinchina," pp. 322–323.
  - 10 A notable absence is the Lao principality of Xieng Khouang (Vietnamese: *Trấn Ninh*), listed as one of Vietnam's vassals in 1805, but caught in the see-saw power struggle between Siam and Vietnam during the Chao Anu rebellion.
  - 11 Mayoury Ngaosrivathana and Pheuiphanh Ngaosrivathana, "Early European Impressions of the Lao" in Mayoury Ngaosrivathana and Kennon Breazeale (eds.), *Breaking New Ground in Lao History: Essays on the Seventh to Twentieth Centuries*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002, p. 141.
  - 12 *Vietnamese Source materials concerning the 1827 conflict between the court of Siam and the Lao principalities: journal of our imperial court's actions with regard to the incident involving the Kingdom of the Ten Thousand Elephants*, introduction and annotations by Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosrivathana, Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for UNESCO, the Toyo Bunko, 2001, Vol. One, pp. 112–113.
  - 13 Taberd, "Additional Notice on the Geography of Cochinchina," p. 319.
  - 14 Somewhat puzzling is the location of town of Vientiane (*Bản chấn* or *Viên Chấn*) on the right bank of the Mekong, downstream from the Kingdom of Vientiane. The Siamese had completely destroyed the town of Vientiane (aside from some Buddhist monasteries) in 1828 and moved much of the population to Siamese territory. Perhaps the position of the city of Vientiane on the map is meant to take into account this forced depopulation of the city, with many Lao moved to the area around the present city of Nong Khai. Or perhaps it is simply an error. In his 1858 map, Edward Weller (FRGS), seems to have drawn on Taberd's representation of the Mekong River and also places Vientiane on the right bank. See *Burmah, Siam, Anam & c.* (1858?) <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231866668>.
  - 15 See *Vietnamese Source materials concerning the 1827 conflict*, Vol. One, p. 73, endnote 212. The location is also spelled several other ways in the source material, e.g., *Phan-phao*, *Phien-Bao*, etc.
  - 16 Charles F. Keyes, *Isan: Regionalism in Northeastern Thailand*, Cornell Thailand Project Interim Report Series, Number 10, Southeast Asia Program, Data Paper 65, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1967, p. 8.
  - 17 Taberd, "Additional Notice on the Geography of Cochinchina," pp. 319–320.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 319.
  - 19 Gilles Palsky, "La Cartographie française des Côtes cochinchinoises à la Fin du 18e Siècle: Jean-Marie Dayot et le *Pilote de Cochinchine*," *Imago Mundi*, Vol 41, Issue 1, January, 1989, pp. 59–69.
  - 20 Alexander Barton Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Nguyễn and Ch'ing Civil Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 141–143.
  - 21 Taberd was still in Vietnam when Minh Mạng began his administrative reforms. He refers to them in his "Notes on the Geography of Cochinchina" (p. 744). Nonetheless, his map uses the Gia Long system. In his "Notes," published in English, Taberd uses somewhat different translations for Vietnamese administrative units. For example, he translates *trấn* as "prefecture" rather than "protectorate," the translation used by Woodside and others. (Prefecture is usually rendered *phủ* in Vietnamese.) There are some other minor anomalies between Taberd's written comments and the map itself. For the sake of clarity, I've stayed with the translations used by Woodside and modern Vietnamese scholars.
  - 22 The historian Nguyễn Đình Đầu lists all fifty-seven river mouths and numerous other features of Vietnam's long coastline on Taberd's map. Nguyễn Đình Đầu, *op.cit.*, pp. 123 and 127.
  - 23 Tran Van Quy, "The Quy Hop Archive: Vietnamese-Lao Relations Reflected in Border-Post Documents Dating from 1619 to 1880" in Mayoury Ngaosrivathana and Kennon Breazeale (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.239–259.
  - 24 Harold E. Meinhart, "A Glimpse into Vietnam's Turbulent 19<sup>th</sup> Century," *The Portolan*, Issue 73, Winter 2008 p. 21. Taberd described the Đá Vách as "the most terrible of the savage races that occupy the whole chain of mountains skirting the kingdom."



The Bishop's Map – Vietnamese and Western Cartography Converge

- (Taberd, "Notes on the Geography of Cochin China," p. 741.)
- 25 Harold E. Meinheit, "Unveiling Vietnam: The Maps of Alexandre de Rhodes," *The Portolan*, Number 65, Spring 2006, pp. 28–41.
  - 26 Henri Maitre, *Les Jungles Moi*, Paris: Emile LaRose, 1912, p. 555.
  - 27 The groups are: *Mọi đá rách*, *Mọi đá vách*, *Mọi đá hàn*, *Mọi bồ nông*, *Mọi bồ vun*, *Mọi Vĩ*, and *Mọi bà ria*. As noted, the Đá Vách are a recognizable group. Also the *bồ nông* could be the Phnong or Mnong.
  - 28 Letter from Father Jean Steiner, Procure, Macau Diocese, dated August 21, 1774 (in French). Reporting the sad death of the 30-year old Father Juguet, Steiner writes: "Ce missionnaire, peu de temps avant sa mort, avait découvert un nouveau royaume, appelé Stieng . . ." Pigneaux de Béhaine also reported on the "new kingdom of Stieng" (*"regnum novum vocatum Stieng"*) in a January 5, 1775 letter. Both letters are in Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la mission de Cochinchine, 1658–1823: documents historiques*, Paris: Missions étrangères de Paris: Indes savantes, Vol. 3 (1771–1823), 2000, pp. 60–61.
  - 29 Letter, M. Faulet to M. Steiner, June 24, 1776. In Launay, *op.cit.*, p. 64.
  - 30 Frédéric Mantiene, *Pierre Pigneaux: évêque d'Adran et mandarin de Cochinchine (1741–1799)*, Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2012, pp. 70–72.
  - 31 Continued missionary interest in this tribe is seen in the establishment of a mission among the Stieng at Brelam in the 1850s. However, the mission was destroyed during the Pu Kombo revolt of 1866.
  - 32 Taberd, "Additional Notice on the Geography of Cochinchina," pp. 319, 320.
  - 33 Dr. Karl Gutzlaff, "Geography of the Cochin-Chinese Empire," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 19 (1849), pp. 85–143.



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