



Much Loved Frenchmen

1863-1943

was in Vietnam in 1889 as a military physician. He spent all his life in the research of medicinal plants. He resettled in Đà-Lạt, a weather station in Vietnam. It is he who brought quinine and rubber to Vietnam. His popularity among Vietnamese is due a great deal to his attention to the disenfranchised and the poor among whom he lived, himself, in a thatch hut at a fishing village. He deceased in 1943 and was buried at Suối Giào southwest of Đà-Lạt where every March 1st the inhabitants of this region still come to, bringing joss-stick and fruits as offerings.

There is even a high school bearing his name in Đà Lạt. All Vietnam knows his name and cherished his memory.

Livingstone of Indochina

Suối giào

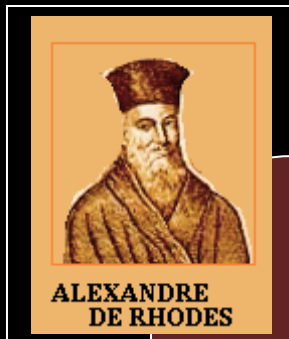


Despite 100 years in colonization, Vietnamese continue to keep a gratitude towards a few Frenchmen, in particular those who brought their contribution to Vietnamese society and culture. These are considered not only great men but also saints. It is the case of **Alexandre Yersin** and **Victor Hugo**. The former is one of only two Frenchmen with **Pasteur** to have streets in several cities in Vietnam bear their names.

Những người Pháp
được yêu chuộng

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A Lịch Sơn Đắc Lô

Nobody challenges what he has done for the Vietnamese script in the aim of facilitating evangelization. Without this French Jesuit, it is difficult for Vietnam to get rid of the imperial Chinese culture. He instituted and improved the first model of romanization by publishing in 1651, his "Dictionnarium annamiticum, lutanum et latinum" from the elements provided by his Portuguese predecessors Gaspar de Amaral and Antonio de Barbosa. Thanks to Alexandre de Rhodes, the Vietnamese people have a romanized written language they use to call "quốc ngữ".

Alexandre de Rhodes

1593-1660

Thanks to his literary works (Les Misérables) and to his humanitarian philosophy, he is very much adulated by the 7 million followers of Caodaism. Les Miserables is a novel with a thesis that poses the problem in the rapport between human criminality and social environment. There is a converging point where the poor and the infamous mix and melt together in one single word, the miserables. It is the fault of misery, of injustice and of social lack of understanding, opting for repression. There remains always a chance to rescue hardened criminals by dint of patience and love. Such seems to be the solution for Victor Hugo throughout the story of Jean Valjean.

Is it because of that humanitarian thesis that Victor Hugo was consecrated in the image of his hero Jean Valjean?



Victor Hugo