

Chapter 5

The Cambodian Secretary-Interpreter Ly Sâm

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Preface

Early on the morning of January 11, 1915, the Administrative Delegate (administrateur délégué) Truffot, who had jurisdiction over the Kratié region, was attacked and killed as he was attempting to subjugate an uprising by the Pnong.¹ Accompanying him as an interpreter, Cambodgien (Khmer) Ly Sâm, 6th class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter (Secrétaire Interprète titulaire), left behind two detailed hand-drawn maps and one report, both in French, concerning Truffot's marching route and the circumstances surrounding the attack. Of these, the hand-drawn map depicting the attack site includes especially vivid depictions of the people's clothing with explanations: 1) The Pnong wore only something resembling a loincloth; they were barefoot and did not cover their heads, and many carried spears drawn in simplified, arrow shapes. Some also carried slightly curved swords. Only two people were shown firing rifles at Truffot's troops; 2) Militiamen (Miliciens) wore blue coats with stand-up collars and buttons in the front along with red pants and a beret-like hat. Barefoot, they all carried rifles; 3) Partisans wore light brown coats with buttons in the front as well as trousers. They wore nothing on their heads and went barefoot; 4) Local officials including Ly Sâm, wore light brown coats with buttons in the front as well as trousers, and helmet-like headwears. Only Ly Sâm wore shoes; everyone else was barefoot. Sâm, provincial governor of Kratié, carried a different kind of rifle than that of the militiamen, while Pên, Balat (deputy to the provincial governor) of Sambor carried a sword; 5) The French tended to be drawn somewhat larger. They wore light brown coats with buttons in the front as well as trousers, hats, and shoes, and had beards. Truffot and Magaud, Chief Guard (garde principal), carried pistols [RSC-10681]. When compared to photographs from the same period [Montague 2010: 152–153, 156–157, 174, 181–184], we see that Ly Sâm depicted the characteristics of each groups very skillfully. Moreover, the report includes realistic descriptions of the manner in which the militiamen marched,

¹ Pnong is the name Khmers collectively use to identify minority people who live on the east bank of the Mekong.

scenes of the encampment on the night before the attack, and the condition of individuals at the time of the attack; along with the maps, this gives us a clear understanding of what happened.

Truffot and Ly Sâm were about the same age. According to a file of documents drawn up after his death to calculate the pension for his widow, Truffot was born on May 18, 1873, in Vezannes, Yonne and began his duties as a colonial official in Cambodia in 1899 [RSC-36723]. Meanwhile, according to the “Mémoire de proposition pour l’admission à la pension d’ancienneté” of July 31, 1932, Ly Sâm was born on February 13, 1872 in Tamlat, in the Sôctrang region (Cochinchina) [RSC-33541]. As he worked until reaching retirement age in 1932, about 300 documents related to Ly Sâm can be found in his three personal files [RSC-10656, 10662, 33541] and a file concerning the Pnong rebellion in Kratié [RSC-10681], stored in Phnom Penh’s National Archives.

Truffot died three months after his arrival in Kratié. Taking into account his sixteen-year service period that began in 1899, it would not be surprising had Truffot gained some proficiency in the Khmer language. However, according to Ly Sâm’s report, conversations with local officials, militiamen, and local people were conducted through the interpreting services of Ly Sâm. The file that contains the report also includes a French translation of two letters with the indication that the Interpreter Ly Sâm translated them [RSC-10681].² Thus, Ly Sâm and other indigenous Secretary-Interpreters translated reports and made them available to French government officials.

Ten years after the Truffot incident, on April 18, 1925, villagers killed *Résident* Félix Louis Bardez at Kompong Chnang. Félix Louis Bardez became a *Résident* of Kompong Chnang at the end of 1924. On the day of the incident, he accompanied one interpreter and one Cambodian militiaman into the village. Summoning the villagers who were not paying taxes, they handcuffed several, ordering that they pay fines or else face imprisonment. The villagers grew violent and rushed the three, killing them all. David Chandler notes that, with the colonial rule establishing itself during the twentieth century, the Khmer language proficiency of the French began to decline. It has been pointed out that even though he worked in Cambodia for over 15 years Bardez could not speak Khmer. According to Chandler, the period from the 1860s to the 1870s was “a heroic period” during which Doudart de Lagrée, Francis Garnier, Jean Moura, Etienne Aymonier, and others were pioneers; they empathized with the Cambodians, translating inscriptions and chronicles that they themselves discovered into French, and also forwarded a great number

² One was sent by Ton, Me Khum (village mayor) of Sré Khtum, to the governor of Kratié on January 1, 1915 and then forwarded by the governor to the administrator of Kratié on January 6, while another was sent by Me Khum Chruk of Choeng (currently within the Kratié province) to the governor of Kratié on January 4 of the same year, and the governor of Kratié forwarded it to the administrator of Kratié on January 11. The original language of these letters is unknown.

of sculptures to museums far and wide. Among these pioneers was Pavie, in whose mission Ly Sâm took part at the beginning of his career. Afterwards, at the beginning of the twentieth century, typewriters were introduced to the *Résidence* of each region, resulting in an increase in the amount of documents that each *Résident* had to deal with, meaning that the vast majority of work was done within the office. Moreover, during the same period, the automobile became more common, making a *Résident's* inspection trips faster, while the targeted area came to be concentrated around roadways. As a result of this, there were fewer and fewer opportunities for French officials and local people to come in contact with each other [Chandler 2008: 173, 185, 191–194]. Truffot can be thought of as one of these latter types of officials.

There are more documents of better quality written in French and Khmer from the latter part of the nineteenth century than from other periods, however, there has been almost no research conducted on these, especially with regards to documents written in the Khmer language. The authors of these documents were Cambodian officials and mandarins as well as villagers, the vast majority of whom were Theravada Buddhist Khmer. The Kingdom of Cambodia survived the colonial period, with its “mandarins” bestowed by the royal court traditional titles which had existed since pre-colonial times.³ The majority of information transmitted among the King, ministers, local governors, and villagers was in the Khmer language, with French documents only created at times of contact with French colonial officials such as the *Résident supérieur* of Phnom Penh and *Résidents* in provincial centers. This situation was inconsistent with traditional colonial views that depicted Cambodians in exclusively passive terms, stating that “[T]he government that a Cambodian peasant might encounter in these years was composed of a minority of Cambodians and of a great many Vietnamese brought into the protectorate because they could prepare reports in French, and this interplay between Cambodians and Vietnamese had important effects on the development of Cambodian nationalism, especially after World War II” [Chandler 2008: 167–170, 185]. This leads us to wonder what kind of circumstances can be presumed when “a Cambodian peasant” and “a Vietnamese civil servant” come in contact with each other. For example, previously tax collectors dispatched from Phnom Penh had gone to collect rents of “royal paddy fields” (*rizières royales*) and “ponds belonging to the Crown” (*étangs appartenant à la Couronne*) and taxes on rice harvests but from around 1918 to 1920 local officials such as Me Khum were put in charge of this task [Kitagawa 2003: 23–24, Chandler 2008: 189], so it is improbable that Vietnamese officials participated in tax collection on the spot. Moreover, while mandarins such as local governors and village headsmen were not necessarily Khmer, since it was necessary to prepare and read documents written in Khmer that followed a given format, it is felt that, at the very least,

³ However, Ly Sâm and other Secretary-Interpreters who worked for the French colonial administration did not have such titles.

these were not duties fit for Vietnamese newcomers.

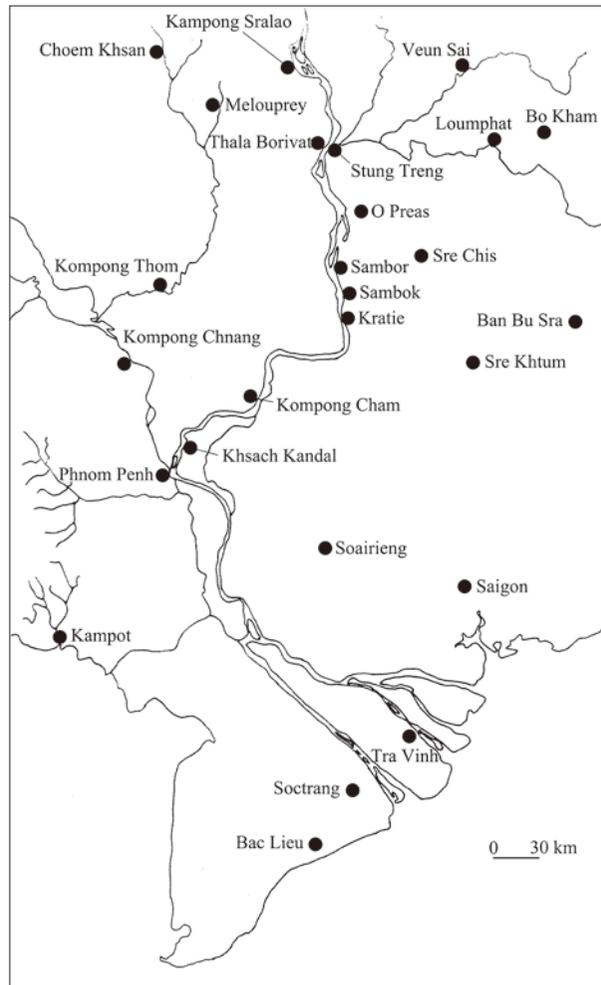
There is little information concerning people living in colonial Cambodia, making empirical analysis of historical sources from this period necessary. Local colonial officials such as Ly Sâm were generally a part of “a social stratum that enjoyed certain economic wealth under colonial rule, although they were subjected to social injustices of a colonial society such as discrimination and political oppression on a daily basis as being middle class always positioned under the colonists, and they possessed the ability to criticize this situation based on European ideology and logic that they learned”; they were thought to be the class that would later become the main players in the nationalist movement [Ikehata 2002: 10]. In Cambodian history, little research has been done on these local officials. In light of this situation, this paper aims to depict Ly Sâm as a “Cambodian Secretary-Interpreter (Secrétaire Interprète)” in as much detail as possible, based on historical materials.

1. The Northeast of the Kingdom of Cambodia—Stung Treng and Kratié

Ly Sâm spent most of his career as a civil servant in Laos, and also Stung Treng and Kratié, which are in the northeastern part of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In *Monographie de la province de Stung-Treng (Cambodge)*, there are descriptions of how Stung Treng was established at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Veun Sai or Moulapoumok⁴ (currently a part of Rotanak Kiri) were established around 1898, by Lao leaders [*Monographie* 1913: 23–26]. Stung Treng is sometimes even referred to as “Srok Liev” (the land of the Lao) in the dynastic chronicles of Cambodia. Stung Treng switched hands from Laos to Cambodia in 1904. At that time, in the Stung Treng province, Lao peoples populated the region around the Mekong River and its tributaries, with the inland area inhabited by ethnic minorities collectively referred to as Kha.

Meanwhile, Kratié and Sambor had been subject to Cambodian kings since before the colonial period, with inland areas distant from the Mekong inhabited by the Pnong and not subjugated by Cambodian authorities. The French missionary Bouillevaux entered the interior from Sambok in September 1851. After staying at a village about one to two days from the “grand fleuve” (the Mekong River), he traveled through woodlands “with no traces of mankind,” arriving at “a village of savages, either Penong or Bonong,” after three days. This village was located in “a region paying tribute to Cambodia” and each household (ménage) paid a certain amount of wax as taxes. From this location, Bouillevaux traveled one more day to the east, entering “the village of independent savages.” These inhabitants

⁴ As per the *Monographie de la province de Stung-Treng*, “Ban Veun Sai” is the name used by locals, while “Moulapoumok” is used by the French.



Map 1. Mekong region

“had no government of any form: there was no leader, and everyone was equal.” In the land of Charai further to the north, there was a “King of Fire” and a “King of Water” and it is said that they received gifts every three years from the King of Cambodia and the King of Cochinchina. Moreover, there were a few Cambodians who had fled after committing crimes and went on to marry Pngong women in the village of “independent savages,” and these individuals served as go-betweens between Bouillevaux and the Pngong [Bouillevaux 1874: 146–157]. In the *Monographie de la province de Kratié* as well, the governor of Sambor was 1) responsible for receiving letters, gifts, and contributions destined for the King of Cambodia from Laos and other neighboring countries, and 2) it was noted that the King of Cambodia was responsible for delivering presents every three years to the “King of Water and the King of Fire,” i.e., the “Kings of

Jaray, Rode, and Pnong” [Monographie 1908: 53].

In other words, Ly Sâm’s workplace was an area serving as a point of contact to Laos and Pnong for the Cambodian court, and was being incorporated into the realm of the Kingdom of Cambodia under French colonial rule. At the end of 1907, the first administrative station (poste administratif) was established in Sré Khtum (now in the Mondol Kiri province) in the Pnong area and beginning in February 1909, a detachment of militiamen led by the French Chief Guard came to be stationed in the area. What’s more, from 1909 to 1910, having received the direction of the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia, Henri Maitre carried out an expedition, winning the allegiances of various villages and establishing a station (poste) in Ban Bu Sra/Ban-Pou-Sra (presently in Mondol Kiri) and was nominated to be its delegate (délégué). Henri Maitre was often absent from his station but Okña Piphéa Chantakréam Mau, a Cambodian Balat who was appointed his assistant, inspected and subdued the villages around the station and registered their villagers on the list. In those villages, Me Khum/Mésrok (village chief) collected a tax of 7 piastres (about 120–180 kg of unhulled rice) per “registered person” (inscrit), which was paid to two representatives of the governor of Kratié. In addition, villagers also performed compulsory service by working far from their village on construction of a road linking Kratié and Sambor. In order to earn the 7 piastres necessary for tax payment, it is thought that they strengthened their reliance on Cambodian and Chinese merchants, being forced to sell forest products at unfair prices [Guérin 2008: 73–89].

2. Ly Sâm’s Career

1. Initial Service in Cambodia and the Pavie Mission

In his report of the Truffot incident, Ly Sâm stated that he studied the Khmer language at a pagoda in his hometown of Sôctrang and studied French at an elementary school (école primaire) in Sôctrang and then at a college (collège) in Phnom Penh. He also wrote that he learned Quoc-Ngu, Siamese, and Lao, acquiring a diploma in Lao. He first worked from 1891 to 1894 at the Service of Cadaster (Service du Cadastre) and Public Affairs (Travaux publics) in the *Résidence supérieure* in Cambodia, where he assumed duties related to the planning of a railroad to run between Kratié and Stung Treng [RSC-10681].

It is noted that in the decree (arrêté) of the Governor-General of Indochina (Gouverneur Général de l’Indochine) dated October 10, 1894, (Ly) Samme was paid 300 piastres as his salary plus 1.5 piastres a day for travel allowance in his role as an interpreter trainee (élève interprète), and that he was ordered to work in the Pavie Mission from September 1, 1894 [RSC-33541]. In the report of the Truffot incident, he wrote that he participated in the Pavie Mission and had surveyed High Tonkin (Haut Tonkin), Sip-Song



Map 2. French protectorate of Laos

Panna, and Sip-Song Chu Thay [RSC-10681].

2. Service in Laos

In his employment history attached to “Mémoire de proposition pour l’admission à la pension d’ancienneté,” Ly Sâm noted that he worked at the *Résidence supérieur* of Laos as a 6th class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter from September 27, 1895, and was dismissed as a 2nd class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter on March 3, 1906 [RSC-33541]. According to the report of the Truffot incident, during this time he worked at Luang Prabang, Muong Sing, Xieng Khong, i.e. present-day Ban Haei-Sai, and Xieng-Seng, etc. in High Laos (Haut Laos) [RSC-10681].

In a letter dated January 28, 1907, that he wrote to the *Résident* of Stung Treng, Ly Sâm explained that he was dismissed in 1906 because he had been tempted “by various Lao mandarins” and committed corrupt acts. At the time, he was sentenced to six months imprisonment but, taking his service into account, he was given a special pardon [RSC-10662]. In a letter addressed to the *Résident supérieur* dated June 7, 1909, the *Résident* of

Stung Treng wrote that Ly Sâm, along with Chau Muong of Pak Hinboun, was dismissed due to charges of misappropriation of public funds [RSC-10656].

3. *Service in Cambodia*

The above-mentioned letter dated January 28, 1907, was an appeal to reinstate Ly Sâm as “an interpreter of Cambodian, Annamese, and Lao” at “a salary equivalent to the time he worked in Laos” [RSC-10662]. A letter to the *Résident* of Stung Treng dated February 25, 1909 contained the following account: “Thanks to the order given by the *Résident*, on January 28, 1907, I was given a position as a temporary interpreter (*interprète journalier*) at 20 piastres per month” [RSC-10656] and it turns out that he was offered a position on the very day the previous letter was accepted. However, on February 5, 1907—one week after he was hired—Ly Sâm sent another letter to the *Résident* of Stung Treng, complaining that he would not be able to feed his wife, children, and parents on his salary of 0.5 piastres per day and petitioned to be reinstated as soon as possible [RSC-10662]. In another letter dated February 25, 1909, he noted that he “cannot feed a family of four on a temporary interpreter’s salary” and so petitioned to either return to his position as Secretary-Interpreter (*Secrétaire Interprète*) for Cambodia, or, if this was not possible, to receive a raise. In a letter to the *Résident supérieur* dated June 7 of the same year, the *Résident* of Stung Treng indicated that Ly Sâm had worked at stations in Thala-Borivat (presently in the Stung Treng province), Stung Treng, and Veun Sai from 1907 and, in recognition of his talents, recommended him as a 2nd class Auxiliary Secretary (*Secrétaire auxiliaire*) due to his having sufficiently compensated for a “serious mistake that jeopardized his career” [RSC-10656]. From his employment history, we can confirm that Ly Sâm was reinstated as 2nd class Auxiliary Secretary-Interpreter (*Secrétaire Interprète auxiliaire*) on July 14, 1909 [RSC-33541].

Records remain of his work time in Cambodia in “Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène”⁵ and show that he was in Stung Treng until 1914, in Kratié from 1914 to 1917, in Stung Treng from 1917 to 1920, in Kratié from 1920 until 1923, in Kompong Cham from 1923 to 1925, in Stung Treng from 1925 to 1927, in Kampot in 1927, and in Kratié from 1927 to 1931 [RSC-10656, 10662]. With the exception of Kampot, i.e., the Gulf of Thailand region, in early 1927, all his other work was conducted in the middle and upper Mekong river basin.

⁵ From early 1909, early and late 1910, early and late 1911, early and late 1912, early and late 1914, early and late 1916, early 1917, early and late 1918, early and late 1919, late 1920, early and late 1921, early and late 1923, early and late 1924, early and late 1925, early and late 1926, early and late 1927, early and late 1928, early and late 1929, early and late 1930, and early and late 1931.

(i) Transfer to Kratié (1914)

From the end of 1913, Ly Sâm repeatedly submitted requests for leave citing health reasons. The first such request asked for a three-month leave and was included in a letter addressed to the *Résident* of Stung Treng dated December 10. The director of the Moulapoumok station where Ly Sâm was working at the time, transmitted the request to the *Résident* of Stung Treng on December 15, adding a note demanding that permission for leave be given after the end of January, as he had business to be managed at the end of the year. Afterwards, in a second letter to the *Résident* of Stung Treng dated January 14, 1914, Ly Sâm applied for a leave of absence, attaching a doctor's medical certificate. The *Résident* of Stung Treng noted in this letter that Ly Sâm was suffering poor health due to opium usage and, upon granting him leave, that the *Résident* wanted to have an interpreter proficient in Lao succeed him. The *Résident* transmitted this letter to the *Résident supérieur* on February 16. In a third letter to the *Résident supérieur* dated March 16, Ly Sâm attached a medical certificate from the Phnom Penh Hospital noting a diagnosis of "anemia due to habitual opium usage" and indicated that, were his request for leave to be withdrawn, he desired a transfer to a healthy and important workplace in "Lower Cambodia" (bas Cambodge; not Kampuchea Krom), and requested assignment to Kampot. However, Ly Sâm's request was not granted and, on the decree of the *Résident supérieur* on March 21, he was transferred to Kratié as a successor to Nguyễn-van-Ngoc, a Secretary trainee (Secrétaire stagiaire) who had been summoned to Phnom Penh [RSC-10656]. The Truffot incident occurred during the time he worked in Kratié.

Despite having a doctor's medical certificate, Ly Sâm's requests had been continuously denied presumably because there was a shortage of talented Secretary-Interpreters proficient in the Lao language, which was indispensable to the administration of Stung Treng and Kratié.

(ii) Transfer to Stung Treng (1917)

Next, as a result of the decree of the *Résident supérieur* dated July 21, 1917, Ly Sâm was ordered to move from Kratié to Stung Treng as a successor to Muong, a 2nd class Principal Interpreter (Interprète principal). Leading up to this, there was a telegram from the *Résident* of Stung Treng addressed to the *Résident supérieur* dated June 12 requesting that an able Cambodian interpreter be appointed to replace Muong. At the bottom of the paper, there was a statement indicating that Muong was appointed governor of Khsach-Kandal (presently a part of the Kandal province) [RSC-10656]. In another telegram to the *Résident supérieur* dated June 12, the *Résident* of Stung Treng mentioned the names of Lieng of Battambang, Cuong of the Phnom Penh Hospital, and Ly Sâm of Kratié as interpreters of Lao [RSC-10656]. From this, we can see that there were few Secretary-Interpreters proficient in Lao, and that the *Résident* of Stung Treng was aware of some information

regarding the whereabouts of some of them.

(iii) Transfer to Phnom Penh and Kratié (1920)

Ly Sâm worked for only a very short time in Phnom Penh during the first half of 1920. Ly Sâm sent a letter to the *Résident* of Stung Treng on February 7, 1920. The letter says that for 11 years—from 1907 to 1914 and then again from 1917 to 1920—he worked in Stung Treng, “an unhealthy region most distant from the capital” and fulfilled his duties by patrolling Veun Sai, Bo Kham, Loumphot (part of present-day Rotanak Kiri), Siempan (part of present-day Stung Treng), Spong (unknown), Kampong Sralao, Melouprey, and Cheom Khsan (part of present-day Preah Vihear), “areas dangerously unsanitary” and requested to the *Résident supérieur* transfer to a *Résidence* or station of “Lower Cambodia” on the grounds that his age and health made such activities difficult. The *Résident* of Stung Treng forwarded this to the *Résident supérieur* on February 10, requesting an able Lao interpreter in his stead. In a telegram dated February 19, the *Résident supérieur* accepted Ly Sâm’s wishes and on March 1 he was transferred to Phnom Penh. It was announced that Buor Chhim would be his successor [RSC-10656].

However, Ly Sâm refused the transfer to Phnom Penh, and set about trying to extend his stay. On February 25, he sent a letter to the *Résident* of Stung Treng, indicating that, with this salary, living in the capital was difficult, and asking to remain in Stung Treng until an opportunity arose to be directly transferred to another duty post in Cambodia or to at least delay his deferment until the end of March to facilitate the transfer to a successor. A decree of the *Résident supérieur* dated March 1 stated that Ly Sâm was to be transferred to the Veterinary and Epizootic Service of Phnom Penh but, in a telegram at 5:05 PM of the same day to the *Résident supérieur*, the *Résident* of Stung Treng indicated that, since Ly Sâm was going out on patrols with assistants and planning to return on March 6, he wanted to delay his departure until the 20th or thereabout. In a telegram dated March 5, the *Résident supérieur* granted his permission. Afterwards, a letter dated May 4 from the *Résident* of Stung Treng to the *Résident supérieur* noted that because Ly Sâm could not provide for his family on his salary, he refused to work in Phnom Penh and wanted to work in Kampot or Kompong Cham, and that from the standpoint of the *Résident* of Stung Treng, due to his experience and positive attitude towards service, and especially his abilities in the Lao and Kha languages, that “his presence would be missed.” In addition, at the end of this letter, there was an entry indicating a desire to have Bouchhim remain as a successor to Luu-Dien-Bang, a Secretary who was given a three-month vacation by a decree dated April 3, 1920, and that despite health worries that forced Luu-Dien-Bang to soon leave, he was to stay at his workplace because there was no successor. In a telegram the next day of May 5 at 9:20 AM too, the *Résident* of Stung Treng communicated this to the *Résident supérieur* again [RSC-10656]. From this, we can see that there was a chronic shortage of Secretary-Interpreters fluent in Lao at the *Résidence* of Stung Treng.

Despite Ly Sâm's rejection and the recommendation provided by the *Résidence* of Stung Treng, on May 27 of the same year, in a communication from the head of the Veterinary and Epizootic Service to the *Résident supérieur*, it was acknowledged that Ly Sâm had assumed his new post on May 23 [RSC-10656].⁶ After that, it seems as though Ly Sâm was waiting for an opportunity without giving up transfer from Phnom Penh. He sent a letter to the head of the Veterinary and Epizootic Service on October 1, reporting that he reached an agreement with 1st class Principal Secretary (Secrétaire principal) Nguyen-Leu-Heat who had just returned from his leave, and urged the head to convey to the *Résident supérieur* his desire to change positions with Nguyen-Leu-Heat. A note from the head of the Veterinary and Epizootic Service dated October 2 was attached to the end of the letter, and read "there are no inconveniences to speak of other than the difference in salary." Directly thereafter, Nguyen-Leu-Heat replaced Ly Sâm at the Veterinary and Epizootic Service in Phnom Penh as a result of a decree of the *Résident supérieur* dated October 5 while Ly Sâm assumed the duties of 2nd class Secretary Nguyen-Huu-Thien, who himself was on a leave of absence, at the *Résidence* of Kratié [RSC-10656].

(iv) Transfer to Kompong Cham (1923)

In a letter dated July 3, 1922—a little less than two years after his transfer to Kratié—Ly Sâm conveyed to the *Résident* of Kratié his desire to be transferred to Kompong Cham, citing the fact that, from 1907 to 1922, he had worked at "places infamously unhealthy and far away" at Veun Sai (Moulapoumok), Stung Treng, Thala-Borivat, and Phnom Penh, and then again at Kratié, and had satisfied the transfer requirements of the personnel of the 2nd cadre secretaries of Cambodia (personnel des Secrétaires du cadre secondaire du Cambodge) as stipulated in "Article 13 (Part 3) of the New Statute." The *Résident* of Kratié conveyed Ly Sâm's desire to the *Résident supérieur* in a letter dated July 17. In a letter to the *Résident* of Kratié dated February 2, 1923, citing the fact that he had worked for over 16 years at the *Résidences* of "the most unhealthy locations in Cambodia," i.e., Kratié and Stung Treng, Ly Sâm once again petitioned for transfer to Kompong Cham in accordance with the decree of September 23, 1919, which concerned the change of the personnel of secretaries (personnel des Secrétaires) in Cambodia. The *Résident* of Kratié sent this request for transfer to the *Résidence supérieure* in a letter dated February 8, 1922 (this is thought to be a mistake and should really be 1923). As a result, it was decided by a decree of the *Résident supérieur* dated March 8, 1923, to transfer Ly Sâm to Kompong Cham "as per his wishes" [RSC-10656].

⁶ A request to view his personal records was reported; on the same day, May 27, relevant documents were sent from *Résident supérieur* to the head of the Veterinary and Epizootic Service.

(v) Transfer to Stung Treng (1925)

It was Ly Sâm who had ever since 1914—a period of almost ten years—wanted to be transferred from Stung Treng, Kratié to “Lower Cambodia” (bas Cambodge) but two years after finally getting his desired transfer to Kompong Cham, he was planning on a transfer back to Stung Treng. The origins of this consist of a letter from Ly Sâm to Bua Chhin dated July 13, 1925, that remained in the document file. In it, Ly Sâm indicated that should Bua Chhin seek a transfer to Kompong Cham he would seek a move to Stung Treng, and encouraged Bua Chhin to quickly submit a request to that effect before anybody else wanting to transfer got wind of this opportunity. At the end of this letter there is a note to the effect that a friend of Bua Chhin, Sath, “wishes to work with you [Bua Chhin] in the courthouse.” Next, in a letter to Boua (Bua) Chhin dated August 2, after mentioning that he had received his reply, he noted that Boua Chhin had wanted to be transferred to Kompong Cham two years earlier but it didn’t go through as Ly Sâm refused his transfer. However, this time, he really wanted to leave Kompong Cham in order that Boua Chhin be transferred to Kompong Cham in his stead, he provided specific advice on what to do. The gist of this advice was that: 1) Boua Chhin had worked for five years in Stung Treng, “the most far-flung and unhealthiest” locale in Cambodia, and thus met the conditions for a transfer; 2) he wanted to be assigned to a workplace closer to the capital; and that 3) Boua Chhin should submit a recommendation to his superior officer to the effect that Ly Sâm be appointed as his successor because Ly Sâm worked in Kompong Cham, was familiar with Lao and Annamese, and was qualified to be a Secretary in Stung Treng. The letter was concluded with a passage indicating that Boua Chhin’s “friends,” Laui Ngoc But, Kong, Ly Seng, Kham Tu, Ouch, and others prayed for his success and, if he got the transfer, Kong would help him set up “a comfortable residence” while his “friends” Sath and Tal would wait for him in Kompong Cham [RSC-10656]. It is clear from these two letters that there were interactions between Secretaries regardless of whether they were Cambodian or Vietnamese, and through these, one party could gain an understanding of the desires of the other party and appropriate arrangements could thus be made in advance to hasten an advantageous outcome.

In a letter addressed to the *Résident* of Stung Treng sent sometime in August, Buor-Chhinn (Bua Chhin) indicated that in letters from “my coworker in Kompong Cham, Ly Sâm” dated July 13 and August 2 that he also forwarded, Ly Sâm strongly desired to return to Stung Treng, and offered to exchange positions with him. In a letter to the *Résident supérieur* dated August 15, the *Résident* of Stung Treng reported that Buor-Chhinn had submitted a transfer request about two years beforehand and he made an approval to this effect conditional upon “finding a Secretary who would voluntarily come to Stung Treng,” and that Ly Sâm, who had worked at Stung Treng and was fluent in Lao, had agreed to exchange positions with Buor-Chhinn. As a result, 4th class Principal Secretary Ly Sâm replaced Buor-Chhinn, who was of the same class, and was transferred to Stung Treng as

per the decree of the *Résident supérieur* dated September 14 [RSC-10656].

(vi) Transfer to Kampot (1927)

With the decree of the *Résident supérieur* dated December 9, 1926, Ly Sâm was replaced by the Secretary trainee Youi Dam, and transferred to the *Résidence* of Kampot. This matter was conveyed to the *Résident* of Kampot by the *Résident supérieur* by telegram on December 10. In a letter to the *Résident* of Kampot dated March 24, 1927, soon after his arrival at Kampot, Ly Sâm mentioned that he had received information indicating that a Cambodian Secretary at Kratié had submitted a transfer request, and then requested the *Résident* to transmit to the *Résident supérieur* his own request to be transferred to Kratié or Stung Treng citing such facts as that Ly Sâm's wife, a Lao, had refused to accompany him as she "could not speak the language of this country," i.e., Cambodian, and was not suited to Kampot's climate for health reasons, thus finding himself alone on his job transfer, and that he found his duties in Stung Treng to be most suitable as he was familiar with Lao and Siamese. The *Résident* of Kampot conveyed this to the *Résident supérieur* on March 27. As a result, 3rd class Principal Secretary (Secrétaire principal) Ly Sâm was replaced by 4th class Secretary Oum-Preuou and transferred to Kratié by a decree of the *Résident supérieur* on April 26. Oum-Preuou meanwhile was transferred to Soairieng with 6th class Secretary Khun-Ning transferred to Kampot [RSC-10656]. From the above, it is clear that information sharing and preliminary arrangements were made between Ly Sâm and others, and that Ly Sâm's own selection of workplace was mainly influenced by the situation at home.

(vii) Transfer Request to Stung Treng (1928)

In a letter to the *Résident* of Kratié dated June 7, 1928, Ly Sâm made it clear that he wanted to be transferred to Stung Treng, where he hoped to stay until his retirement. He also indicated that he planned to build a residence and continue living there even after retirement. From the *Résident supérieur*'s order of July 26 directed at the *Résident* of Kratié, it is clear that Ly Sâm's request was conveyed to the *Résident supérieur* on June 9. Instructions provided by the *Résident supérieur* allowed Ly Sâm to search for colleagues interested in transferring from Stung Treng to Kratié [RSC-10656]. Given this, it is clear that the making of these preparations by fellow Secretaries prior to job transfers was a procedure requisite also for a *Résident supérieur* and a *Résident*. At this time, it was probably not possible to find someone wishing to change job posts, meaning Ly Sâm was to work at the *Résidence* of Kratié until his retirement. Thereafter, on December 2, 1930, the birth certificate for his youngest child was issued in Kratié [RSC-33541], and we know that his Lao wife, who had refused to go to Kampot, lived together with Ly Sâm in Kratié, which had an environment similar to that of Stung Treng.

As is indicated on the employment history chart, Ly Sâm retired on September 1,

1932. As per a decree of the Governor-General of Indochina, his pension was to be paid quarterly, with payment to be made by Stung Treng on the 15th of January, April, July, and October [RSC-33541]. All indications are that he was able settle in Stung Treng after his retirement, which had been his desire.

4. Efforts to Put off Retirement

In “Mémoire de proposition pour l’admission à la pension d’ancienneté” dated July 31, 1932, Ly Sâm’s birthdate is given as February 13, 1872 [RSC-33541]. Looking at “Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène,” its first entry would be consistent with “Mémoire de proposition pour l’admission à la pension d’ancienneté,” which had his age at 37 as of May 24, 1909. However, the records became less clear in late 1920,⁷ and his increase in age gradually began to stagnate toward the end. Looking at the handwriting, items such as name and date of employment by the government, current position, age, marital status, number of children, medals, duty period, and the presence of any direct relationship with senior officials in the capital or the palace were clearly written by Ly Sâm himself [RSC-10656, 10662], so it is assumed that these fluctuations in recorded age were intentional and were initiated by Ly Sâm himself as he sought to delay his retirement as he approached 50 and became conscious of his looming retirement.

To support this, there is a letter dated December 5, 1931, that is addressed to the *Résident supérieur*. In it, Ly Sâm wrote that according to “l’Acte de notoriété tenant lieu d’acte de naissance” published in either 1911 or 1912, his birth year is given as 1872, but, “at the time when I passed his exams in 1890, I was only 16. However, I had to report my age as 18 to be appointed as an interpreter trainee,” meaning that as of February 13, 1932 he was actually only 58 and had not reached the retirement age of 60. This would be why he requested permission to continue working until the end of 1932 [RSC-33541].

5. Performance Feedback and Medals

Paul Macey, who was the Administrative Commissioner (*Administrateur commissaire*) in the Cammon region, said in a letter of recommendation dated January 9, 1903 at Pak Hinboun, that Ly Sâm “possessed superior French document translation skills, as well as conversation and writing skills in Annamese, Lao, Siamese, and Khmer, and was courteous

⁷ His age is given as 47 on November 12, 1920, 47 years 4 months on May 19, 1921, 50 on June 14, 1923, 52 on May 1, 1926, 53 from November 15, 1926 to November 7, 1927, 55 from October 18, 1929 to October 31, 1930, and 56 on November 3, 1931.

to indigenous people (indigènes), polite, gentle, and considerate to mandarins, and was an excellent employee" [RSC-10662]. Despite having a blemish on his record that included a case of embezzlement with Chau Muong of Pak Hinboun that caused him to be dismissed from his post in Laos, his excellent proficiency in the Lao language and ability to foster good relations with mandarins assured him of immediate employment in Stung Treng, Cambodia. At the beginning of his service in Cambodia, in the early 1909 "Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène," the head of the station at Ban Veun Sai entered "Siamese, Burmese, Annamese, Lao" in the column "foreign language," and "very good interpreter" in the column "Appréciation de la valeur générale de l'employé." The description in the column "Suggestion of the *Résident* or the head of the service" began with "Ly Sâm is a very good interpreter and speaks Siamese, Lao, Burmese, and Annamese, making him very valuable at a station such as Veun Sai" and concluded with "I hope to see him return to the position of a Secretary-Interpreter" [RSC-10656, 10662].

With regards to Ly Sâm's proficiency in Lao, the column "Appréciation de la valeur générale de l'employé" for the latter part of 1918 notes that "he is the only interpreter in Stung Treng sufficiently proficient in Lao" [RSC-10656, 10662]. In a letter to the *Résident* dated May 4, 1920, the *Résident* of Stung Treng wrote that Ly Sâm "was a senior servant (serviteur), very conscientious and energetic, and that his service was highly thought of" and that he was "the only trustworthy interpreter assigned to me, is proficient in Lao (his successor in contrast is not familiar with any idioms) and is the only Secretary at the *Résidence* who knows Kha" so "his departure will be sorely missed." With regards to his French, in a letter addressed to the *Résident supérieur* and dated July 17, 1922, the *Résident* of Kratié wrote that he "is head and shoulders above anyone else when it comes to his knowledge of French" [RSC-10656].

In addition to languages, "the laws of Cambodia" was entered in the column "Additional knowledge" (Connaissance accessoires) of "Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène" for the first and second halves of 1913. In the column "Special Aptitude" (Aptitudes spéciales) for the second half of 1920 "good knowledge of geopolitics" was noted, while in the column "Special Aptitude" for the first half of 1921, there was a comment that he "can make detailed survey maps" and the column "Particular Facts" (Faits particuliers) noted that he had "participated in the Pavie Mission" [RSC-10656, 10662]. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, directly following the Truffot incident on January 11, 1915, Ly Sâm created three documents: 1) a pictorial map showing the marching route of the forces (dated January 15); 2) a pictorial map showing the situation at the site (dated February 20), and; 3) a report on the details of the incident, analysis of causes, and recommendations (dated February 25), and submitted them to the

administrative delegate for Kratié.⁸ The colored pictorial maps (1) and (2) were drawn on square paper with 75 cm sides. While people, beasts of burden, and wild animals were represented in detail in picture form, other features were abstractly represented by symbols. Examples included roads presented as single red or black lines, rivers and lakes presented in light blue, stations depicted as tri-color pennants, villages drawn as small square ensembles, and mountains as light brown contoured concentric circles [RSC-10681]; given this work it is evident that Ly Sâm was familiar with map expressions. As with Lao, he may have acquired this knowledge through his activities with the Pavie Mission.

As Ly Sâm entered his 50s, a decline in his work is noted in “Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène.” In the column “Appréciation de la valeur générale de l’employé” for the first half of 1925, it is noted that he is “old and tired, and his work is very late and often filled with careless mistakes. He can only do a little work because he needs to reconsider all his work in order to avoid making major mistakes. He has won awards in Siamese, but cannot translate this language.” Similarly, near the end of the same year, we find entries noting “he is not fit for tasks anymore” and “he needs to retire.” Also, in the first half of 1926, we find a comment that “his work is slow, although he contributes greatly with his knowledge of the Cambodian, Annamese, and Lao languages.” For the first half of 1928, we find “suggested retirement” and “however, has not yet reached the age of compulsory retirement.” However, in latter part of 1931, just before his mandatory retirement age, an entry reads, “he is a very good Secretary, has had an excellent administrative career and has a perfect knowledge of this land (pays)” [RSC-10656, 10662].

The report of the Truffot incident that Ly Sâm created ends with a passage evaluating his work performance from 1891 to 1915, an assessment of his performance during the incident, where he acted calmly even though he was in danger, and a request to be awarded a decoration [RSC-10681]. This is perhaps what led to the entry of “one silver medal from the King of Cambodia” in the column “Medal” of “Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène” of the first part of 1916. Thereafter, in late 1918, he was awarded a Royal Order of Monisaraphon; in late 1919, a gold medal; in late 1920, a Chevalier medal; in early 1923, a second class medal of honor (médaille d’honneur de seconde classe); in early 1924, an Officier medal; in early 1927, a Kim Khanh decoration from Annam; and in early 1928, a Chevalier medal of the Order of the Million Elephants (l’Ordre du Million d’Éléphants) from Laos [RSC-10656, 10662]. Concerning this last decoration from Laos, letters to the Veterinary and Epizootic Service of Phnom Penh dated August 10 and 13, 1920, and a letter addressed to the *Résident* of Kratié dated November 16 remained in the file. With regards to his service in Laos from 1895 to 1905 and in Stung Treng from 1907

⁸ The administrator of Kratié forwarded this to the *Résident* of Kompong Cham on March 9.

to 1920, we know that Ly Sâm himself requested to be awarded the medals of the Million Elephants (Million d'Éléphants) and White Parasol (Parasol Blanc) of Laos due to his "constant work at interpreting in Lao in addition to his mother tongue." In the letter dated August 13, there is an accompanying note dated the 14th from the head of the Veterinary and Epizootic Service alluding that a "favorable opinion" would be forwarded to the *Résident supérieur*. Meanwhile, in a letter dated November 16, there was an annotation dated the 17th by the *Résident* of Kratié to the effect that Ly Sâm's request would be considered commensurate with his service record, with this sent to the *Résident supérieur* [RSC-10656].

6. Family

In a letter to the *Résident* of Stung Treng dated February 5, 1907 in which he requested to return to his interpreter duties in Cambodia, it was noted that Ly Sâm's wife, children, and parents lived in Muong Lakhone, which was close to Pak Hinboun [RSC-10662]. Ly Sâm's own parents lived in Sôctrang, so "parents" here must refer to his wife's parents. His wife was most likely Lao. In "Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène" from the first half of 1909, there is an entry "married" as well as a note that there were two children. The number of children increased to three by the first half of the following year of 1910. Beginning in the second half of 1910, we can see that there is one daughter and two sons. By the first half of 1914, there were four children—three boys and one girl. Then in the latter half of 1917, the number of children decreased to three—two boys and one girl. Furthermore, beginning in the latter half of 1918, it is noted that he had divorced [RSC-10656, 10662]. In a letter sent to the *Résident* of Stung Treng dated February 28, 1918, he wrote that he had filed for divorce from his wife Sao-Phane at the local district office in Moulapoumok, and that he had taken care of his two boys aged 6 and 9 [RSC-33541].

Then in "Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène" from the second half of 1925, the number of children decreased to two. In the first half of 1926, the record shows he had one son and one daughter and his status changed back to "married" [RSC-10656, 10662]. According to a letter addressed to the *Résident* of Kratié dated December 17, 1931, a marriage certificate was issued to Ly Sâm at Stung Treng on April 1, 1926 with a birth certificate for the youngest child issued in Kratié on December 2, 1930 [RSC-33541]. What's more, according to a letter addressed to the *Résident* of Kampot on March 24, 1927, his new wife was Lao [RSC-10656].

Ly Sâm was born in Sôctrang, and in "Bulletin individuel de notes du personnel indigène" for the second half of 1911, for the item "Is there a direct relationship with a senior official in the capital or the royal palace?" there is a note that he was "a cousin of

Son Diep, Minister of the Navy.” Beginning from the first half of 1923, the title of Son Diep changed to the Minister of Justice [RSC-10656, 10662]. According to “l’Acte de notoriété tenant lieu d’acte de naissance” (1913/1914),⁹ Ly Sâm’s parents consisted of his father Ly Sau of Ex-Huong hao (village agent) and his mother Neang¹⁰ Kes, both of whom resided in Tamlat. The names of four witnesses were noted on the document: Dien Pong (aged 64), Ly Mang (57), Ho Nhean (52), and Dien Cong (46). All were cultivators residing in Tamlat. On the backside of the document in Vietnamese, it is noted that the chief (maire or *Thông trưởng*) of Tamlat certified Ly Sâm’s birth date. The signatures of three witnesses appear in Khmer in the lower left-hand side of the document. Only the last signature—of Dien Cong—appears using Roman letters. To the right of the signatures, the signatures of three Tamlat notables—Huong tan, *Thông trưởng*, and Huong hao (officials in villages)—appear in Khmer script as Li (=Ly) Ieng, Lim Kem, and Yoeung Tepv. Unlike documents created during the same period in Cambodia, following these six signatures, the word “kiy” appears in Khmer script. This probably corresponds to the “notes” (*ji 記*) written in Chinese and is thought to be a feature of signatures in Khmer in the regions under control of the Nguyen Dynasty. Furthermore, Lim Kem, *Thông trưởng*, is thought to be the same person as Lam Kem, the chief of Tamlat that appears on the front page of the document [RSC-33541].

According to the *Monographie de la province de Soc-Trang* published in 1904, on the road leading from Sôctrang to Bac-lieu there were two villages on both banks of rach (creek) Nhu-gia, Tamlat, and Nhu-gia. Nhu-gia had 211 “registered people” made up of Cambodians or *minh-huong*,¹¹ while Tamlat had 261 “registered people,” almost all of who were Cambodian. There were also about 50 Chinese in the two villages [*Monographie* 1904: 19].

On July 4, 1925, Ly Sâm received a telegram from Ly Yen in Sôctrang stating that “my father is sick and I need you to come quickly.” Ly Yen very well may have been the same person as the Huong tan of Tamlat who signed “Li Ieng” in Khmer script on previously-mentioned “l’Acte de notoriété tenant lieu d’acte de naissance.” In a letter to the *Résident* of Kompong Cham, dated July 6, Ly Sâm wrote that his father had fallen sick and that he wanted to return home to Sôctrang, and asked that the *Résident* of Kompong Cham request 15 days leave of absence from the *Résidence supérieur* on this behalf. The

⁹ Although a copy, the front has French typed on it, and at the end, there is an indication that it was created in Tamlat on October 26, 1913 and that the signature of Lam Kem, Chief (maire), is attached. The back cover has Vietnamese typed on it and at the end there is a note indicating that it was created on July 6, 1914 and that the illegible signature of the administrator of Sôctrang was attached.

¹⁰ Neang is a common expression attached to women’s names.

¹¹ People who said to be the descendants of refugees from the Ming Dynasty following the Manchu conquest.

Résident of Kompong Cham forwarded this to the *Résident supérieur* on the very same day and on July 10 ten days leave to begin on July 13 was granted by the *Résident supérieur* [RSC-10656]. From this, we can ascertain that Ly Sâm's father and brother were in Sôctrang up until at least mid-1925. Ly Sâm had also sought permission to spend time in Sôctrang prior to this as well.

Ly Sâm, since the beginning of his work, had mainly sought employment opportunities in, and transfers to, an area ranging from Laos to northeastern Cambodia out of consideration for his family made up of his wife, who was Lao, and children. On the other hand, on at least three occasions during his employment, he used long vacations that he had acquired to return home,¹² and even at his post he was able to keep in touch with his hometown of Sôctrang at least during the time his father was alive through the use of telegrams and similar communication methods.

3. The Truffot Incident

In addition to the details regarding the circumstances surrounding the march up to the night right before the incident as well as the time of the attack itself, the report on the Truffot incident also included descriptions of the problems that surrounded the Truffot forces and the situation in the Pnong district from Ly Sâm's point of view, as well as suggestions based on these. These in turn help us to understand the relationships between Cambodian Secretary-Interpreters (*Secrétaire Interprète*), French officials, and the Pnong at that time.

1. An Overview of the Truffot Incident

According to the report created by Ly Sâm, on January 3, 1915, Truffot departed from Kratié leading Coursange, the Chief Forest Guard (*Garde principal de forestier*), Magaud, the Chief Guard who was the commander of Kratié's detachment of the indigenous guard,

¹² Beginning with a request sent to the *Résident* of Stung Treng on December 10, 1913 and followed by requests to the administrator of Kratié on September 23, 1915, to the *Résident* of Stung Treng on March 1, 1918, and to the *Résident* of Kratié on January 18, 1922. The request for 1913 was not granted, but 29 days of leave was granted beginning October 14, 1915 (fully paid), 30 days of leave was granted beginning April 1, 1918 (fully paid), and two months leave was granted beginning March 1, 1922 (paid at half rate). For the leave taken in 1918, Ly Sâm sent a telegram to the *Résident* of Stung Treng from Sôctrang citing "family circumstances" in requesting a 15-day extension to his leave of absence. An eight-day extension was granted, during which he received his full salary [RSC-10656].

Sân, Governor of Kratié, the Cambodian interpreter Ly Sâm, and 27 militiamen. They arrived at the Srè-Sde station (unknown; might refer to Srae Sdach which is in present-day Kratié) on the 4th and left from there on the 6th, and at the Srè-Chis station (in present-day Kratié) on the 7th and left from there on the 9th, finally reaching the site of the incident, Ô-Préas (in present-day Kratié), on the 10th. In addition to the 27 militiamen brought from Kratié, the military forces included 10 militiamen brought from their station at Srè-Sde, seven militiamen brought from their station at Srè-Chis, and 11 partisans brought by Balat Pên of Sambor who joined the group on January 8 at Srè-Chis, for a total of 55. There was information to the effect that 300 rebels were planning an attack at Srè-Sde, so they strengthened their defense and from the early morning of January 6, the surrounding areas were searched with 40 militiamen, who found the remains of a camp made up of 300 people and 15 elephants on a bank of the Prék-Té River, 15 km south of Srè-Sde. After departing from Srè-Chis in the early morning of January 9, they burned down everything they discovered along the way, including five or six villages that the Pnong had abandoned and rice storehouses hidden in paddies and woods, eventually arriving downstream from Ô-Préas.

Arriving at the upper stream of Ô-Préas in the morning of January 10, Truffot lead Coursange, Magaud, Governor Sân of Kratié, Balat Pên, Ly Sâm, and 20 militiamen and headed towards Thmon Leu village, which was about 4 km away, on a reconnaissance mission. The village was deserted but they discovered three people in a field and were able to capture one male. After interrogating him and learning of the villagers' escape destination, Truffot ordered that all huts in the field be burned to the ground and provided Governor Sân and Balat Pên with 10 militiamen, having the captive guide them in a search for the villagers' whereabouts. Along with Coursange, Magaud, Ly Sâm, and 10 militiamen, Truffot himself returned to the camp at Ô-Préas. Governor Sân and Balat Pên burned down about 70 provisional huts and 40 storehouses hidden in a forest about 7 km from the field, taking with them some copper pots and gongs. They returned to the camp around 4 PM.

At around 4:30 PM, Truffot ordered Governor Sân and Ly Sâm to make an itinerary for returning to Kratié via Sambor. After planning the itinerary and gaining approval from Truffot, around 5:30 Governor Sân and Ly Sâm pointed out to Truffot that there was a great risk of retaliation for having burned down several Pnong villages and rice storehouses until that day. To guard against this, they proposed to move the camp to a place about 20 meters upstream from Prek. Once they arrived, they would use their carts to make a circle and arrange the militiamen inside of it and have the officials and coolies take spots in the middle, and have four people stand guard in a three-hour rotation. Truffot approved of this plan but Magaud disapproved, saying it was enough to have four people stand guard. Shrugging his shoulders, Truffot merely said, "Do what you judge to be necessary" and then fell silent. Then Magaud gathered the militiamen and through Ly Sâm, who interpreted, ordered that enemies be taken alive, without any unnecessary shots taken, promising a

prize of 1 piastre for each prisoner.

Afterwards, the following sequence of events occurred:

Around 8 o'clock, following dinner, Truffot told Governor Sâ, Balat of Sambor, and myself (Ly Sâm) to gather around him and go to bed. We arranged our bedding and went to bed near him and Mr. Coursange. Meanwhile Chief Guard Magaud left Mr. Truffot and was surrounded by his militiamen and adjutant Aeur, who were hiding some 10 meters away in some rocks and shrubs.

Two militiamen who were to protect the horses were also sleeping next to Mr. Truffot. One was upstream, near the head of his bed and the Governor; next there was Mr. Coursange's boy, and to his right was the other militiaman. Balat Pên of Sambor and I were to his left, under two trees. At around 10 o'clock or later, I heard a heavy sound. Large branches of a tree at the foot of a mountain upstream from camp had broken despite the fact there was no breeze. The entire camp became anxious, thinking this was perhaps a bad omen, but nobody said a word. Albeit distracted, we resolved to rely on the strength of our unit and our brave leader and, regaining our courage, we became calm.

Had this incident not occurred, it would have indeed been a marvelous night. Engulfed by nightmares, everyone fell into a deep sleep.

I woke the second time around 1 AM to find two of the prisoners' guards talking in front of the fire. The light of the fire reached Mr. Truffot's bed. Awakened by their constant chatter, this official (Mr. Truffot) opened his eyes and scolded the sentinels, telling them to put out the fire and stop their chattering. Hearing this, I warned them on his behalf. They put out the fire, stopped talking and fell asleep [RSC-10681].

On the day of the incident, Ly Sâm awoke at about 4 o'clock on the morning of January 11 to find Truffot already awake. Still in his nightwear, he was trying to put on one of his shoes. While putting on his clothes, Ly Sâm heard the first gunshot (fired by one of the four sentinels). This was followed by three more gunshots and the sound of footsteps. At first Ly Sâm thought that it was a tiger attack and scrambled to his feet. He approached "a tree near the road leading to Prek, which was about 1 meter away" and tried to see what was going on. Thereupon, suddenly 30 or so Pnong armed with lances and swords appeared and "rushed towards the light where Truffot was." Running full speed to announce the attack to Truffot, the sentinels found the assailants arriving at about the same time.

As there were no militiaman close by Truffot picked up his revolver and fired it at two Pnong. A partisan positioned in front of Truffot fired upon another Pnong but upon borrowing bullets from a militiaman the magazine broke, and he found himself helpless. Truffot shot seven bullets from his revolver but did not have time to reload or run, and found his path obstructed by 20 to 30 rebels. Behind him and to his right two leaning trees

served as obstacles. “At that instant, swords and lances rained down upon him” with the first lance piercing his abdomen, the second deeply piercing his solar plexus, the third sword cutting his head vertically, and the fourth sword cutting his right shoulder. In addition to the above fatal injuries, there were at least 20 more wounds to his sides and legs. Trying to escape, Truffot “ran seven steps before collapsing” and drawing his last breath. About 6 o’clock in the morning the battle ended and it became peaceful. Clad only in his underpants and still clutching his revolver, Truffot’s body lay across a small ditch about seven steps from where he had slept. His belly was cut open, his head cracked vertically and his right shoulder was almost separated from his body; his limbs were also covered with numerous other wounds.

A partisan who had tried to protect Truffot had also been wounded, but was able to escape towards the group of militiamen. After killing Truffot, the attackers shouted out three times, their voices mixing with the sound of gunshot. The assailants next killed the militiaman who was still asleep near the head of Truffot’s bed. Another militiaman who had been to the right of Truffot had just awoken at the time of the attack and suffered serious injuries.

Coursange had awoke to the sound of the attack and saw that one militiaman was running toward him. Taking up his gun, he shot one intruder, but, as his gun was loaded with only one bullet, no shots rang out no matter how much he pulled on the trigger. Meanwhile, an assailant who had drawn near aimed a spear at the top left side of Coursange’s chest. He immediately twisted his body and grasped the spear, resulting in the spear tip entering the upper part of his side and leaving a long, large wound. It did not, however, pierce his heart. He was then rescued by a militiaman, who helped him remove the assailant’s spear and escape. During a second lance attack he was wounded in the chest with a spear, although the wound was not particularly serious at the time.

Governor Sãn of Kratié awoke to find a Pnong before him. He began firing his gun in a hit or miss fashion and was able to escape, running to the group of militiamen. Balat Pên of Sambor was with Ly Sãm; seeing the enemy approaching, he drew his sword. Trying to escape towards the militiamen, he fell as a sword entered his calf, resulting in major injury. He was able to get up, however, and because the rebel who was chasing him was shot and fell, he was able to avoid death.

Chief Guard Magaud was having soup when he heard the gunfire and ran towards the militiamen. Holding his revolver, he repeatedly shouted not to shoot without orders but the gunshots grew more frequent and bullets were flying from all directions. “Within two minutes” of his having escaped, the Pnong reached the spot where he had slept. Convinced that he was still asleep, the Pnong pierced his bedding with their spears, creating holes in some 20 places. They pillaged his trunks, disposing of it some 10 meters away.

Adjutant Aeur was in the midst of the battle with the militiamen and claimed he was awake at 4:10 when the attack began but Ly Sãm does not confirm this. He tried to wake

the militiamen; half of them woke but the other half remained asleep. Amongst the latter were the deceased and injured. Ex-sergeant Um, the partisans Sêt and Smouh were sitting on the route that the enemy was attacking. Um and Sêt were killed before Truffot, while Smouh was seriously injured.

Unarmed, Ly Sâm remained hidden under a tree some 5 meters from Truffot from the beginning of the battle up until its end. 12 invaders came within 1.5 meters of his hiding spot but, absorbed in the luggage they found on the ground, they never noticed him. As they crept towards the spot Truffot had slept, Ly Sâm slowly and carefully retreated from the cover of the tree to join the militiamen. It was at this time that he saw that Truffot and another partisan who was in the distance had fallen. The battle was just ending when Ly Sâm reached the circle of militiamen and noticed that Coursange, Magaud, Governor Sâ of Kratié, and Balat Pên were safe.

Finally, at around 5 o'clock, the militiamen fixed their bayonets on their guns and formed a circle around the cart that was positioned on the upstream side of Prek, deciding to wait until sunrise to verify the situation. When it became light enough to see the surrounding area, they could see a single Pngong left behind on the battlefield. With a spear in his hand and a sword tucked into his waist, he was running about, saying, "where are my comrades?" Hearing this, the partisans, who understood the Pngong language, shouted out "Hey, there's a Pngong over here!" Coming up against the militiamen, he was felled by their gunfire. A horse that was tethered was also hit, and collapsed. By around 6 o'clock the surrounding area had become completely peaceful, so ten militiamen bearing guns with bayonets patrolled the area and began searching the dead and injured.

Besides Truffot, the dead consisted of four militiamen and three partisans, while 16—14 militiamen and partisans, as well as Coursange and Balat of Sambor—were injured. Eight fallen Pngong were found on the battlefield and four near the forest, but two of them were still alive and so were shot. The shallow waters and narrow rapids of the Prek and the rocks along its banks were stained red from blood, and the groans of the injured could still be heard. Animals lost in the battle consisted of one male elephant, five horses (one of which died), and four cows (one of which was injured), while luggage loaded on seven carts was looted and three guns and two containers of ammunition were stolen. The dead bodies, the injured, and luggage were loaded on a cart, while three bodies (two partisans and one militiaman) that could not be loaded were buried. Similarly, bags of rice that could not be loaded were left at the site. After taking a break for the injured, the party left Ô-Préas at about 8:20, arriving at Srè-Chis at 6:14 PM without having rested or eaten [RSC-10681].

In the pictorial map of the battle site, figures indicating all the people whose names were listed in the report had been drawn. Near each figure the person's name as well as explanations such as "Mr. Truffot died with his revolver still in his hand" or "Interpreter Ly Sâm hid under a tree some 5 meters from Mr. Truffot" was added. The map was made

in such a way that one can visually grasp the position and actions of each person during the battle. In particular, the figures of Truffot and Coursange appear in two places on the map; one shows them when they were attacked while the other depicts them just after, i.e., Truffot's dead body and Coursange receiving treatment [RSC-10681]. This depiction method in which multiple scenes are depicted in a single frame with relevant explanations seems to be similar to the murals of temples.

2. French Colonial Officials as Seen from the Perspective of the Cambodian Secretary-Interpreter

Ly Sâm noted that no one could help Truffot in the midst of the battle, as there were already rebels before them at the time the alarm was sounded and there was no choice but that each person had to fight to save himself. According to his report, the failure of the Truffot forces, which had allowed a surprise attack, was in not realizing that they were in the middle of a conflict and not heeding his and Governor Sâ'n's proposal to strengthen the defense of the camp, as well as beginning the march at 3 in the morning and not allowing for rest until 11:30 in the morning and then again at 7 or 8 at night, so that everyone was exhausted and soon fell asleep. Based on the above-mentioned information, in order to conserve the physical strength of the men, Ly Sâm proposed shortening the amount of time that they marched each day, starting out after 6:30 in the morning by which time it was light and easier to see, taking a break from 10 AM to 2:30 PM during which everyone could take a nap, pausing at 4 o'clock on open land whenever possible, eating and taking care of other necessities while still light, and taking up arms and forming a circle at night with sentries continuously on alert. The same document file containing the report and pictorial maps includes a report written right after the Truffot incident, at the time Chief Guard Marchand inspected the Srè-Sde station on January 20 through January 27 of the same year. Looking at this, we see that while the Truffot forces took two days to move between Kratié and Srè-Sde, the Marchand forces spent four days. Deciding on a camp relatively early—between 11 AM and 2 PM—was probably to avoid exhaustion and allow for enough preparation time. It is assumed that Ly Sâm acquired this knowledge regarding basic considerations to be taken on such marches as a result of his time with the Pavie Mission.

Reading the passages on the camp on the eve of the attack, we see that the French official Truffot and the military officer Magaud had grown apart, and that Truffot had drawn close to the local civil officer Ly Sâm, Governor Sâ'n, and Balat Pên, while Magaud seems to have been surrounded by the militiamen under the adjutant Aeur. In another part of the report, it says that Magaud complained incessantly about Truffot and did not value his opinion whatsoever. Moreover, it is also noted that, at Srè-Sde, he proclaimed in front

of Truffot, Coursange, and others that what the indigenous people said was not to be taken into account or trusted.

Magaud's directive to the militiamen and Truffot's reprimand of the sentries were conveyed by means of Ly Sâm's interpreting; there seems to have not been any direct interaction between the French and the locals. In another part of the report, the following episode is noted as an "omen" of the incident.

The Cambodians in the convoy had been feeling a certain foreboding in the calls of the birds and horses on the road for the last several days. Amongst themselves, they said that, if it were up to them, they would not continue the journey even if they were offered 1,000 piastres. However, this was a government job, so they had no choice but to be quiet. I [Ly Sâm] heard their whispers almost every day, but made it a point to pay no special attention. If I had conveyed [to the French] what they were saying, they probably would have just said that they were superstitious. Plus, I knew that Mr. Truffot did not like to hear the word "scary" [RSC-10681].

This episode suggests that Ly Sâm came to feel that, despite the fact that French government and military officials who did not understand the local language and lacked experience on the ground obviously lacked the sensibility needed to read the situation before them, they looked down on indigenous people as savages and that the indigenous people, conscious of such contempt, would not voluntarily provide information, leading to fatal errors of judgment.

3. The Pnong as Seen from the Perspective of the Cambodian Secretary-Interpreter

Ly Sâm had "experience in an area where Pnong and Kha peoples lived and caused trouble" and was proud of the fact that he was familiar with the situation in this region to the point that he was considered an expert of sorts. In the report, the Pnong and Kha are described as follows: 1) The Pnong and Kha have the same customs and they both dislike theft, adultery, and magic. They determine guilt by pouring dissolved lead into the palm of a person who had appeared as a criminal in the dream of somebody else. Those found guilty are sentenced to death; 2) Contracts for debts exchanged verbally are passed down from father to child and then to grandchild. Should the obligor refuse to pay, the creditor may forcibly seize all property, pillage the village in which the debtor lives, catch the debtor and his family, and force them into slavery; 3) The Pnong believe that "the land of the highland district (red soil; la terre rouge) and the forests and mountains of this district belong to them" and that this is "their kingdom," claiming "there is a 'King of Water' (Sdach Tuk) and a 'King of Fire' (Sdach Phleung) there." However, none of the Cambodians

who Ly Sâm had met had ever seen either King, nor did any of them know where they could be found; 4) When the Pnong and Kha are told that “the land in the highland district belongs to us (French colonial authority or the Kingdom of Cambodia as a protectorate of France)” they always asked “why does the government demand taxes from us (Pnong and Kha) or impose corvée on us every year? We have never had a debt or an obligation to the government, and neither have our forefathers” [RSC-10681].

In other words, as Ly Sâm understood it, the Pnong and Kha felt that they had their own kingdom equivalent to the Kingdom of Cambodia in the highland district, and indeed there was no doubt that a society with its own customs and rules existed there. The taxation and forced labor that the French colonial authorities enforced violated their perception of property. The fact that Truffot’s forces burned villages and storehouses, and looted and took villagers captive was a clear infringement on their property and thus attacking the forces in retaliation was deemed appropriate.

Moreover, Ly Sâm also noted that the reason that the Pnong and Kha disliked the Cambodians and Lao was because they often worked as guides for the French and reasoned that, without these guides, the French would not enter their territories. In other words, from his point of view, there was no doubt that the conflict was between French colonial rule and the Pnong and Kha, with Cambodians and Lao playing the role of intermediaries in drawing French power into Pnong and Kha territory. Thus, because he was aligned with the French colonial authorities, he could expect to be regarded as an enemy by the Pnong and Kha.

4. Another Sâm

In a document file for payment of a pension to Ly Sâm, several documents pertaining to another Cambodian Secretary who had the same name Sâm and had worked in Laos were included. This individual was born within the Kingdom of Cambodia but probably due to the fact that he had never served in Cambodia, there was no more information about him in the archives in Phnom Penh. However, this discovery allows us to catch a glimpse of the actual circumstances surrounding document administration in French Indochina.

With the retirement of Ly Sâm imminent, on February 2, 1932, the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia sent a telegram to the *Résident supérieur* of Laos requesting “to urgently send copies of the documents concerning Sâm, 1st class Auxiliary Secretary, during his service in Laos from 1898 to 1906, i.e. the decree related to his initial appointment as well as his delete certificate from the salary register.” In response, on February 22, the *Résident supérieur* of Laos forwarded “excerpts concerning the work of Sâm, 2nd class Secretary of the *Résident supérieur* and the Commissioner’s office of Laos, staff number Mle35, born July 13, 1869 in Kompong Soai (Cambodge).” In these excerpts

it was noted that a person named Sâm had been appointed 1) Temporary Secretary at 18 piastres per month on March 1, 1897, and 2) 2nd class Auxiliary Secretary-Interpreter at an annual salary of 287.5 piastres January 1, 1899, and 3) was given a raise to 350 piastres on January 1, 1907. Also, a delete certificate from the salary register noted that “Sâm, 2nd class Secretary of the *Résident supérieur* of Laos and the Commissioner’s office, passed away on July 19, 1925 at Napé (Thakhek), and his removal from the salary register was certified on the 20th of the same month.”

Ly Sâm was born in Sôctrang and was still alive in 1932 so this person born in Kompong Soai was obviously another person but because they both had the name “Sâm” and were Cambodian, it seems that they were confused for each other. Four documents related to this other Sâm—1) the decree of the *Résident supérieur* of Laos dated June 23, 1900 noting that 2nd class Auxiliary Secretary Sâm, who was serving in Savannakhet, would be assigned to the engineer of the Company of Mines of Hinboun; 2) the decree of the *Résident supérieur* of Laos dated July 11, 1904 in which it is noted that 2nd class Auxiliary Secretary Sâm was returned the Secretary of Laos on July 1, and was to be assigned to Saravane; 3) the decree of the *Résident supérieur* of Laos dated November 23, 1906 in which it is noted that 2nd class Auxiliary Secretary Sâm is to be assigned to Savannakhet; and 4) the decree of the *Résident supérieur* of Laos dated January 16, 1909 in which it is noted that he was promoted to 1st class Auxiliary Interpreter (Interprète auxiliaire)—have got mixed into the document file of Ly Sâm’s “Memorandum of proposition for the admission to the long-service pension” (Mémoire de proposition pour l’admission à la pension d’ancienneté). These were probably forwarded from Laos in response to a request from Cambodia in 1932.

On March 10, 1932, the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia submitted a request to “telegraph the date of resignation from the Laos service of 1st class Auxiliary Secretary Sâm, who had worked in Savannakhet in 1909 and was appointed a Cambodian official on July 14, 1909” to the Commissioner of Savannakhet. In response, in a telegram dated April 9, there was a reply from Savannakhet that “with regards to Auxiliary Secretary Sâm who died in 1927 in Napé, we don’t have any records of any documents. Another Secretary named Ly Sâm seems to have worked at Hinboun in the Thakhek region; I will forward the 139-C (telegram number) that you sent to the Commissioner’s office of Thakhek.” In response to the transfer dated April 16, on April 27 Thakhek provided an answer: “Secretary Sâm died in Napé on July 19, 1925 and on the 20th of the same month was deleted from the salary register.” Citing as “essential for exact calculations of his continuous service pension” on April 30, the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia once again requested “copies of the decree related to the first appointment and resignation of Secretary Ly Sâm, who had served in Laos from 1898 to 1906” from the Commissioner’s office of Thakhek.

Furthermore, on May 26, the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia informed the *Résident* of Kratié that “the period of service from 1898 to 1906 in Laos declared by Ly Sâm is not

consistent with what the government of that region (Laos) of the Federation has presented, and furthermore, according to the *Résident supérieur* of Laos, a Secretary with the same name died in Napé in July 19, 1925 while on duty.” Then the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia added that: 1) In order to re-examine Ly Sâm’s work situation before actually going to Cambodia, in 1906, the *Résident supérieur* needed a copy of the decree stating Ly Sâm had resigned from his position as a government official; 2) If such a document could not be obtained, Ly Sâm would only have a service record of 22 years, nine months as of May 31, 1932, meaning that he wouldn’t reach the required 30 years to earn continuous service pension; 3) the *Résident supérieur* deemed it necessary to direct Ly Sâm to send a document to substitute his marriage certificate as soon as possible to the Fund for Pensions of Indigenous Civilians (Caisse des pensions civiles indigènes), in order that his wife could secure the rights to his continuous service pension in case something went wrong. In response to this, in a letter to the *Résident supérieur* of Kratié dated June 8, 1932, Ly Sâm reported that: 1) in 1898, he had worked under the name Samme; 2) he had eight years of work experience from 1898 to 1905 and three months of work experience from January to March 1906 in Laos, and in Cambodia for six months from July 1909 to the end of the year and 22 years five months from 1910 to May 1932, for a total of 31 years five months; and furthermore 3) that he worked in Cambodia and Laos prior to the creation of the Fund for Pensions of Indigenous Civilians (September 15, 1898) and thus, in accordance with the “decree dated December 29, 1913,” he declared that this period should also be included in the calculation. Ly Sâm’s letter was forwarded from the *Résident* of Kratié to the *Résident supérieur* on June 29. Furthermore, on July 9, the *Résident* of Kratié forwarded to the *Résident supérieur* six documents related to the appointment of Ly Sâm, 1) the document dated September 8, 1894, 2) the document dated September 27, 1895, 3) the document dated December 31, 1897, 4) the document dated July 3, 1900, 5) documents dated July 14, 1902, and 6) the document dated July 29, 1904, and the marriage certificate dated March 7, 1926.

On July 7, the *Résident supérieur* of Cambodia asked the *Résident supérieur* of Laos for proof that 1) Ly Sâm had worked in Laos from September 27, 1895 until March 2, 1906, and that 2) Samme and Ly-Sâm were the same person. In response, on July 29, the *Résident supérieur* of Laos clarified that Samme and Ly-Sâm were the same person and was dismissed on March 3, 1906, and forwarded Ly Sâm’s employment history in Laos [RSC-33541].

There is no more information on the other Sâm. However, as a result of exchanges related to this incident, the following was clarified: Local officials were given personal numbers (Ly Sâm’s was M1e175) and the documents were managed under each individual’s name. Even for somebody like Ly Sâm who had worked for two *Résidences* in Laos and Cambodia, it was possible to trace his work history going back more than 30 years. Moreover, six documents dating from the period 1894 to 1904 certifying his work

experience in Laos were forwarded not from the *Résident supérieur* of Laos, but instead from the *Résident* of Kratié, who was Ly Sâm's superior, to the *Résidence supérieur* of Phnom Penh, so it is thought that Ly Sâm himself actually managed these documents. This indicates that he was fully aware of the meaning, value, and usage of the documents he had been creating daily as a part of his work.

Conclusion

Ly Sâm was born in a Khmer village in French Cochinchina, studied at the collège of Phnom Penh and began his career by participating in the Pavie Mission, and mainly worked as a Secretary-Interpreter at the *Résidences* in Laos and in the northeastern part of Cambodia. At the time of his birth, Cochinchina and Cambodia were already under French control. French Indochina came into existence during the early stages of his career as a Secretary-Interpreter and it was just as he was reaching retirement age in the early 1930s that the first stirrings of Cambodian nationalism could be felt.¹³ In addition to his mother tongue of Cambodian (Khmer), he was also proficient in French, Lao, and Annamese, making him a most useful person in French Indochina at the time. Up until his 40s, he yearned to work in "Lower Cambodia" but through his career as a Secretary-Interpreter, he was able to consolidate his status as a specialist in the northeastern region, Stung Treng and Kratié. In his 50s, he married a Lao woman for the second time and seems to have wanted to live in Stung Treng. Meanwhile, the French administrator Truffot, who was a senior official for only three months of his career, was about the same age as Ly Sâm and had a roughly 16-year work experience in Cambodia but appears to have not mastered the Cambodian language. This was not limited to Truffot; for most French colonial officials of the period, the assistance of Ly Sâm and other indigenous Secretary-Interpreters as well as local officials like the governor and Balat was indispensable to the execution of their duties. Thus, in the Kingdom of Cambodia, a protectorate of France, there was much demand for capable individuals proficient in the language of the colonial power, with those indigenous people who had gained the abilities prized by the colonial administration through their life experiences being the most highly recruited. It was his experience with the Pavie Mission that would become the foundation of Ly Sâm's career development in Laos and expertise in the northeastern region of Cambodia. Moreover, it was this familiarity with Lao and local conditions that allowed Ly Sâm to gain the position of the Secretary-Interpreter in Cambodia less than a year after having been dismissed on corruption charges.

¹³ According to Chandler, Lycée Sisowath (Since 1936 Lycée, before that collège), the Buddhist Institute (established 1930), and the Khmer language newspaper *Nagara Vatta* (established 1936) were key to the "self-awareness" of the Cambodian people during the 1930s [Chandler 2008: 199].

At the time of the Truffot incident in 1915, Ly Sâm already had 20 years of experience gained in Laos and Stung Treng. From the report he wrote, we can see that, as a regional expert, he understood local conditions and was proud of the fact that he knew how to cope with them.

However, from the document file stored in the National Archives in Phnom Penh, there is no indication that Ly Sâm held any doubts about French colonial rule itself or held any ill feelings. In letters that were left in the file, Ly Sâm himself requested assignments, transfers, vacations, and the conferment of awards. As a full-time Secretary-Interpreter hired by the *Résidence* of Cambodia, his hopes as they appear here were to secure a sufficient salary to feed his family, to secure a duty post in a location where he and his family could enjoy a pleasant life together, and to be allowed to take lengthy vacations to his hometown of Sôctrang. While he hoped to see his rank and salary improve and his achievements recognized through the conferment of medals, given that he firmly refused to work in the capital city of Phnom Penh, he seems to have had no ambition to seek a position within the central government, as his cousin Son Diep actually did. Of great interest here is that Ly Sâm's letters were forwarded to the *Résident supérieur* by way of the *Résident* and other superior officers, with his requests quite often approved. What's more, with regards to his job transfers, it was confirmed that he was able to interact and exchange information with his fellow native Secretary-Interpreters (*Secrétaire Interprète*), both Cambodian and Vietnamese, enabling him to lay groundwork with his French superiors before he approached them with his requests, and that the *Résident* and *Résident supérieur* also engaged in personnel matters under the assumption that a successor would be secured through the laying of this groundwork. Fluent in French and Lao, Ly Sâm enjoyed a long career and may have been in a better position than other Secretary-Interpreters to press his case on such matters.

Within the document file, Ly Sâm is presented as "a Cambodian Secretary-Interpreter." While his mother tongue is identified by himself and others as "Cambodian" (Khmer), his birthplace is given as Sôctrang in Cochinchina. Historical records that remain concerning him are limited to post-employment entries, so it is unclear why he chose the collège in Phnom Penh. Amongst Cambodian senior officials and politicians from the colonial period up through independence, it is well known that there were many people from Kampuchea Krom (lower Cambodia; Mekong Delta region) just like him. The area of the Kingdom of Cambodia during the time of Ly Sâm was almost the same as that of the present-day Kingdom of Cambodia. However, it is clear that the words "Cambodge" and "Cambodgien(ne)" as expressed in documents related to him do not necessarily indicate the domain of the Kingdom of Cambodia and its inhabitants or people of origin. Movements of "Cambodgien(ne)" under the political unity of French Indochina and what was thought of the spread of "Cambodge" is a subject that deserves further research in the future. An interesting fact here is that both Huot Tath and Chuon Nath, who would later lead the

Cambodian Buddhist world, inspected the Khmer temples of French Cochinchina in 1928 and 1933 with Suzanne Karpelès, the head of the Royal Library and the General Secretary (Secrétaire général) of the Buddhist Institute (Institut Bouddhique). They investigated the establishment of temple schools and distributed publications of the Royal Library and the Buddhist Institute and photos of King Monivong. Moreover, we should bear in mind that many temples established schools between 1928 and 1933, and they welcomed a teacher who had studied at the Pali school attached to Vat Lanka in Phnom Penh [Chuon 1936a–g, Huot 1928ab, 1929ab]. In addition, the Cambodian Buddhism that was destroyed through the annihilation of “monks who protected the precepts” during the Pol Pot era (1975–79) is widely known for having been restored by summoning Khmer Krom monks from the Mekong delta [Hayashi 2000: 130, 133–134].

Ly Sâm’s Work Experience [RSC-33541]

Start date	End date	Employment grade	Annual salary
Services in Laos			
27 sep. 1895	31 dec. 1897	6 th class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter (Secrétaire Interprète titulaire)	
1 jan. 1898	13 jul. 1900	5 th class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter	
14 jul. 1900	13 jul. 1902	4 th class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter	
13 jul. 1902	31 jul. 1904	3 rd class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter	500\$00
1 aug. 1904	2 mar. 1906	2 nd class Permanent Secretary-Interpreter	562\$00
3 mar. 1906		Discharged	
Services in Cambodia			
14 jul. 1909	31 dec. 1910	2 nd class Auxiliary Secretary-Interpreter (Secrétaire Interprète auxiliaire)	300\$00
1 jan. 1911	31 dec. 1911	1 st class Auxiliary Secretary (Secrétaire auxiliaire)	350\$00
1 jan. 1912	31 dec. 1913	1 st class Auxiliary Secretary	400\$00
1 jan. 1914	31 dec. 1914	2 nd class Auxiliary Secretary	420\$00
1 jan. 1915	31 dec. 1916	6 th class Permanent Secretary (Secrétaire titulaire)	450\$00
1 jan. 1917	16 may 1919	5 th class Permanent Secretary	500\$00
17 may 1919	13 jul. 1919	3 rd class Secretary	540\$00
14 jul. 1919	30 apr. 1920	2 nd class Secretary	600\$00
1 may 1920	31 jul. 1921	Pay raise as per decree of 1920.4.14	840\$00
14 jul. 1921	31 dec. 1923	1 st class Secretary	918\$00
1 jan. 1924	31 dec. 1926	4 th class Principal Secretary (Secrétaire principal)	996\$00
1 jan. 1927	31 dec. 1928	2 nd class Principal Secretary	1,074\$00
1 jan. 1929	31 dec. 1929	Pay raise as per decree of 1929.2.25	1,200\$00
1 jan. 1930	11 jul. 1930	Pay raise	1,344\$00

12 jul. 1930	31 aug. 1931	2 nd class Principal Secretary	1,428\$00
1 sep. 1932		Deregistration	
		Pension amount	774\$00

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