



French and Tây Bôi in Vietnam:
A study of language policy, practice and perceptions

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Centre for European Studies
and General Linguistics
University of Adelaide

August 2000

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Tây Bôi	1
1.2	Methodology	2
1.3	Language policy	4
1.4	The current situation	5
1.5	The Vietnamese language	6
1.6	Some definitions and terminology	7
1.7	Overview of the thesis	13
2	Theory and methodology	15
2.1	Practical data-gathering	16
2.2	Variation studies	22
2.3	Pidgin and creole theory	36
2.4	The Ideology of French	43
3	Language policy and usage	49
3.1	Vietnam before European contact	50
3.2	The first Europeans in Vietnam	51
3.3	The colonial era	53
3.4	The end of the colonial era	76
3.5	Reunification	81
3.6	Summary	83
4	Tây Bôi	85
4.1	Introduction	85

4.2	Linguistic studies	87
4.3	Travel narratives	103
4.4	Summary	115
5	La Francophonie	117
5.1	The beginnings	117
5.2	Francophonie internationally	118
5.3	Francophonie in Vietnam	125
6	Analysis of the fieldwork	143
6.1	The research trip	143
6.2	Results	148
6.3	Conclusions	170
7	Conclusions	173
7.1	Tây Bôi	175
7.2	On Francophonie	179
7.3	On French in Vietnam	182
7.4	Summary	184
A	Sample questionnaire	187
B	Transcripts	189
C	Hanoi then and now	201
D	Francophonie brochures	203
E	Tourist brochures and flyers	208
	Bibliography	219

List of Figures

1	Vietnam before 1860	vii
2	Colonial Vietnam: French Indochina	viii
3	Vietnam today	ix
C.1	Colonial Hanoi	201
C.2	Hanoi today	202
D.1	CFC brochure	203
D.2	CNIDST brochure	204
D.3	Alliance Française programme	205
D.4	AUF brochure	206
D.5	CAEF newsletter	207
E.1	Cyclo Bar flyer	208
E.2	Café des Arts flyer	209
E.3	Ho Chi Minh's 'Relic Area' brochure (outside)	210
E.4	Ho Chi Minh's 'Relic Area' brochure (inside)	211
E.5	Ngọc So'n Temple brochure (outside)	212
E.6	Ngọc So'n Temple brochure (inside)	213
E.7	Temple of Literature brochure (outside)	214
E.8	Temple of Literature brochure (inside)	215
E.9	Army Museum brochure (outside)	216
E.10	Army Museum brochure (inside)	217

Abstract

The field of this thesis is the policy and practice of French language use in Vietnam, with particular reference to Tây Bồi, a pidgin French spoken during the colonial era. The work will examine the varieties of French, the circumstances of their origins and development, how they are used and how they could contribute to the study of the meeting of different languages and cultures, especially with regard to the interaction of French with other languages. The example of Tây Bồi will illustrate some of the overlooked results of language planning policies and how practical usage differs from the ideals.

Research was conducted using material from various sources, including the limited number of linguistic studies on Tây Bồi, literature on colonial French policy and accounts of that era, and later works on *Francophonie* specifically on Vietnam and throughout the French-speaking world. Methodological approaches include aspects of sociolinguistic investigation, analysis of communicative necessity, the power, identity and prestige associated with language, and pidgin and creole theory. A study trip to Vietnam was necessary for researching archival records not available in Australia, as well as gathering linguistic data from French speakers and examining attitudes towards French across people of different generations and backgrounds.

Conclusions are drawn from this wide-ranging study on the continuing efforts of France to promote its language and culture overseas and the changes in emphasis and policy which have occurred since the colonial era. The study of contact between languages and cultures and of its results, including Tây Bồi, can prove valuable for understanding and developing an improved linguistic policy as well as international relations.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

11/8/2000

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and input of Professor Peter Mühlhäusler and Dr. Blandine Stefanson as supervisors of this thesis.

I am grateful to the Centre for European Studies and General Linguistics for the grant of the PW Rice Research Travel Award to provide funding for the field trip.

My thanks to all those who contributed to the research in Hanoi, particularly Mme Pham Thi Lieu of the Hanoi Cultural University, M. Mai Phan D ng of the AIF, M. Christophe Villemer of the AUF, Dr. Ta Ba Hung and staff of the CNIDST, staff and students at the CFC, staff at the Alliance Fran aise, the National Library and the National Archives Centre One, and to Kien, Huy and Quang, whose assistance and friendship made the trip a more rewarding experience.

Special thanks to Dr. Peter Clayton and Guy Olding for comments and support.

Typeset in Computer Modern by the author and Damien Warman with L^AT_EX, with thanks to Brandon Pincombe.

Printed on acid free archival paper.



Figure 1: Vietnam before 1860, showing the unification of the country under the Vietnamese emperors (DeFrancis 1977 p. 39).

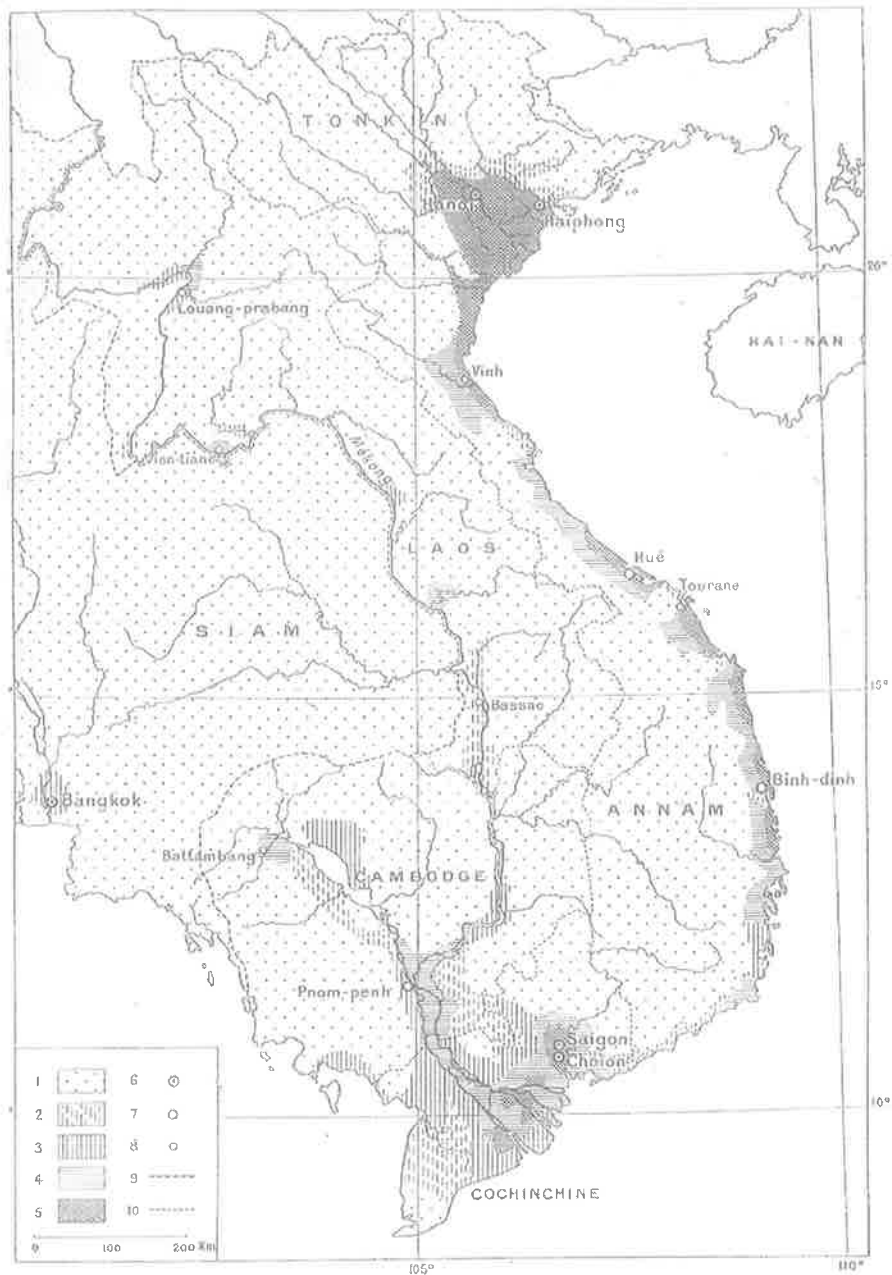
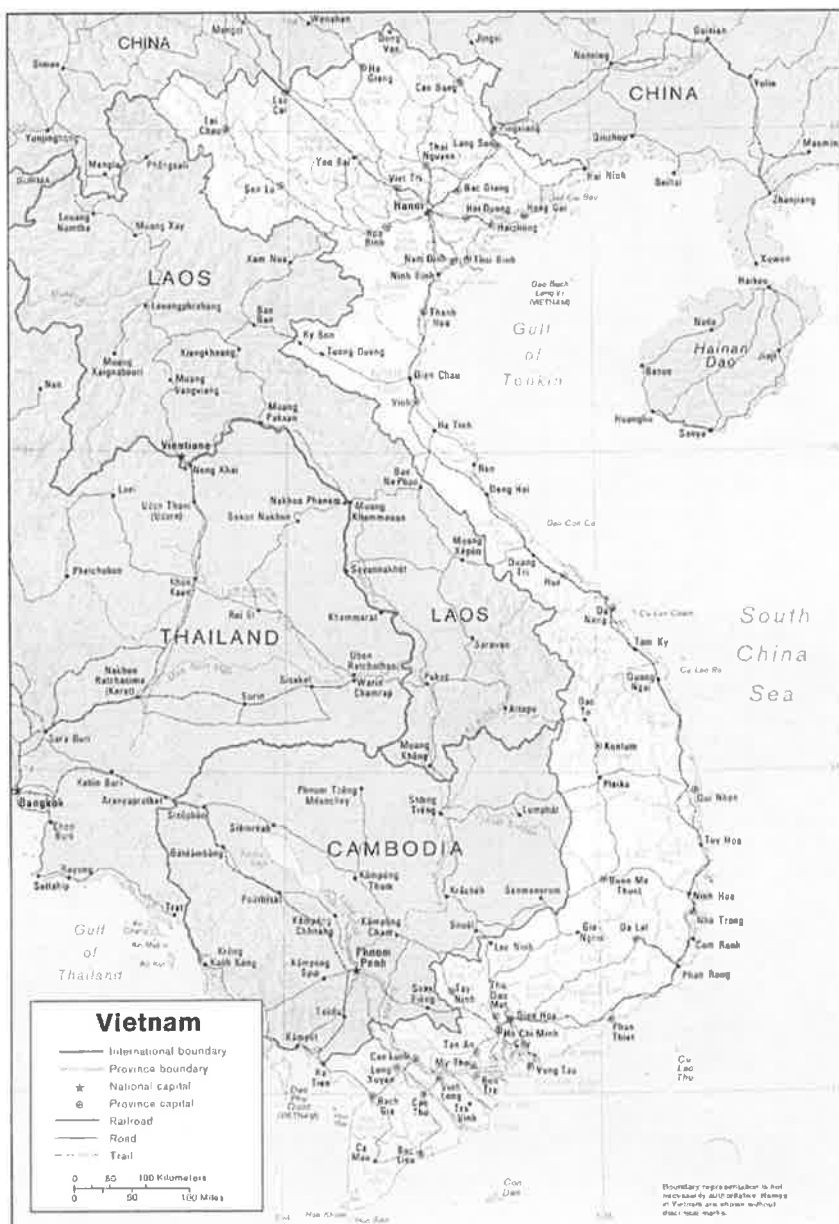


Figure 2: Vietnam during the colonial era: French Indochina c. 1920s, showing population density, major cities, administrative divisions (small dashes) and the borders of French Indochina (large dashes) (Vidal de la Blache and Gallois 1929 p. 467).



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Figure 3: Vietnam today (<http://www.medteams.com/>)