

## THE ELEVEN TUE-TU SEALS

There are five main categories of seals in our disciplines: DAI-AN (The Great Seal), DUONG-AN (The Office Seal), GIA-AN (The Family Seal), HANH-AN (The Travelling Seal), and TIN-AN (The Seal of Confidence). The DAI-AN and TAM-AN are for the official use of Grand Master and Masters. GIA-AN is likely the emblem of each family. The HANH-AN and TIN-AN are for the use of everyone (students, teachers, Masters and Grand Master). HANH-AN is a small seal, easy to use, and one can carry it in one's pocket to go everywhere; the stamping name on this seal is the name of the owner; it could be the civic name or the disciple-name. TIN-AN is also a small seal, usually a bit smaller than the HANH-AN, and the stamping name is often a nickname, a second disciple-name, or a Vietnamese name of any student. In this letter I report on the group of eleven seals HANH-AN, which have been recently made especially in Vietnamese Tue-Tu Seal-Chart-Character. This is the first time I have achieved such a mission, and I now believe that these eleven seals are unique. They make an important cornerstone in our HISTORY OF TUE-TU SEALS and show the high standard for the making of other TUE-TU SEALS in the future.

The making of a seal in Vietnamese Tue-Tu Seal Character is a difficult problem to solve because, on the one hand, the number of requirements to do it in the state of the art is so high. This takes into account the artistic aspect and the quality of material for the seal's body; the design and arrangement of the stamping characters in Vietnamese Tue-Tu Seal Characters; and the high level of security against forgery, since the seal is the official signature of the owner in countries such as Japan. On the other hand, Vietnamese Tue-Tu Seal Character Chart is a relatively recent creation of Grand Master Phan Hoang. These Tue-Tu letters look close to the brush calligraphy of the Japanese Kanji but they are in fact Latin Alphabet. Tue-Tu is unknown to artist-seal-makers. It is too hard for them to organize these "strange" and unknown characters into a small amount of space while respecting the traditional rules of seals which first require the harmony between characters; otherwise the result will look like a stamp reproduced on soft-stone or on a piece of plastic or rubber. In this case the job can be done at any city in the world. The seal-holder-box also has its important role to play, like the role of a scabbard to the sword. Therefore the making of a Vietnamese Tue-Tu Seal, in the situation where I was, needs the intervention of three people: someone competent in Tue-Tu Seal Chart -which is different to the Tue-Tu Basic Chart- to draw a draft of the design and make the primary arrangement (I did it) ; someone competent to review the arrangement and make sure that it is acceptable under the public view (not easy to find someone for this mission); and finally, the artist-seal-maker to translate all these considerations into his work and produce the seal accordingly (I have discovered one).

Arriving in Tokyo on December 13, 2009 to stay for a month, I bought a bicycle and went around to explore a number of places. At many occasions, professional seal-makers told

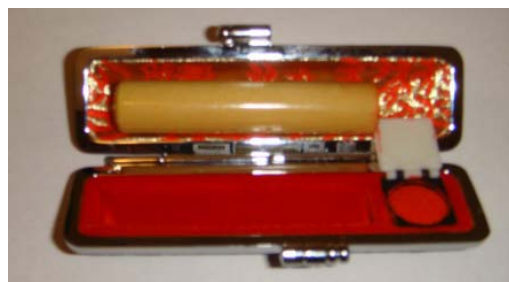
me that they were unable to make the Tue-Tu Seal as I required. Finally I was lucky to meet with a patient man who took time to understand the issue, patiently examined all avenues with me, and accepted to take my orders. Then after, peace in mind, I went to Kyoto. When I come back to Tokyo, on January 05, 2010 afternoon, not going to the Youth Hostel where I will stay until my departure, I immediately take another train from Tokyo to his place. At my great sadness he quietly shows me some more difficulties we had not seen before I left for Kyoto. He admitted that he was unable to make the Tue-Tu Seals. These difficulties and costly failures for years pushed me now almost to the edge of abandoning my dream of Vietnamese Tue-Tu Seal project. Willing to preserve our Vietnamese Way is being sometimes challenged so hard in life, I thought.

**T**hat night, I was unhappy. Keeping the frustration for myself, thinking again and again of the failed project, I was wandering through a number of narrow streets without knowing exactly where to go in this immense city. I felt really alone, no one to talk with when I was in need of some conversation. It started getting cold and windy, the kind of penetrating cold weather I had known in Paris a long time ago, when I was a hungry student. I started singing a Japanese song I have learned many years ago then I realized that respected Japanese people do not sing while walking on the street. Again I became silent, the narrow street became longer. The cold and the wind finally made me land in a small but very comfortable coffee shop named DOUTOR, a well known chain of coffee-restaurant shops in Japanese style where people can stay for hours without being asked to make more orders. Sitting quietly, eating peacefully, I was in fact wrestling hard with myself to find solutions for the remaining technical problems. I was staying for a while in this restaurant, a pen and a notebook at work. At late night I finished to find some solutions. Early morning of the next day, with some emotion and apprehension, I took the train and ran back to the place of my artist. I slowly explained my solutions to him. Very patiently he listened to me, took time to think, and finally agreed with me that he will try again...

Only in six days, in the afternoon of January 12th, all the seals have been made with great satisfaction. I want now to record here the name of the owners of these eleven Tue-Tu Seals:

NGHIA HO LeCaoTrang; TUE LY MaiHuuHung;  
HOANG MAI Daniela Mazzon ; TUE PHU Filipe  
Manuel Leite de Sousa; TUE VO Tomasz

Marszalek ;TIN HO LeHung; TUE LA Pascale Clermont; TUE THU Francis Fouet;  
TUE CAO Henri Coudray; TUE TIN Stephane Gaudard ; and PHAN HOANG.



I spent the rest of that happy day to find the needed materials and envelopes for mailing, a printing shop to print the Certificate for Disciple-name and Seal Owner. In order to print a document you need to find a shop where they rent computer; you make your document and print yourself... if you can guess the meaning of each indication on the screen in Japanese! Back to my small room at the Youth Hostel, under a low light and on

a minuscule table I happily affixed the seal of each disciple on their respective Certificate, made the calligraphy to show them how their name was arranged in Tue-Tu Chart for Seal (that is an advanced set of Tue-Tu Alphabet, and different to the Tue-Tu Basic Chart), gave, in some case, more details on the meaning of each name which was already printed on the Certificate. When I finished this job it was past 2:00 am, I was tired but very HAPPY.

Why choosing Tokyo instead of HaNoi, Saigon, HongKong, Beijing, Macau, Taiwan or Singapore? At all these places I have friends willing to help but only in Japan, for now, I could have a greater chance than elsewhere to accomplish such a project which requires so many technical and artistic capacities. Since 1915 Vietnam has adopted the Latin alphabet for Vietnamese writing, slowly the old way of the Seal disappeared. Nowadays, many Vietnamese who possess a seal and use it without knowing how to read their seals because these seals are curved in Chinese. On the reverse, in Japan the seal is the required signature, therefore the demand for seals is still high, so the expertise is developed; moreover the assistance of computer is growing and assuring for more protection against forgery.

My dear disciples, you will discover more answers to the above question when you know more about the Art of the Seal. Your seal is not only for affirming your identity, it symbolizes the ideal of the owner, transmits the Way of the discipline you belong to, shows your authority and confirms your property. Your seal is a precious object to you and your family, a valuable artwork to be preserved. Also it contains a rich source of information for your descendants or for researchers of a large range of fields. Possessing a disciple-name and a seal from the master is an important matter for students in any discipline of VIET-CHI, --from Vietvodao, Viettaichi, Chi-Kiem, Chi-Vat to Viet-Khi-Phap, Chi-Bong, Chi-Cuoc, Chi-Luc- and in general for all practitioners of any martial art discipline such as Karate, Kung-Fu, Tae-Kwan-Do, Vovinam. A Black Belt not having a martial art name and a seal is like a businessman without a pen and a business card. You will find the difference between you and many others when you possess a disciple-name and a Tue-Tu Seal.

Phan Hoang  
(Ottawa, January 2010)