

## CRISIS: INDOCHINA

### OCTOBER 1936–DECEMBER 1937

They arrived in Saigon on 9 November and immediately proceeded to the northern provinces. After a brief stop in Hanoi they reached Thanh Hoa where they were installed at Madame Renaud's hotel, which once again came to serve as their headquarters. Only two weeks after they had disembarked from the *Maréchal Joffre* in Saigon they were back at Lach-truong, ready to start their second excavation campaign. If the first excavation season had a character of discovery and enthusiastic curiosity, the second season was more about return and completion. Nguyen Xuan Dong joined them once again as the expedition secretary and draughtsman, and they were reconnected with their local team of workers from the first season. But there is a new sense of stress and rush in this second campaign, and it appears as if a primary concern is the accumulation of another "rich booty" to meet the inflated expectations of the press and museums in Paris.

#### *Back to Lach-truong*

At Lach-truong they took up the work where they had left it a year and a half earlier. In addition to the twelve Han period brick tombs excavated in the first season, they now opened and emptied another sixteen tomb vaults.<sup>481</sup> None of them revealed amazing artefacts like the kneeling figurine found in Tomb 3. On the contrary, most of them had been to the

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<sup>481</sup>. Tomb 13A–Tomb 26, reported in detail in Janse 1947: plates 33–48, 79, 161; Janse 1951:91–117.

most part destroyed or emptied. Tombs 13A, 16, 17, and 18 were however partly untouched, although parts of the vaults were missing,<sup>482</sup> and Tomb 24 contained silver objects that were rare for Han period tombs in this area.<sup>483</sup> Tomb 19 was found untouched and contained some human skeletal remains, among which was a left parietal bone from a human skull preserved through contact with a bronze bowl.<sup>484</sup> It makes an interesting parallel with the similar find of human skull bone preserved by bronze at Dong Son, which led to the conclusion that the inhabitants of Dong Son had been headhunters. But in the case of this second find, which was judged by its context of a “civilized” Han burial, Janse never suggests any relation with headhunting practices, but used the skull fragments only in a futile attempt to identify the age and sex of the buried individual.<sup>485</sup>

### *Quang-Xu’o’ng*

As soon as the excavations had been started at Lach-truong, Janse took the opportunity to continue his earlier surveys and start new excavations in the region of Quang-xu’o’ng (between the seaside resort of Sam Son and Thanh Hoa Town).<sup>486</sup> The work pace was now fierce, with simultaneous excavations on several sites many kilometres apart. In the Quang-xu’o’ng region, they excavated five Han period brick tombs at the Yên-biên site,<sup>487</sup> three at the Tho-Dai site,<sup>488</sup> one at the Nho-Quan site,<sup>489</sup> and three at Hoà-chung.<sup>490</sup> At the Thung-Thôn site, which had been located in surveys during the first expedition, they now excavated six Han period brick tombs. Two of these graves – Tombs 1A and 1B – had particularly rich grave goods including gold bangles and traces of lacquer ware.<sup>491</sup>

On 22 February 1937 they had an official visit to the tomb site at Hoà-

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482. Janse 1951:91–92, 96–100.

483. Janse 1951:116.

484. Janse 1951: plate 37.

485. Janse 1951:100–102.

486. See map in Janse 1951:179.

487. Janse 1947: plate 163; 1951:156–163.

488. Janse 1951:172–176.

489. Janse 1951:177.

490. Janse 1947: plate 165; Janse 1951:178–186, plates 88–91; Janse 1959:165–179.

491. Janse 1947: plate 164; 1951:164–171; *Cahiers de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient*, No. 9, 1936, pp. 5–6.

Chung by the Inspector General of the French Colonies Justin Godart, accompanied by the Governor of Annam Mr Guillemain and the French Resident of Thanh Hoa Mr Lagrèze, with wives and other dignitaries. The visit was noticed in the francophone Indochina press. In one article Olov is described as an already well-known scholar: *un savant déjà connu*, and Ronny as *une collaboratrice très éclairée et très entendue* – a much cultivated and very competent female collaborator.<sup>492</sup> Judging from the reports it was a successful public event, where the most eminent guest Justin Godart was offered an original artefact from the excavation to take home as a souvenir.<sup>493</sup> Photographs taken at the event show that it attracted considerable local interest as well (fig. 44).<sup>494</sup> The visitors were divided into three groups, materializing through official choreography the metaphorical distance that is a common theme in Janse's texts – between the allegedly primitive and the civilized. The first group, including high officials and EFEO staff from Hanoi, was allowed to enter the excavation trench where they were able to touch the exposed brick structures while having the ongoing excavation of the tomb demonstrated by Olov and Ronny Janse. A second group, with lower-ranking French people and Annamite officials, was allowed to watch the demonstration and take photographs from a more distant position on the side of the trench. The third and largest group, with locals or visitors from nearby villages, were kept at a clear distance from the first two groups, and had no contact with or clear vision of the happenings in the trench.

While the excavations of brick tombs were going on at Lach-truong and the sites in the Quang-Xu'ong region, Janse also resumed his excavations at the Dong Son settlement site. This means that by the end of 1936, only a month after they had begun the second excavation campaign, they were already involved in simultaneous excavations in three separate geographical areas, with two distinct types of archaeological material: various sites with Han period brick tombs, and one prehistoric settlement site. How this was practically managed is not clarified in the reports, memoirs or any of the archive material we have at hand. But the arrangement must have meant that Janse himself was largely absent during the excavations, and hence probably required a regular delegation of formal

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492. Notice in *L'Avenir du Tonkin*, 25 February 1937: "Fouilles intéressantes."

493. Janse 1947:viii; Janse 1951:186n.

494. The visit to Hoà-chung has also been filmed. Swedish Television Archive. © SVT Arkiv.

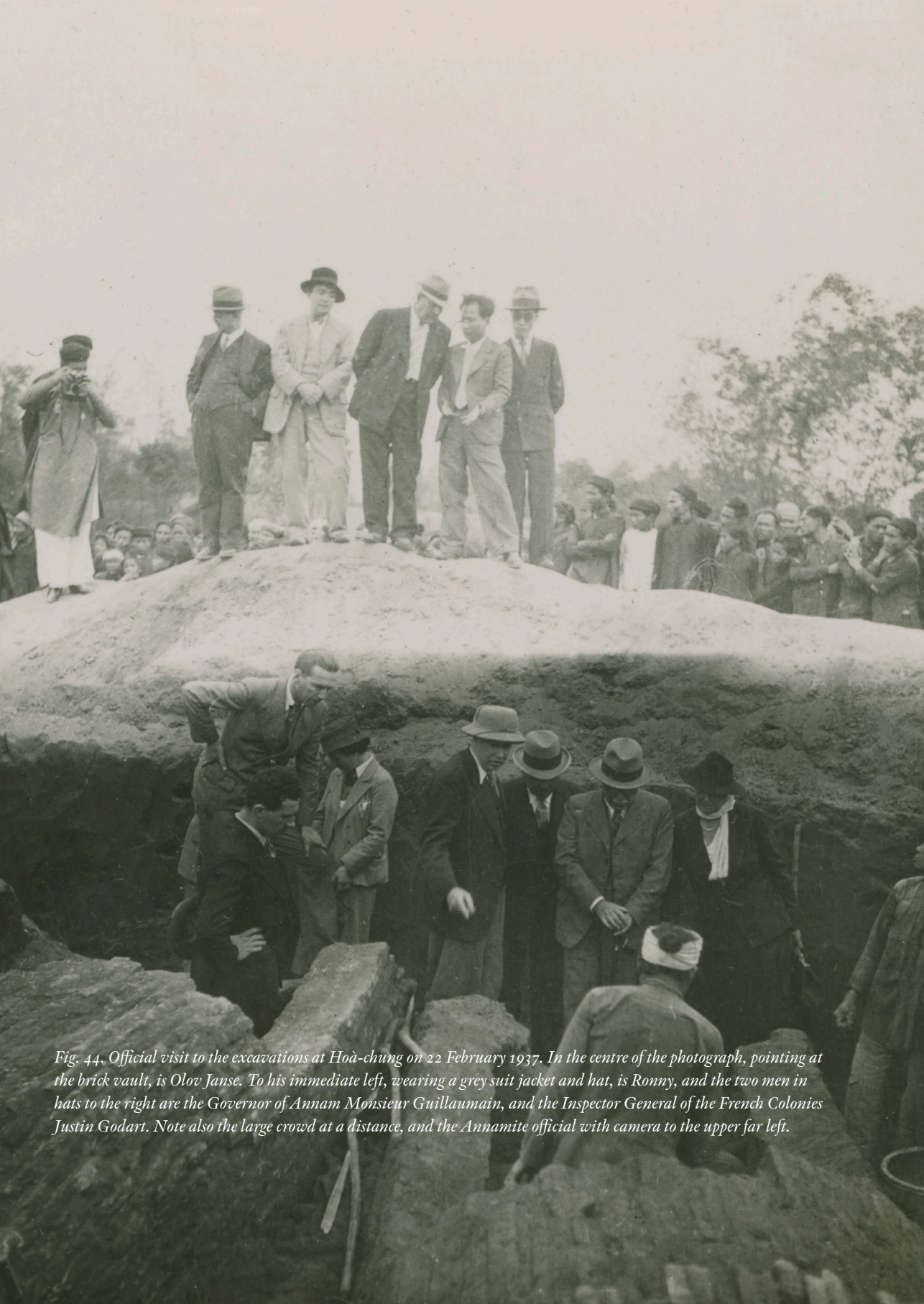


Fig. 44. Official visit to the excavations at Hoà-chung on 22 February 1937. In the centre of the photograph, pointing at the brick vault, is Olov Janse. To his immediate left, wearing a grey suit jacket and hat, is Ronny, and the two men in hats to the right are the Governor of Annam Monsieur Guillaumain, and the Inspector General of the French Colonies Justin Godart. Note also the large crowd at a distance, and the Annamite official with camera to the upper far left.



leadership to Ronny, Dong, and/or his local foremen. This is noteworthy because in all official accounts Janse is portrayed, and portrays himself, as an archaeologist of high scientific standards, essentially different from treasure hunters like Louis Pajot. His official position on this matter is eloquently expressed in a passage of his memoirs:

In archaeology it is of the utmost importance to have knowledge – down to the tiniest detail – of the circumstances in which the finds have been encountered. Observations regarding the location of an object in a grave or a stratum could lead to the determination of the age and usage of the object, and offer valuable information about past social relations and religious beliefs. Even an apparently worthless little potsherd without the least aesthetic value can, for the scientist, be the key to the chamber where the solution to many of the mysteries of the past has been concealed. It can be of the same crucial importance as a fingerprint, a burnt-out match, or a tiny bloodstain, for the solution of a criminal drama. The field archaeologist is in some sense a Sherlock Holmes of prehistoric times.<sup>495</sup>

If Janse officially declared himself to be a fieldwork archaeologist comparable to Sherlock Holmes – known for a meticulous attention to every detail, and a surreal ability to find and join together miniscule fragments to meaningful renderings of past events – the reality of his fieldwork campaigns in Indochina was quite different. The first expedition had taken off at a high pace, and in the second they upped the speed even further, forcing Janse to leave his excavation sites on a regular basis (imagine Holmes leaving the primary investigation of a crime scene to Watson, or an untrained assistant) to increase the harvest of potential museum

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495. Janse 1959:17–18. In the Swedish original: “När det gäller arkeologi är det av största vikt att äga kännedom – även i minsta detalj – om de förhållanden under vilka fynden anträffats. Iakttagelser rörande ett föremåls placering i en grav eller i ett visst kulturskikt kan [...] leda till bestämmandet av ett föremåls ålder och användning och ge värdefulla upplysningar om gångna tiders sociala förhållanden och religiösa föreställningar. Även en till synes obetydlig liten krukskärva utan minsta estetiska värde kan för vetenskapsmannen stundom vara nyckeln till den kammare, där lösningen till många av det förgångnas gåtor legat förborgad. Den kan vara av samma avgörande betydelse som ett fingeravtryck, en utbrunnen tändsticka eller en obetydlig blodfläck för lösningen av ett kriminaldrama. Fältarkeologen är på sätt och vis förhistoriens Sherlock Holmes.”

pieces. Hence in reality – at this point certainly – his primary concern was the potential booty of collectible objects, and not the Holmesian detective work aimed at reconstructing past events, which was his officially stated ideal.

### *Back to Dong Son*

Once back at Dong Son, Janse, Dong, and their team turned their attention to the pole structure that had been indicated to them by Louis Pajot and Victor Goloubew at the EFEO, and which they had registered in their survey in the first season. The pole structure was located at the northern end of the identified settlement area, where they now opened three extensive trenches – *loc.* 8, 9, and 9<sup>his</sup> – on the bank of the Song Ma river.<sup>496</sup> More than two metres below the ground they found wooden poles, preserved by the anaerobic conditions in the wet riverbank, along with locally made pottery. They seemed to indicate the presence of stilt houses, similar to contemporary lowland building techniques in the same area. This was before the discovery of more precise dating methods like radiocarbon and dendrochronological analyses, but typological dating of the pottery and other finds in the stratum that seemed to be contextually connected with the pole structures indicated that it dated back to the time of the early Han period settlement.<sup>497</sup> There is, however, not much information about the excavations at Dong Son during this second campaign. In his report, Janse writes that parts of the findings were shipped to the Guimet Museum in Paris, but that the majority – along with drawings, notes and photographs from the excavations – had been left with Victor Goloubew at the EFEO in Hanoi. Goloubew, who seems to have nurtured a particular interest in Dong Son since before Janse started his excavations, had “expressed a desire to make a special study of the products of [their] excavations and to publish them”. Janse had therefore “passed on to [his] colleague the notes, plans, prints and negatives [he] had prepared during the excavation”, and left most of the finds from the second expedition’s Dong Son excavations in Hanoi.<sup>498</sup> To what extent this is a correct description is difficult to know, but Victor Goloubew did

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496. Janse 1958:14–15, plate 6.

497. Janse 1958:28–32; Janse 1959:112; *Cahiers de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient*, No. 9, 1936, pp. 5–6.

498. Janse 1958:29.

present one lecture in 1938 at the Musée Louis Finot in Hanoi under the title *La maison Đông-so'niennne* – “the Dongsonian house”.<sup>499</sup> Since the outbreak of the Second World War there is no trace of the finds or of the documentation material that was reportedly left in Hanoi.

They returned to work at Dong Son several times over the course of the second expedition. While they were in the area, they also took the opportunity to excavate two Han tombs in Dai-khoi,<sup>500</sup> and six at Dong-tac, where they found a figurine similar to the kneeling figurine at Lach Truong, and an object described as a golden monster mask, along with the more common finds of ceramics and metals.<sup>501</sup>

### *Muong ethnography*

When 1936 gave way to 1937, they were already well under way with the excavations at several sites in the Thanh Hoa province. One evening in January when Janse returned to Madame Renaud's hotel in Thanh Hoa Town, he found a letter waiting for him. It contained an invitation to join the French governor of Annam on an official visit to a remote Muong village on the next day. Janse was thrilled and later wrote that he viewed it as a unique opportunity to “see this shy and isolated people”. The purpose of the visit was to inaugurate a new medical station, and they left before dawn in a delegation with three cars. The visit lasted only a few hours, and they were back in Thanh Hoa by the evening. But in a similar vein as he did his archaeological pursuits, Janse maximized the ethnographic output of the visit, and devoted one extensive Swedish newspaper article, and one whole chapter of his memoirs to this event.<sup>502</sup> The preamble to the article immediately signals a familiar sense of adventure and distance, with temporal references similar to what we have seen in Janse's earlier travel writing:

With the Muong people, the semi-wild tribes in Northern Annam, where our famous archaeologist and ethnographer now completes his world-famous researches, time appears to be stand-

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499. Cahiers de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient (Hanoi) N° 14. Premier trimestre de 1938, pp. 12–16.

500. Janse 1951:148–153, plates 62–65.

501. Janse 1947: plate 162; Janse 1951:138–147, plates 56–63, 66.

502. *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 July 1937: “Gästbud i Annam: hos Muongfolket.”; Janse 1959:159–164.

ing still, and the same ceremonies as 20 centuries ago are still performed today.<sup>503</sup>

The article – and the almost identical text in the memoirs – is largely devoted to the French delegation's arduous journey through the countryside and mountains with wobbly ferries and leech attacks, and the eventual arrival at the village of Ngoc-lac, where the inauguration of the medical station was to take place. The clothing and jewellery of the villagers, who belonged to the Moung ethnic group, are accounted for in detail. The entertainment performed by the villagers to celebrate the occasion is described in a characteristically demeaning tone, with words that signal simplicity or childishness:

In front of the drum danced a wizard, whose hops and skips apparently were intended to imitate the movement of a bird, bobbing to and fro on the ground. Now and then he poked the drum with the sticks he held in each hand.<sup>504</sup>

To emphasize the primitive character of the event, the shaman's dance is moreover compared with the stylized scenes depicted on the two-thousand-year-old kettledrums they had excavated at Dong Son: "We had here a typical example of how ancient ceremonies are still alive in these lands, where time seems to be standing still."<sup>505</sup> The visit ended with a jar drinking ceremony (which is a common practice associated with festive events and hospitality in parts of mainland Southeast Asia), where the guests were invited to drink a fermented rice sherry from a large jar, sucking two by two on long bamboo straws. The ritual is described in an equally demeaning and humorous tone in Janse's article and memoirs.

Judging from Janse's account, the villagers of Ngoc-lac had made a great effort to set up an extraordinary festive event to welcome their visi-

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503. *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 July 1937. In the Swedish original: "Hos Muongfolket, de halvvilda stammarna i Norra Annam, där vår berömde arkeolog och etnograf nu slutför sina över hela världen uppmärksammade forskningar, tycks tiden stå stilla och samma ceremonier som för 20 sekler sedan förekomma alltså.".

504. Janse 1959:161. In the Swedish original: "Framför trumman dansade en trollkarl, som tydligen avsåg att med sina krumsprång återge rörelserna hos en fågel, som guppar fram och åter på marken. Då och då petade han till trumman med de pinnar, som han höll i vardera handen."

505. Janse 1959:161.





tors. Their rituals seem to have been far from simple or childish. And they lived in the 1930s, just as much as Janse himself. They did certainly not deserve to be described in demeaning words, and moreover be relegated to the past, by one of their invited guests. Olov Janse appears otherwise to have been a decent man with empathy and compassion, and is often described as a gentle and friendly person. So how can we understand this recurring theme of disrespect in his writing? Well, first of all it is worth noting that these texts are exclusively intended for Swedish audiences. The longer articles and reports written in French or English focus mostly on his archaeological work, and do not contain such travel writing and supposedly humorous anecdotes – only those written in Swedish do. Moreover, the format of the text in his Swedish articles and memoirs featuring native people in and around his Indochina expeditions,<sup>506</sup> repeats

*Fig. 45. Jar drinking ceremony in Thanh Hoa. Photo by Olov Janse.*

<sup>506</sup> Another striking example is chapter 19 of his memoirs, featuring a visit to an elephant-hunting Moï community during the third expedition (Janse 1959:187–199).

itself from his first published travel account from Iceland written in his early twenties.<sup>507</sup> Hence you could say that these people – who showed Janse nothing but generosity and respect – are taken hostage within the confines of a certain marketable format for popular representation intended to amuse and impress a Swedish audience. Compared with the audiences in former colonies or major colonial powers such as France and the United Kingdom, most readers in Sweden in the mid twentieth century had little if any experience of places like Indochina, which could serve as an explanation why this format was particularly marketable there. And as we know from the reviews of his memoirs, Swedish readers were both amused and impressed.<sup>508</sup> Although Janse's core activity was the archaeological investigations, the strong images of primitivity and civilization conveyed through his travel accounts are of great importance, not least from a Swedish perspective. They have been spread and consumed to a much larger degree, and have arguably had a much larger popular impact in Sweden, than any of his archaeological results.

Janse himself referred to this part of his work as “ethnography”. It is, however, more aptly described as amateur ethnography, comparable to the hit-and-run amateur archaeology pursued by Louis Pajot and other untrained French and native people at and around Dong Son. Both were focused on obtainable objects, rather than context and academic analysis. Unlike serious ethnography that has a profound interest in human culture and human conditions and involves long-term involvement, language training, and habitation, Janse's hit-and-run ethnography was largely pursued on one-day visits to native villages where he shot films and photographs, and purchased objects to send back to Sweden and France. No serious knowledge of human culture, traditions, and rituals can come out of such brief encounters. It is rather the case that Janse's “ethnography” masquerades as professional pursuits by association with his professional knowledge in archaeology and the comparative studies (joining ethnography and archaeology) pursued by his mentors Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss.

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507. See the chapter “Travel Writing”.

508. E.g. Wilhelm Holmqvist, 1959, “Exotisk forntid”, *Vi*, no. 49.

### *Kilns at Tam-thô*

There is, however, one new focus in the second expedition that stands out among speedy artefact-oriented tomb excavations and hit-and-run ethnography. While the rest of the team was excavating Han period tombs in Quang-xu'ông (more specifically at the site of Yên-biên),<sup>509</sup> Janse surveyed the vicinity for more sites to excavate. Close to the village of Tam-thô some eight kilometres from Thanh Hoa Town, he spotted some large, strange-looking mounds that he decided to investigate. He brought his team to the site and started excavations in early February 1937. It turned out that the big mounds – the largest almost 40 metres long – contained ancient pottery kilns. The mounds covering the oblong clay-lined cavities contained masses of ceramics: mostly potsherds and waste, but also pieces of miniature houses, spindle whorls, net-sinkers, bricks, roof-tiles, and pieces of small animal figurines.<sup>510</sup> Some resembled the grave goods they had excavated from the Han period brick tombs, but there were also pieces that they had only seen equivalents of at the Dong Son settlement site. In the excavations of the Tam-thô kilns, we get a glimpse of the serious archaeologist Olov Janse. With no prospect of finding exclusive museum pieces for display, he devoted much work and effort to detailed investigation and a thorough report of these early industrial production sites.<sup>511</sup>

The investigation of the Tam-thô kiln sites is also one of the most important lasting results of Janse's Indochina expeditions. The kilns, which provided the local population from the Han period onwards with ceramics for everyday use and funeral deposits, were the first such sites to be found and excavated in Indochina. Before Janse's excavations at Tam-thô, it was believed that the "Han-style" ceramics had been imported from the Chinese empire. So this was quite a breakthrough and has been of great importance for later research.

However, in an arguably ill-founded conclusion to his report on the finds in Tam-thô, Janse writes assuredly that the kilns had been managed by immigrant Han Chinese, because "the Annamites always have been known to be poor ceramists".<sup>512</sup> This is yet another example of how easily the translation of archaeological fragments into a meaningful story,

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509. Janse 1951:156–163.

510. Janse 1947: plates 147–160; Janse 1951: plates 33–39.

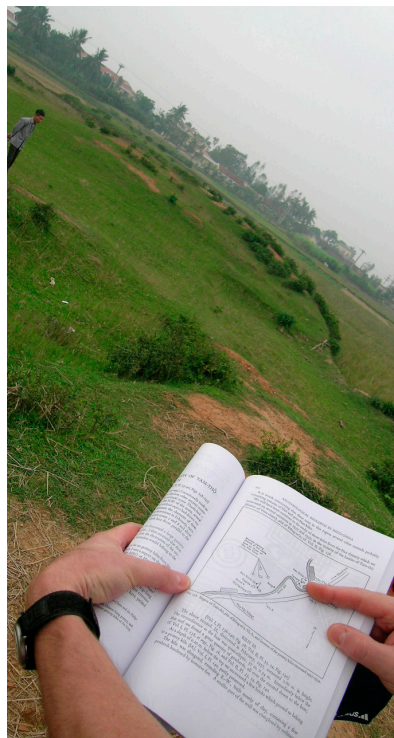
511. Janse 1947:60–62, plates 138–160; Janse 1951:231–246.

512. Janse 1951:245.



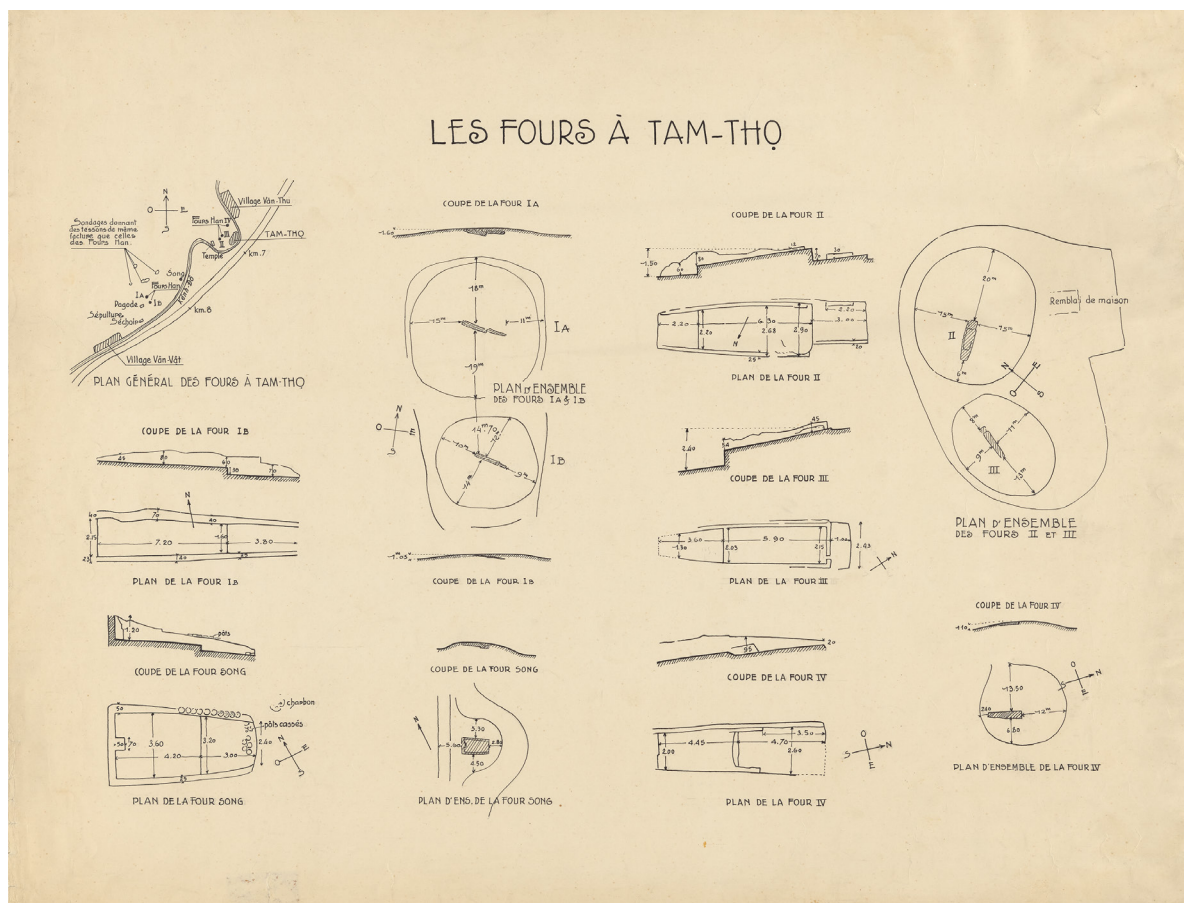


*Fig. 46. Starting excavations at Tam-thô I:A, in February 1937. Olov and Ronny Janse in the centre, wearing trench coats.*



*Fig. 47. Tam-thô kiln sites II–IV, visited by the authors in October 2005.*

*Fig. 48. Original drawing of the Tam-thô kilns.*



adopts a common-sense popular image – a “common truth” (such as the primitive character of the Dongsonian people and the civilized character of the Han Chinese, or the inadequate ceramic skills of the Annamites) – which immediately takes over as the principal image of the narrative and obscures every nuance and every possibility of a more interesting cultural analysis. With the fragmentary material that the archaeologist has at hand, the archaeological interpretation is more than most (if not all) other human sciences prone to rely on such “common truths”, which the material is far too sparse to challenge. We see this very clearly in Janse’s interpretations, simply because our “common truths” are now different. Hence what now appear to be ill-founded conclusions should not necessarily be seen as single mistakes or signs of poor quality. It should rather be regarded as a symptom of the vulnerable conditions for all archaeological interpretations of the past – in the 1930s, as well as in the twenty-first century.<sup>513</sup>

In February, when they had just begun to excavate at the Tam-thô kilns, Janse found some time to write letters for the first time since they left Paris in October. He wrote to Birger and Ture Nerman in Stockholm, and to Marcel Mauss in Paris, about his work and findings. The tone is cheerful when he describes some of the most valuable artefacts from the forty Han tombs opened thus far, and the discovery of the kiln sites, which he emphasizes with exclamation marks are the first of that kind ever found in Indochina.<sup>514</sup> He writes that they have plans to visit the French territory Kwang-Chéon-Wan near Hong Kong in the following weeks to do archaeological surveys. To Mauss, and Ture and Nora Nerman he also writes about a week-long visit to the northern military territory Tinh-tuc where he had encountered “semi-wild and shy” mountain tribes. The reason for the journey was the annual break for the Têt festivities celebrating the Annamite New Year (around 10 February), and he had travelled alone with a French friend, because Ronny was yet again suffering from furunculosis and had to stay in Hanoi to rest and recover. To Marcel Mauss he wrote that he also spent much time in Hanoi, because this time he would make sure to do all the cleaning of the objects before

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513. E.g. Ion 2017.

514. Letters from O. Janse to B. Nerman, 2 February 1937. Riksarkivet. Kartong 3. Korrespondens Brev III 1935–1941; Janse to T. Nerman, 2 February 1937. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Ture Nerman 3.1.7; Janse to M. Mauss, n.d. Fonds Marcel Mauss au Collège de France: mauss-janse-0030.pdf.



SOCIÉTÉ FONCIÈRE D'INDOCHINE ET DE L'ANNAM - HOTEL MÉTROPOLE-HANOI  
SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME AU CAPITAL DE 10.288.700 FRANCS - SIÈGE SOCIAL: 15, B<sup>o</sup> HENRI-RIVIÈRE

HOTEL MÉTROPOLE  
TÉL. 60 HANOI TÉL. 334

HOTEL  
DE LA CASCADE D'ARGENT  
TAM-DAO TÉL. 5

GRAND HOTEL DE CHAPA

GRAND HOTEL DE DO-SON

HOTEL DES TROIS MARÉCHAUX  
LANG-SON

WAGONS-RESTAURANTS  
HANOI-VINH ET VICE VERSA

ADR. TÉLÉGR.: MÉTROPOLE-HANOI

CORRESPONDANTE A HANOI  
DE LA COMPAGNIE INDOCHINOISE  
DE NAVIGATION

CODES:  
INTERNATIONAL LUGAGNE - A.B.C. - A.Z.

R. C. HANOI 36

Hanoi den 20. II. 1937

Kära Vänner,

Gärligt tack för brevet.  
Det var roligt få nyheter från  
Eder och höra att allt  
står gott till hos Eder.

Vi har nu c:a 10 dagar haft nyin-  
firande här. Allt arbete ligger då praktiskt  
taget nere. Jag passade på tillfället att  
tillsammans med en av mina franska  
vänner här, göra en ytterst intressant och  
äventyrlig resa till till de s. k. halvödda  
stammarna i Norra Tonkins fjälltrakter, en  
färd på c:a 700 kil. Först reste vi på vägar som  
ännu ej officiellt är öppnade för trafik genom  
underbara länder som i stort varit helt oberörda  
av västerländsk kultur. Vi stannade c:a en  
vecka på en liten ort inom f. d. kinesisk område  
där jag lyckades komma i kontakt med de i  
varsliga fjäll mycket skygga bergsstammarna.  
Därefter reste vi längs den kinesiska gränsen  
äster till Hanoi. Grävningarna har gått bra.  
Står för det andra mittiska nyåret lyckades

Fig. 49. Letter  
from Olov  
Janse to Ture  
Nerman.

they were shipped to Paris to be displayed. He did not want to be occupied with any such work back in Paris, because he was determined to devote as much time as possible to the completion of *Les Germaines* (the posthumous publication of Henri Hubert's work) under Mauss's direction: "I am for my part sorry for the delay and I look forward to finishing that work."<sup>515</sup> In the letter to Ture and Nora Nerman, he also mentions that he has received some money from one of the donors to the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities to purchase a collection of Indochinese artefacts on behalf of the museum, and adds: "I hope that the person concerned will think of me, when the position as director for Ö.S. becomes vacant after Andersson next year."<sup>516</sup> Overall, he seems at this point to have been quite cheerful and pleased with the results they had obtained so far, and he was thinking ahead – planning their return to Paris and being attentive to news about the upcoming vacancy of Andersson's position in Stockholm.

The next two months followed in much the same manner. They were busy with excavations of the kiln sites, the Dong Son stilt houses, and Han tombs around the Thanh Hoa province. Over the Easter break they left Thanh Hoa and travelled south along the coast to central Annam and the Nghé An province, where they did surveys and some test-pit excavations at the kitchen-midden site of Càu-giât.<sup>517</sup> In letters to Birger Nerman and Marcel Mauss he describes how they had also studied the customs and traditions of local fishermen, and collected ethnographic objects to send to the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm.<sup>518</sup>



*Fig. 50. Fisherman, Annam 1937. Photo Olov Janse.*

<sup>515</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>516</sup>. Janse to T. Nerman, 2 February 1937.

<sup>517</sup>. Janse 1947:40n.

<sup>518</sup>. Letter from O. Janse to B. Nerman, 10 April 1937. Riksarkivet. Kartong 3. Korrespondens Brev III 1935–1941; O. Janse to M. Mauss, 12 April 1937. Fonds Marcel Mauss au Collège de France: mauss-janse-0031.pdf.

In early April they returned to Hanoi, where the heat was increasing by the day, as they got closer to the monsoon rains. They stayed in Hanoi a couple of weeks to oversee the cleaning, photographic documentation, and packing of the latest finds before transportation to Paris. In a letter to Birger Nerman, Janse wrote that so far they had packed one hundred cases from the second expedition alone, and added that Andersson ought to regret that he missed out on a share of the extraordinary findings.<sup>519</sup> Apparently Andersson had given Janse the impression – they had “practically agreed”, according to Janse – that the finds from the latter part of the winter campaign would be allocated to the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, but Andersson had never provided the funding they had agreed on. Janse writes to Nerman, clearly disappointed:

During this particular period, we made the most interesting finds and their value exceeds many times the sum that Andersson had promised. It cannot hurt to let the matter be known here and there. When is A. resigning? Is it 1938 or 39?<sup>520</sup>

The main reason why they stayed in Hanoi longer than necessary, despite the hot weather, was an upcoming visit of the Governor General Jules Brévié. Brévié nurtured a special interest in archaeology and had expressed a desire to witness ongoing excavations, so George Coédès took the opportunity to showcase Janse’s excavations as a part of EFEO’s work. Janse had spared two large brick vaults that looked intact at the Bim Son site for this special event, and now they were awaiting the arrival of Monsieur Brévié.<sup>521</sup>

And finally, on 15 April 1937, Jules Brévié made an official visit to the excavations at Tam-thô and Bim Son. An unmarked newspaper clipping in Janse’s personal archive describes the visit. On the afternoon of 15 April, the Governor General, along with a whole group of national and local dignitaries, visited the excavations at a kiln site at Tam-thô, where he “took a vivid interest in the work directed by Doctor Jansé”. A little

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519. Letter from O. Janse to B. Nerman, 10 April 1937. Riksarkivet. Kartong 3. Korrespondens Brev III 1935–1941.

520. Ibid. In the Swedish original: “Det var just under denna period, vi gjorde de intressantaste fynden och vilkas värde många gånger om överskrider den summa Andersson hade ställt i utsikt. Det kan ej skada om saken bleve känd här och var. När avgår A.? Är det 1938 eller 39?”

521. Ibid.; Janse to Mauss, 12 April 1937.

later they attended the ongoing excavation of a brick tomb – Tomb 1B at Bim Son – where several interesting ceramics, one of which was in perfect condition, were exhumed before their eyes.<sup>522</sup> Representatives from the local community at Bim Son arranged a reception ceremony with flags and umbrellas, and in spite of the heat the visit was a great success.<sup>523</sup> As a souvenir of the visit, Jules Brévié was presented with some original artefacts from the excavation, among which was a rather special lamp of glazed pottery.<sup>524</sup> Pleased and content with the successful event, Olov and Ronny Janse were blissfully unaware that it would also mark the end of their happy days in Indochina.

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A week after Jules Brévié's visit to Bim Son, Janse wrote a letter to Ture Nerman in Stockholm. Unlike the previous letters sent to Ture and his wife Nora, this was addressed to Ture in his function as Member of Parliament, and sent to his office in the Parliament building (from where it was forwarded to his home address) (fig. 51). In distress, Janse writes:

From a friend in Paris I now receive per airmail a newspaper clipping with a notice regarding the Academy's request for the government to appoint Karlgren as Andersson's successor. I am surprised that he already two years in advance makes this démarche, and while I am in East Asia where I am now, not without sacrifices, bringing together collections of antiquities for The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. [I have] turned to the Academy with a request to also be considered. Karlgren is exclusively a phonetician and to fill the position after Andersson there is need for an archaeologist and museologist. K. is neither, and has moreover never pursued excavations in East Asia. Should he get the post, his professorship at Gothenburg University would probably be withdrawn. For my own part I don't know what I'm going to do when this expedition ends. The position at MFEA is my last and only hope. With the new naturalization laws I am now

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522. Newspaper clipping with the title "Voyage de M. le Gouverneur Général à Thanh Hoa." NAA: Janse 2001-29.

523. See photo in Janse 1947: plate 93.

524. Janse 1947: plate 92(3); Janse 1951:194n12.





Fig. 51. Envelope  
for the letter to  
Ture Nerman,  
dated 22 April  
1937.

also completely excluded from opportunities to get a paid state or municipal employment in France. My position is thus precarious. [...] To try and exclude me from a position that I almost have the right to get, is to do me a cruel injustice.<sup>525</sup>

525. Letter from O. Janse to T. Nerman, 22 April 1937. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Ture Nerman 3.1.7. In the Swedish original: "Av en vän i Paris erhåller jag nu per flyg ett tidningsurklipp med en notis ang Vitterhets Akademiens hemställan till K M:t att utnämna Karlgren till Anderssons efterträdare. Jag är förvånad över att vederbörande redan två år i förväg gör denna demarche och medan jag ännu befinner mig i Östasien där jag nu icke utan uppoffringar sammanför samlingar av fornsaker åt Östasiatiska Museet. [Jag har] vänt mig till Vitterhetsakademien med anhållan om att även bli ihågkommen. Karlgren är ju uteslutande fonetiker och för posten till Anderssons efterträdare behövs en arkeolog och museolog. K. är varken det ena eller det andra och har dessutom aldrig



He asks Ture for advice, and for help to raise the issue with the parliamentary ombudsman, with other Members of the Parliament, the press, and so on. We do not know what the response, if any, was. It is clear that the decision to appoint Karlgren after Andersson came as a complete shock for Janse, who had seen himself as the only rightful successor as Director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities – “a position that I almost have the right to receive” – and moreover saw it as his “last and only hope” for a successful continuation of his career.

Looking at the official documentation surrounding the appointment of Karlgren, a rather different picture appears, in which Janse was never even considered for the post. The background was in fact rather complicated.

Johan Gunnar Andersson had become Docent in Geology at Uppsala University in 1905. In 1906 he was appointed Professor and head of The Geological Survey of Sweden, a position he held until 1914 when he asked for permission to leave the Survey to work with Chinese authorities on mining issues. During the ten years (until 1924) that he worked as a geologist in China and with Chinese authorities, Andersson excavated, bought or in other ways collected archaeological material from Chinese history and prehistory. Returning to Sweden in 1925, Andersson brought back a large collection of mostly prehistoric artefacts. The deal was that a majority of the material should be returned to China after scientific investigations in Sweden. The material was duly returned, but was lost and has not been found since the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945).<sup>526</sup>

In 1925, Andersson was appointed Professor of Geology at Stockholm University. The same year “The China Committee” (Swe: *Kinakommitén*), which had been founded in 1919 by the wealthy industrialist Axel Lagrelus to support Andersson’s collecting endeavours in China, offered to transfer Andersson’s private collection to Swedish State ownership under the condition that the State could guarantee that the collections would be subject to scientific or scholarly (Swe: *vetenskaplig*) treatment

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gjort utgrävningar i Östasien. Skulle han erhålla platsen kommer troligen hans professur vid Göteborgs Högskola att slopas. Själv vet jag ej vad jag ska ta mig till när denna expedition blir slut. Befattningen à Ö.S. är mitt enda och sista hopp. Jag är nu genom de nya naturaliseringslagarna även helt utstängd från möjligheter att i Frankrike erhålla en avlönad statlig eller kommunal befattning. Min ställning är alltså prekär. [...] Genom att söka utstänga mig från en befattning som jag nästan har rätt att erhålla, göres mig en grym orättvisa.”

526. E.g. Fiskesjö 2014:77n26; Johansson 2012:110, see also 106, 108.

and analysis. The offer was accepted in March 1926, and in July the same year Andersson was promoted to Professor of Far Eastern Archaeology and Director of the State's East Asian collection (Swe: *Östasiatiska samlingarna*), which continued to grow rapidly between 1928 and 1935. In the 1926 agreement between the Swedish State and Kinakommittén it was underlined that the collection, at the time of Andersson's retirement, would be integrated with the collections of the Swedish History Museum and there be supervised by a curator. Hence there would, according to the original agreement, be no prolongation of Andersson's professorship.<sup>527</sup> But both Kinakommittén and Andersson thought that this would damage the development of the collection and potentially hinder further scientific and scholarly investigations.<sup>528</sup> It was therefore important to them that a suitable successor could be found and prepared in good time before Andersson's retirement.

What Olov Janse did not know was that Andersson already in 1936 had decided that Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) would become his successor. Karlgren was a phonetician and sinologist who had studied for Paul Pelliot in Paris, had been professor of East Asian languages at Gothenburg University since 1918, and Vice Chancellor of Gothenburg University between 1931 and 1936. He would be put to the test as Acting Director when Andersson went on a last research trip to China and Indochina in 1936. But this pro tempore solution was also a strategic step to place Karlgren firmly within the museum's organization, and make sure that they could later argue that Karlgren had sufficient experience of working with museum matters.<sup>529</sup>

But before he reached a decision, Andersson had entertained other possibilities. In 1932 he wrote to Karlgren explaining that his successor ought to be a highly skilled archaeologist in the field of comparative archaeology, familiar with the material and methods of comparative ethnography, and must read and speak English. A knowledge of Far Eastern languages would be a bonus. At this point Andersson focused his attention on the young ethnographer Karl Gustav Izikowitz (1903–1984), and also mentioned military historian F. Heribert Seitz (1904–1987) as a

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527. Andersson 1929:11–27; see also Malmqvist 1995:286–288.

528. Malmqvist 1995:289.

529. Letter from B. Karlgren to J. G. Andersson, 5 April 1936. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936 E1A: 13, 0328a,b–0329; Letter from J. G. Andersson to B. Karlgren, 9 April 1936. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936 E1A: 13, 0334a,b–0335.

potential man for the job.<sup>530</sup> Janse was never mentioned in this context, by Andersson or anyone else, even though he was clearly looking for an archaeologist with qualifications almost identical to Janse's.<sup>531</sup>

At about the same time as Andersson entertained the idea of having Izikowitz or Seitz as his successor, he corresponded with Sune Lindqvist, professor of archaeology at Uppsala University. In a letter to Lindqvist, Andersson describes Janse as *klen*.<sup>532</sup> *Klen* is a Swedish word with different connotations. It can mean small, unhealthy, or physically and mentally weak as opposed to strong. But in the mid 1930s it was also used to say that someone was not good enough, unfit or insufficient in relation to a task or activity.<sup>533</sup> Judging from the context, we believe that Andersson meant that Janse was not quite trustworthy or reliable with regard to his museum assignments.

In a letter to Sigurd Curman the same year,<sup>534</sup> Sune Lindqvist confirms this sentiment, when he writes in a passive-aggressive tone that Janse's doctoral thesis lacks in quality, and that Janse is a paltry person because he has not mentioned Lindqvist's works in the publication to the occasion of the 1929 gold exhibition at the Swedish History Museum.<sup>535</sup> Such designations passed between some of the most powerful actors in Swedish archaeology at the time, were of course not good for Janse's reputation. But he continued, nonetheless, to work for Andersson at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities for as long as 1936.<sup>536</sup> It is moreover noteworthy that Janse in a letter to Ture Nerman in 1937 says exactly what Andersson emphasized already in his 1932 letter to Karlgren, namely that Andersson wanted to see an archaeologist and not a phonetician as successor on his post.<sup>537</sup> This indicates that Andersson might have discussed the issue with Janse at some point in the years 1931–1932, explaining what

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530. F Heribert Seitz, Sv. biografiskt lexikon: <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=5853>, accessed 14 May 2018.

531. Letter from J. G. Andersson to B. Karlgren, 2 April 1932. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1932 E1A:7, 0106a,b, 0107

532. Letter from J. G. Anderson to Sune Lindqvist, 4 April 1932. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1932 E1A:7, 0321a,b.

533. SAOB: *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok*, 1936.

534. Letter from Sune Lindqvist to Sigurd Curman, 26 July 1932. Sune Lindqvist. Gustavianums arkiv. Husbyborg. Korrespondens med svenskar F8 D:10.

535. Janse 1928.

536. *Svenska Dagbladet*, 6 August 1936: "Prof. Janse på expedition i 8 månader."

537. Letter from O. Janse to T. Nerman, 11 September 1937. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Ture Nerman 3.1.7.

he had in mind regarding his successor. Regarding himself as a competent comparative archaeologist, collecting objects for the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities during his second expedition to Indochina, having worked close to Andersson during the early 1930s and being an experienced museum man, it is reasonable to believe that Janse concluded that it was him that Andersson had in mind. Reading the letters from these years it is difficult for us too, even with the benefit of hindsight, to see any reason why Janse's name was never considered or even mentioned as a potential successor to Andersson. But he never was, in any documents we have seen.

When Andersson eventually changed his mind and decided that Bernhard Karlgren was to be the successor he wanted and needed, they faced a fundamental formal and political problem. The Parliament would need to vote to end the agreement from 1926 for there to be a successor at all. And it was also up to the Parliament to decide who the successor would be. The material on which the decision was based was formulated by *Vitterhetsakademien*, which was led by Sigurd Curman (who was also Andersson's superior as Director of National Antiquities) and by Government clerks.

Sigurd Curman does not seem to have disliked Janse, but was not particularly interested in helping him either. Janse, on the other hand, as we know, helped Curman's daughter Brita on her visit to Paris<sup>538</sup> and corresponded regularly with Curman until he understood that he must have been involved in the decision to make Karlgren Andersson's successor. From that point on there are no letters from Olov Janse in Sigurd Curman's archive.<sup>539</sup>

Members of *Vitterhetsakademien* and *Kinakommittén*, including Curman, were now mobilizing to present the Parliament with correct information. On 25 January 1937, *Kinakommittén* delivered a memo to *Vitterhetsakademien* arguing that because of the rapid growth of the collection thanks to funding from private donations, there was need for a phonetician as the new Director. Museum curators lacked such special knowledge, and Sweden had only one expert in phonetics – Bernhard Karlgren. *Kinakommittén* referred to letters from the German art histo-

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538. Letter from O. Janse to S. Curman, 18 September 1935. ATA: Sigurd Curmans arkiv. Vol. 115. F 2b.

539. The last letter from Olov Janse to Sigurd Curman was sent on 24 September 1936. ATA: Sigurd Curmans arkiv. Volym 116. F 2b.

rian Otto Kummel (1874–1952) and the French sinologist and orientalist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945, who knew Janse and had also been Karlgren's teacher in Paris), who both recommended Karlgren. The Crown Prince stood behind the memo.<sup>540</sup> Olov Janse was never mentioned in any of these documents. Everyone appears to have accepted Andersson's suggestion already in 1936, and the focus now was on convincing the Parliament to rescind the crucial 1926 decision that Andersson would not be replaced when he retired.

When Kinakommittén delivered its memo to Vitterhetsakademien, Johan Gunnar Andersson was in China and Olov Janse in Indochina. Less than a year earlier, in the spring of 1936, Janse had met Andersson in Stockholm to discuss whether the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities would be interested in contributing funding to his next expedition to Indochina.<sup>541</sup> At this point there was some sort of dispute going on between Karlgren and Andersson relating to Karlgren's nomination as Director.<sup>542</sup> Although no formal decision had been made, they discussed the matter as if it was a fact that Karlgren would replace Andersson. Janse of course had no knowledge of this when he visited Andersson.

Andersson left for his last journey to China in September 1936 and arrived in China two months later. In January 1937, one of the donors to the museum, Anders Hellström, wrote to Karlgren that he had donated 5,000 Swedish krona to the museum's bulletin and 5,000 to Musée Cernuschi for Janse's excavations, hoping that the museum in Stockholm would receive duplicates from Janse's collections.<sup>543</sup> At about the same time Karlgren wrote to Janse thanking him for sending a publication on Han bricks.<sup>544</sup> He moreover congratulated him on his success in Indochina saying that both he and the Crown Prince were pleased with the collaboration between him and the museum.<sup>545</sup>

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540. Malmqvist 1995:289–290. We have not been able to find the actual memo that Malmqvist refers to in any archive.

541. Postcard from Olov Janse to J. G. Andersson, 5 May 1936. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936 E1A:13, 0305a.

542. Letter from J. G. Andersson to B. Karlgren, 9 April 1936. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936 E1A:13, 0334a,b–0335.

543. Letter from A. Hellström to B. Karlgren, 4 January 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1937–1938 E1A:17, 0315.

544. Janse 1936.

545. Letter from B. Karlgren to O. Janse, 16 January 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1937–1938 E1A:17, 0337.



In the meanwhile, Andersson had encountered severe problems in China and turned his focus to Indochina, where he intended to excavate Han period tombs – in other words, enter Janse’s hunting grounds. A drama started to build up. Karlgren nervously followed the process at a distance, and wrote in a telegram to Andersson: “Thanks report I believe your idea Tonkin excellent never mind Janse Negotiations directly Coedes fine man writing fully our love Karlgren”.<sup>546</sup>

On 8 March, Karlgren wrote a letter to comfort Andersson, who was disappointed over the situation in China, reminding him that “China in 1937 is not the same China as in 1923”, encouraging him to turn his attention to Indochina instead. Investigations of Han tombs in Tonkin would be a very good alternative, he writes, because the museum has no such material in its collections. He continues: “it would be *damnunculus acris* [a witty paraphrase of the Latin name for buttercup, our remark] if the existence of a little Mr Janse in Tonkin were granted such importance that it would hinder the progress of J.G. Andersson.” George Coëdes is a good man and an old friend, he concludes, and things will turn out for the best.<sup>547</sup>

On 6 April, Vitterhetsakademien sent a memo to the Parliament, stressing the importance of having Karlgren as the new Director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities after Andersson.<sup>548</sup> There were two main threats to their plans. The first would be if the government clerks pointed to the 1926 agreement, and advised against a successor in Andersson’s position. The second potential threat was Janse. If Janse made enough fuss in the media and could convince some of the politicians in Parliament that he was a better choice than Karlgren (which was not unlikely, considering his strong connections to Ture Nerman and other influential actors in Swedish media and politics), the Parliament might vote in his favour, or indeed return to the 1926 agreement.

And Olov Janse was indeed upset. He sent petitions to Curman and

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546. Telegram from B. Karlgren to J. G. Andersson, 8 March 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A:15, 0048.

547. Letter from B. Karlgren to J. G. Andersson, 8 March 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A:15, 0049a,b. In the Swedish original: “att det vore väl *fanunculus acris* om existensen av en liten herr. Janse i Tonkin skulle tillmätas den betydelse att den skulle få lägga hinder i vägen för J.G. Anderssons framfart.”

548. We have not been able to locate the memo, but it is quoted in Kungl. Maj:ts proposition Nr 104 – Riksarkivet. 1938. 1 Saml. Band. K. Maj:ts propositioner Nr 89–135. C8 – and was probably signed by Curman.

Vitterhetsakademien, and letters to Ture and Birger Nerman, pointing out that he had the perfect qualifications for the post, and moreover that he was currently in Indochina collecting materials to enrich the museum's collections.<sup>549</sup> A nervous Bernhard Karlgren wrote to Andersson in Indochina that he had learned that the Academy had decided that Curman should write to Janse and spell out to him that the Academy had already recommended Karlgren. The idea was, according to Karlgren, that Janse would then accept the situation and withdraw his petition before it reached the press. But at the same time, he continued, it was possible that Janse's petition to the Academy was only the first step in what would be a series of complaints. Therefore it was important, Karlgren stressed, that Andersson send a letter to the Academy emphasizing "the man's weaknesses".<sup>550</sup>

Andersson never wrote such a letter, as far as we know. But we know for certain that already in 1932 he described Janse as *klen*, and it was this sentiment (apparently shared by Karlgren) that he was now urged to emphasize for the Academy. This must have been complicated for Andersson, to whom Janse had become a useful person. Karlgren too agreed that Janse's text on Han bricks was important,<sup>551</sup> and his work had apparently rendered him esteem in both France and Indochina. It was therefore impossible to claim without it being called into question that Janse was weak on his merits from museum work and as a scholar. Our interpretation of the word *klen* used by Andersson in this context, is that it was because Janse did not take his responsibilities at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities seriously enough, when he was working for Andersson in the early 1930s. He had recently got married, and focused on his achievements in Paris and later in Indochina. The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities was in other words not his main priority at this crucial time when Andersson was looking around for a potential successor. So we believe that Andersson saw Janse as unreliable and not trustworthy,

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549. We have not been able to locate the original petition to the Academy, but Karlgren quotes from it in a letter to Andersson (Letter from Karlgren to Andersson, 11 May 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A:15, 0085a,b.) and there is a draft in Ture Nerman's archive (Ture Nerman 3.1.7.).

550. Letter from Karlgren to Andersson, 11 May 1937.

551. Letter from B. Karlgren to O. Janse, 16 January 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1937–1938 E1A:17, 0337. We believe it is Janse's text from 1936, *Briques et objets céramiques funéraires de l'époque des Han appartenant à la collection C.T. Loo et Cie*. Paris: Les Editions d'art et d'histoire, that Karlgren refers to.

hence unfit to be in full charge of the museum in Stockholm. There is some archive information which points in this direction, for example that Janse asked Andersson for money, again and again, for a monograph on Hsin-Tien which he never completed.<sup>552</sup> Another possible interpretation, also relating to trust, is that Andersson may not have been sure that Janse would let him continue with his own work and research in the collections after his retirement, which appears to have been a key issue for him.

Olov Janse followed Curman's advice and withdrew his petition. At the same time he tried to convince Ture and Birger Nerman to pull strings in the Parliament. On 11 September he wrote to Ture Nerman:

Regarding the Academy's petition to Kungl. Maj:t recommending Karlgren to the position as Director of the museum, the fact is that J.G.A. has a strong thirst for power and wants to rule the museum even after he has retired. By formally recommending a person as the Director of the museum who is not a museum man nor an archaeologist and who has completely different interests, Andersson has made sure that he can rule over the collections as much as he wants. Curman has agreed, but has at the same time duped Karlgren to make a promise not to demand any extra funding for any other employees if Karlgren is appointed! But this is horse-trading. Regarding myself, it has been stated that I am out of the question because I am almost a French citizen!!! This is of course completely incorrect. I presume that Birger and Lunkan [Ernst J. Lundqvist (1893–1958), chief editor of the magazine *FiB*] have told you in what strange manner this issue has been managed by the Academy. The whole business is sick and it will be no problem at all to reprimand those responsible, even more so since the Parliament decided in 1927 [sic] that when Andersson retired no one should replace him. The easiest way out must be to make sure that Parliament dismisses the petition from the Academy. It would be great if you could do something in that direction.<sup>553</sup>

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552. Letter from Olov Janse to J. G. Andersson, 27 April 1936. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936 E1A:13, 0304a,b.

553. Letter from O. Janse to T. Nerman, 11 September 1937. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Ture Nerman 3.1.7. In the Swedish original: "Beträffande akademiens hemställan till K.M:T att göra Karlgren till föreståndare för Ö.S. förhåller sig saken så att J.G.A. som är mycket härsklysten vill fortsätta att regera på Ö.S. även sedan han blivit pensionerad genom att formellt utnämna till chef en person som varken är museumman

Janse was in many ways correct in his description of the situation. Andersson had not wanted to leave Sweden for China before it was clear that Karlgren would become his successor, and he also had a controversy with Karlgren regarding his own position at the museum after Karlgren had become Director.<sup>554</sup> But Janse's idea that the Parliament would be on his side was completely wrong.

The petition from the Academy mentioned in Janse's letter was sent to the Parliament on the 6 April 1937.<sup>555</sup> The proposition was debated in the Parliament a year later, on 30 March 1938,<sup>556</sup> after which it was decided that Bernhard Karlgren would succeed Johan Gunnar Andersson on the day after his retirement.<sup>557</sup> The debate took a whole day, and a large number of politicians aired their opinions. The main question was the 1926 agreement, and they eventually voted against the clerks' advice and broke the agreement. But the idea of Karlgren being the most suitable, indeed the only possible, successor to the post raised no concerns. Janse's name was never mentioned.

While the issue of his successor was being debated in Stockholm, Johan Gunnar Andersson was in Indochina hoping to excavate Han tombs. He corresponded regularly with Karlgren and tried to work out a strategy to

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eller arkeolog utan har helt andra intressen, beräknar Andersson väl kunna i lugn och ro få styra och ställa som han vill utan inblandning. Curman har gått med på affären men har dessförinnan avlockat Karlgren ett löfte att ej begära några anslag för medarbetare om K. blir utnämnd! Detta är ju kohandel. Beträffande mig själv, ha vederbörande [sic] framställt saken så att jag inte kan komma i fråga då jag redan skulle vara i det närmaste fransk medborgare!!! Vilket ju [sic] fullkomligt oriktigt. Förmodar att Birger och Lunkan berättat för dig de egendomliga sätt på vilket detta ärende behandlats i akademien. Saken är sjuk och det bör inte vara svårt att få vederbörande prickad, allra helst som Riksdagen redan 1927 beslöt att efter Anderssons avgång ingen ny föreståndare skulle tillsättas. Det enklaste vore väl att i Riksdagen verka för att akademiens hemställan avslås. Vore bra om du ville göra något ditåt.”

554. Letter from J. G. Andersson to B. Karlgren, 2 April 1932. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1932 E1A:7, 0106a,b, 0107.

555. The petition is summarized in *Kungl. Maj:ts proposition Nr 104*. Bihang till Riksdagens Protokoll vid Lagtima Riksdagen i Stockholm år 1938. Första samlingen Åttonde bandet. Kungl. Maj:ts propositioner nr 89–135. Riksarkivet.

556. Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1938. Första kammaren. Andra bandet. Nr 24–34. Nr 24; Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksmötet år 1938. Andra kammaren. Andra bandet. Nr 20–28. Nr 24. Riksarkivet.

557. Riksdagens skrivelse Nr 171, p. 2. Bihang till Riksdagens protokoll vid Lagtima riksdagen i Stockholm år 1938. Fjortonde samlingen. Riksdagens skrivelser och förordnande, nr 1–477. Riksarkivet.

bypass Janse, in Stockholm as well as in Hanoi. The tone of the letters, mostly those written by Karlgren, is rather harsh when commenting on Janse.<sup>558</sup> One major problem had occurred, and it was that the Crown Prince had written to Janse and asked him to help Andersson in Indochina. He had done this on his own initiative, without informing Karlgren or Andersson. In November 1937 Karlgren wrote to Andersson:

Talking about Janse, the appeal to him from a certain direction [the Crown Prince, our remark] was slightly embarrassing. I thought, when I contacted Cœdès and he answered so amiably, that it had to do with what he knew about my work, and not due to some intervention by Janse.<sup>559</sup>

Anyway, writes Karlgren in conclusion, “I will send a telegram to the Crown Prince and thank him.” The reason why Karlgren and Andersson did not want the Crown Prince to get involved, was of course that it might play into the hands of Janse – and so it did. Karlgren was sitting alone in Sweden, and Andersson was in Indochina together with Janse and Cœdès. The ever-important Crown Prince had contacted Janse with a personal plea, indicating that Janse was a man of power and influence. Judging from the correspondence with Andersson, Karlgren was anxious about the whole situation. This is probably why he found every possibility to attack Janse, to make sure that Andersson would not change his mind. In a letter to Andersson in December 1937, Karlgren writes that Janse had appeared in a newspaper article in *Dagens Nyheter*, saying that he had facilitated Andersson’s excavations in Indochina. The last paragraph of the article reads:

Lastly I would like to mention that the ample ethnographic collection I have managed to gather will mostly be donated to the

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558. Letters between B. Karlgren and J. G. Andersson. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A: 15, 0041, 0049a,b; 0085a,b; 0159a,b–0160; 0165, 0166, 0167a,b, 0168a,b; 1069; 0176a,b; 0178–0179; 0189–0191; 0194a,b–0195a,b; 0202; 0253.

559. Letters from B. Karlgren and J. G. Andersson, 15 November 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A:15, 0176a,b. In the Swedish original: “Apropå Janse var det ju litet förargligt med hänvändelsen till honom från ett visst håll. Jag tror att när jag såg tiden mogen för en sondering i Hanoi, och Cœdès svarade så utomordentligt älskvärt som han gjorde, detta berodde på vad han visste om mina arbeten och ej på Janses eventuella inlägg.”



Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm, whose director, Professor Gerhard Lindblom, has shown a remarkable interest in these researches. Since I have for many years participated in the work at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, it is of course my heartfelt wish to try to contribute to the development of those collections as well, to the extent that it is possible. And I hope there will be an opportunity for me to present as a gift some of the interesting archaeological finds from my excavations here. At the request of the China Committée in Stockholm I have also investigated with the French authorities the possibilities for Professor G. Andersson to excavate in Tonkin. As a result, a permit has been issued for him to excavate some prehistoric sites.<sup>560</sup>

Janse played a devious game when – under the pretext of “helping” Andersson – he used his contacts in the French administration to steer attention away from the most prestigious sites with the most desirable collectible objects and effectuate a permit for excavations only at prehistoric sites where the find material consisted of stone tools and potsherds, that were of little interest for Andersson’s museum collection of fine antiquities. In the Swedish press, as we see in the quotation above, he let the readers know of his own contributions to the Ethnographic Museum, his “heartfelt wish to contribute” to the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, and not least his selfless efforts to help Andersson get an excavation permit in Indochina. Karlgren was not happy about Janse’s sly manoeuvres, and found the article “not at all pleasant”.<sup>561</sup> Johan Gunnar Andersson, who was no less of a cunning strategist, chose not to enter in

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560. *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 December 1937: “Svensk i okända Indokina”. In the Swedish original: “Slutligen vill jag nämna att det stora etnografiska material jag lyckats hopbringa till avsevärd del kommer att överlämnas till Etnografiska museet i Stockholm, vars chef, professor Gerhard Lindblom, visat synnerligen stort intresse för dessa forskningar. Då jag ju under flera år deltagit i arbetet vid Östasiatiska samlingarna, ligger det mig givetvis varmt om hjärtat att så långt det är möjligt söka bidra även till dessa samlingars utveckling. Och jag hoppas bli i tillfälle att dit som gåva överlämna något av de intressanta arkeologiska fynden från mina utgrävningar här. På anmodan av Kinakommittén i Stockholm har jag för övrigt här sonderat terrängen bland de franska myndigheterna beträffande möjligheter för professor G. Andersson att utföra grävningar i Tonkin. Och resultatet har blivit att tillstånd lämnats för honom att utgräva några prehistoriska fyndplatser.”

561. Letter from B. Karlgren to J. G. Andersson, 1 December 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A:15, 0178, 0179.

a public dispute with Janse. But the correspondence with Karlgren shows a different side to him. It has a harsh and contemptuous tone when it comes to Janse. In response to Karlgren's letter about the article in *Dagens Nyheter*, Andersson writes:

It might interest you that the young archaeologists here are launching rather violent attacks on Janse. According to their information, i.e. those who have been in the field with him, they say that they have done all the technical work, mapping, surveying, and photographing, and that he in return has only been haughty and has not mentioned them in his publications.<sup>562</sup>

The depiction of Janse as having a bad reputation among younger colleagues in Indochina is nothing we have come across in other sources. On the contrary, he is often described as a very likeable person, and as we have seen from previous examples he was always keen to acknowledge the contributions of both French and Annamite collaborators in his publications and when he was interviewed in the press.<sup>563</sup> So we take these denigrations as situated items – as manifestations of Karlgren's and Andersson's mutual self-aggrandizing communication regarding the position in Stockholm and Janse's games concerning excavation permits in Indochina. For the latter, a letter from George Cœdès to Johan Gunnar Andersson eventually settled the issue and ended the discussion. Cœdès writes:

On the other hand, you probably know that Dr. Janse is now present in Indochina, working on the same sites [as you want to investigate] with the aid of French funds. Under these conditions, I do not think it would be wise to advise you to take up the Han period as the main object for your study, and after having discussed the matter with our prehistorian, Mlle Dr. Colani, I should rather

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562. Letter from J. G. Andersson to B. Karlgren, 5 January 1938. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A: 15, 0202. In the Swedish original: "Det kanske intresserar Dig att höra att de unga arkeologerna här ganska våldsamt angripa Janse. Enligt deras uppgift, d.v.s. de som varit med honom i fält, uppge att de gjort allt tekniskt arbete, kartläggning, uppmätning och fotografering och att han till gengäld bara var hög och ej gett dem något omnämnade i sina publikationer".

563. E.g. *L'Avenir du Tonkin*, 22 March 1935: "Un entretien avec le Dr O. Janse."

propose that you devote your time to prehistoric researches, a field which is far from being exhausted.<sup>564</sup>

Andersson accepted defeat, adapted calmly to the situation and soon set off to excavate prehistoric coastal sites in collaboration with EFEO's grande dame of prehistoric research, Madeleine Colani.<sup>565</sup>

Johan Gunnar Andersson and Bernhard Karlgren were the winners in Sweden, but Janse took the game in Indochina. This infected and nasty business ended with an awkward letter from Bernhard Karlgren to Olov Janse. Before the issue had been settled in the Parliament debate, Janse had written anxiously to ask Karlgren if there was any possibility for him to have a future position at the museum, arguing that there must be room in the museum's budget for this.<sup>566</sup> In his reply, Karlgren accounted for the museum budget in detail, and made it perfectly clear that there was no such room in the budget. He ended his letter with the rhetorical question if Janse might not have any contacts in America, since "American universities are in desperate need of competent archaeologists".<sup>567</sup>

All correspondence between Olov Janse and the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities ends with this letter. There would be no more contacts between Janse and Karlgren, or Andersson.

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In Hanoi in the spring of 1937, Olov and Ronny Janse were at a standstill. The excavations were halted because of the hot and dry weather. In addition to the news about the affairs in Stockholm, Olov was troubled by a kidney condition, and they both suffered from the increasing heat. No letters were written, no interviews given. A month later they packed their belongings and travelled north, to the mining town of Tinh-tuc in the military territory (now Cang Bao province) near the Chinese border, where Janse had spent the Têt festivities a couple of months earlier. At the

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564. Letter from G. Cœdès to J. Andersson, 19 October 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1937–1938 E1A:16, 0040a,b.

565. For biographical research on Madeleine Colani, and her collaboration with Johan Gunnar Andersson, see Källén 2015: chapter 8.

566. Letter from O. Janse to B. Karlgren, 12 October 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1937–1938 E1A:17, 0338a,b.

567. Letter from B. Karlgren to O. Janse, 25 October 1937. Östasiatiska samlingarnas arkiv. Korrespondens 1937–1938 E1A:17, 0339a,b–0340.

cosmopolitan meeting point Hôtel Métropole in Hanoi they had met the director of the Indochina mining industry, Charles Bastide, whom they were already acquainted with from Paris, and he had offered them to stay in his private villa overlooking the open tin and wolfram mines. With the prospect of escaping the heat of the lowlands for the cooler mountains and having some quiet time to rest, they accepted the offer. After a short stop-over in the scenic Halong Bay, they arrived in Tinh-tuc in early June.<sup>568</sup>

They stayed the whole summer in Tinh-tuc. Janse later devoted an entire chapter of his memoirs to this sojourn, concentrating on his ethnographic encounters with the mountain tribes.<sup>569</sup> But above all, this was a time for rest and refocus. A photograph in their personal archive shows a thin and tired-looking Ronny reclining in a rattan chair on the veranda of Bastide's villa. On another photo, with the villa seen from above, there is a note attached saying "Tin-Tuck, N. Tonkin, Vietnam, (our home)" in the characteristic hand of an ageing Renée (fig. 52). So Tinh-tuc must have made a lasting impression as a place they thought of as home.

During the four months they spent in Tinh-tuc they led a quiet and secluded life, and sent only a few letters to their friends in Sweden and France. The tone of these letters is radically different from the letters sent only a couple of months earlier, during the successful fieldwork campaigns in Thanh Hoa. The letters now give a sense of resignation and despair, and in some of them Janse is quite candid about the situation. In a letter to Marcel Mauss in early June, shortly after they had arrived in Tinh-tuc, Janse says that it breaks his heart to think about the delayed work on Hubert's *Les Germaines*, but that he had no other choice owing to lack of support and funding. Not only had he needed to earn his own living over the last few years, he says, he also had to support his unfortunate parents-in-law in Russia, and had therefore, despite all his best intentions and good will, not been able to devote as much time as he had wished for the Germanics. Should the Musée des antiquités nationales have been willing to support him as he had suggested, Janse writes, the work would already have been done. In the same straightforward manner, which is quite different from his otherwise polite and slightly wary-toned correspondence with Mauss, he goes on to say that he has set aside some money to spend a couple of months with the Germanics and finish the

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568. Janse 1959:208–212.

569. Janse 1959:208–221; see also the article by Olov Janse in *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 December 1937: "Svensk i okända Indokina."

Tinh-Tuc  
N. Tonkin, Vietnam  
(our home)

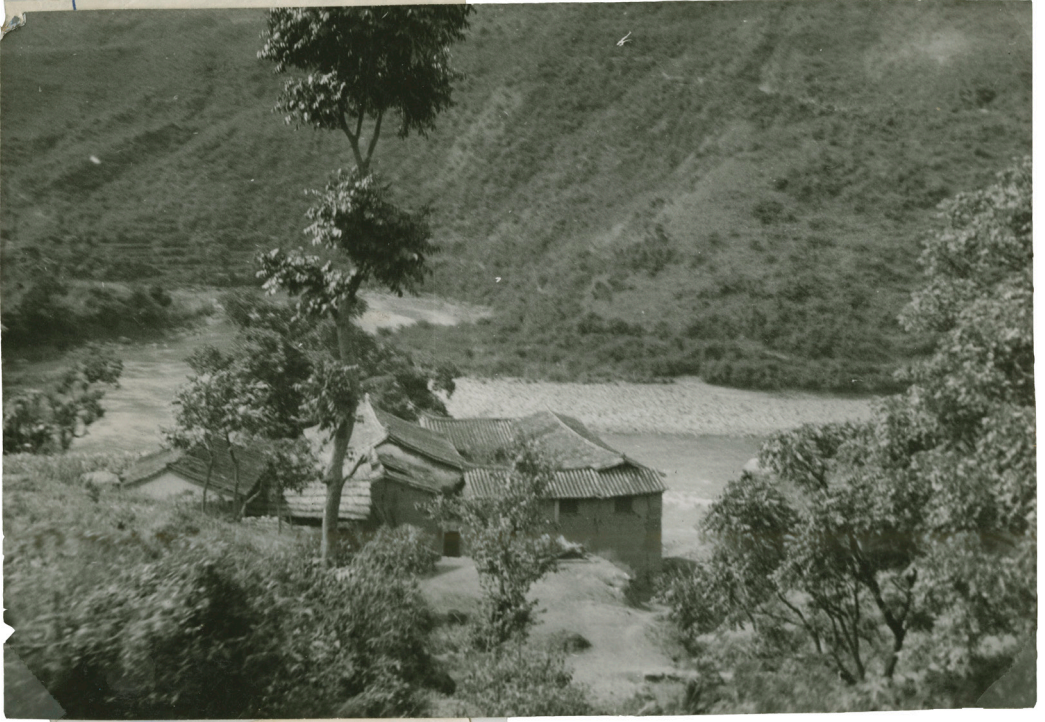


Fig. 52. Photo of Charles Bastide's villa in Tinh-tuc.

manuscript when he returns to Paris in January, but after that he has no idea where he will go. Even if he was naturalized, he would not get a position in France, he says: "I do not doubt that I will be able to earn my living, but I do not envisage a very bright future."<sup>570</sup>

Only a couple of weeks later, Janse received notice from René Grousset in Paris that he had been granted further financial support from the *Commission des Missions*, thanks to interventions by Marcel Mauss and Lucien

<sup>570</sup>Letter from O. Janse to M. Mauss, 3 June 1937. Fonds Marcel Mauss au Collège de France: mauss-janse-0032.pdf.



Lévy-Bruhl.<sup>571</sup> Janse immediately wrote a letter to thank Mauss for his support, and the spirit of this letter is slightly more optimistic than the previous one.<sup>572</sup>

When the summer came to an end, and they were about to return to Hanoi, Janse wrote a long letter to Ture and Nora Nerman. In a quite resentful tone he complains about the happenings in Stockholm.<sup>573</sup> Johan Gunnar Andersson, who less than a year earlier was referred to as Janse's teacher and friend, and an instigator of his work in Indochina, is now "as we know very domineering" (Swe: *ju mycket härsklysten*). Sigurd Curman and his bureaucratic system of heritage management in Sweden, which he just recently aspired to become a part of, is compared in demeaning terms with the French administration in Indochina:

Our collaboration with the authorities here is the best imaginable, and it is a great relief to be free from all the Chinese walls of so-called expertise, guarantees, complications and writings which Curman loves to surround himself with. If the Curman system were applied here, not much would be done in terms of archaeology and excavation. <sup>574</sup>

Olov Janse was clearly upset and not quite in balance, at this point. And these are opinions that he would never have aired in the press. Even if

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571. Lévy-Bruhl was a philosopher influenced by Durkheimian sociology who devoted his career to the study of "the primitive mind" as opposed to the modern Western mind, with book titles such as *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910), and *La mythologie primitive* (1935)).

572. Letter from O. Janse to M. Mauss, 22 June 1937. Fonds Marcel Mauss au Collège de France: mauss-janse-0033.pdf.

573. Letter from O. Janse to T. Nerman, 11 September 1937. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Ture Nerman 3.1.7. In the Swedish original: "Beträffande akademiens hemställan till K.M:t att göra Karlgren till föreståndare för Ö.S. förhåller sig nog saken så att J.G.A. som ju är mycket härsklysten, vill fortsätta att regera på Ö.S. även sedan han blivit pensionerad. Genom att formellt utnämna till chef en person som varken är museumman eller arkeolog utan har helt andra intressen, beräknar Andersson väl kunna i lugn och ro få styra och ställa som han vill utan inblandning."

574. Ibid. In the Swedish original: "Samarbetet med myndigheterna här är det bästa tänkbara och det är underbart skönt att vara fri från alla dessa kinesiska murar av s.k. sakkunskap, garantier, trassel och skrivelser som en Curman älskar att omge sej med. Skulle man här tillämpa systemet Curman, bleve det nog inte mycket utträttat i fråga om arkeologi och grävningar."



he played sly games he remained, on the surface, considerate and composed.

They left Tinh-tuc two weeks later and returned to Hanoi and Thanh Hoa, where they arrived at the end of September. They took up the excavations where they had left them in the spring, and worked for about a month before they took a break to travel by train to Yunnan.<sup>575</sup> Once back in Hanoi, Janse wrote a letter to Birger Nerman, trying to persuade him and their other friends in Sweden to make noise in the press about the appointment of Karlgren.<sup>576</sup> At about the same time, he also sent an article describing some of his ethnographic work in Tinh-tuc to the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* – the article that Bernhard Karlgren found “not at all pleasant”.<sup>577</sup>

Two months after they had returned from Tinh-tuc they had wrapped up what was left of the excavations in Thanh Hoa, delivered a draft report to George Cœdès, and packed the last of the finds for transportation to the Guimet Museum, the French national museum of Asian art in Paris. “This time”, Janse writes in a letter to Marcel Mauss, “the EFEO will reclaim almost nothing and even the statuette no. 2 will definitively stay in Paris.”<sup>578</sup> They left Hanoi on 27 November to travel south to Cochinchina, where after a short stopover in Saigon they set off to excavate on Tortoise Island. The excavations yielded some curious finds of Neolithic-type stone axes side by side with post-Song potsherds (i.e. dated to after AD 1280).<sup>579</sup> A photograph in their personal archive (fig. 53) features a scene from the excavations. On the back is written: “This photo shows Dr. J and party in the jungle on Tortoise Island, temperature about 40° cent.” Compared with the photograph from Samrong Sen at the end of their first expedition (fig. 41) the sentiment communicated by the picture from

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575. Letter from O. Janse to B. Nerman, 4 November 1937. Riksarkivet. Kartong 3. Korrespondens Brev III 1935–1941; Article by Olov Janse in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24 November 1937: “Yunnan – kinaprovinsen nagel i ögat på japanerna. Prof. Olov Janse skriver till SvD från händelsernas brännpunkt.”

576. Letter from O. Janse to B. Nerman, 25 November 1937. Riksarkivet. Kartong 3. Korrespondens Brev III 1935–1941.

577. Letter from B. Karlgren to J. G. Andersson, 1 December 1937. Östasiatiska samlingsarkiv. Korrespondens 1936–1938 E1A: 15, 0178, 0179.

578. Letter from O. Janse to M. Mauss, 5 February 1938. Fonds Marcel Mauss au Collège De France: mauss-janse-0034.pdf. In French: “Cette fois ci l'Ecole Française ne réclame presque rien et même la statuette n:o 2 restera définitivement à Paris.” See also Janse 1947:viii.

579. Ibid.

Tortoise Island is quite different. The jolly expedition leader with firm gaze and straight back is gone. Here we see instead a tired, broken man, whose focus is more on the hot climate than the site being excavated.



*Fig. 53. Olov Janse with local staff and visitors at the excavation on Tortoise Island, in December 1937.*