

Report

Album des pavillons nationaux et marques distinctives: from lithograph on paper to paperless digital

Pierre-Jean Guionin

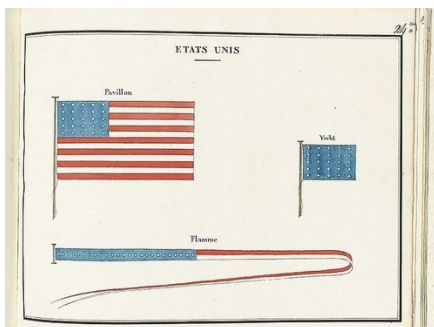
Abstract

The author, the editor of *Album des pavillons nationaux et marques distinctives*, reviews the history of this important vexillological work in anticipation of the publication of a new edition in 2019, two hundred years after its first appearance.

History

In 1819, thirty years after the start of the French Revolution, France was once again a monarchy. Its ruler was Louis XVIII, the brother of Louis XVI, the king executed in 1793. The French Royal Navy continued to make its great exploratory voyages and accompanied the expansion of French territory on every continent. In such circumstances, the ability to recognise the flags flown on the ships of the other great powers was a necessity.

The first French official flag book, *Pavillons des puissances maritimes en 1819*, was published in Paris. It consisted of a series of lithographs signed by Charles Motte (1785-1836), a Parisian publisher and lithographer.¹

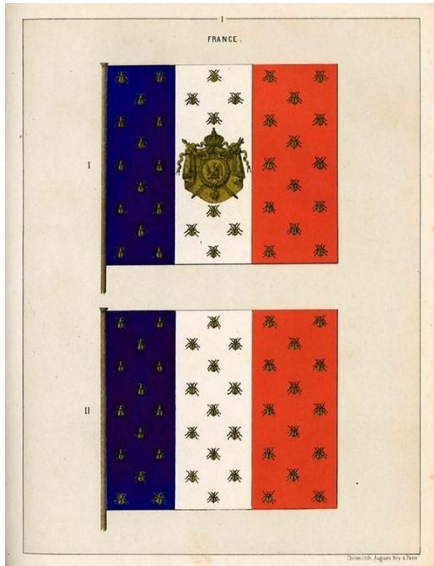


1819 edition: a Charles Motte plate depicting US flags

By 1858 France was an empire once more, under Napoléon III, the nephew of Napoléon I. The emperor instigated a very ambitious naval programme. The *Gloire*, the world's first steam-powered ironclad frigate was laid down, and France maintained its place as the second-greatest naval power, behind the UK.

1 He contributed illustrations to works of travel such as *Voyage pittoresque dans la régence d'Alger, pendant l'année 1833* by Emile Lessore and William Wyld (Paris, n.pub., 1835), and volumes of poetry such as *Méditations poétiques* by Alphonse de Lamartine (Paris, Gosselin, 1823)

In that year, Capitaine de frégate² Pierre Alexandre Le Gras, serving in the Dépôt des cartes et plans de la marine (the Naval Charts and Plans Office³) in Paris, edited the *Album des pavillons, guidons, flammes de toutes les puissances maritimes*. It consisted of 69 chromo-lithographed plates by Auguste Bry (1805-80), a Parisian lithographer and glass painter.



1858 edition: an Auguste Bry plate depicting the flags of Napoléon III and his son, the Prince Impérial

Le Gras (1812-94) was the elder brother of contre-amiral⁴ Désiré Jean Auguste Le Gras (1807-90). Alexandre was appointed an élève de 2e classe⁵ in 1828 and would go on to spend over 25 years in the Charts and Plans Office, before retiring at Toulon in 1879. As well as the famous flag book, he was also responsible, amongst other works, for a pilot for the coasts of southeast Asia⁶ and one for the Baltic⁷, a description of the passages between the Philippines and Japan,⁸ and books on the lighthouses of the West Indies,⁹ and of the eastern coast of South America.¹⁰ He also contributed to a French-English-Japanese dictionary.¹¹

- 2 The equivalent of a Commander in the Royal Navy
- 3 Renamed the Service hydrographique de la Marine in 1887, and the Service hydrographique et océanographique de la Marine (SHOM) in 1974.
- 4 Rear Admiral
- 5 Cadet
- 6 *Instructions nautiques sur la côte est de Malaisie, le golfe de Siam, les côtes de la Cochinchine, le golfe de Tonquin, et la côte sud de la Chine* (Paris, Challamel Ainé, 1865)
- 7 *Instructions nautiques sur la Mer Baltique et la golfe de Finlande* (Paris, Firmin Didot, 1864)
- 8 *Description des îles et des passages compris entre la partie nord de l'île Luçon et les îles du Japon* (Paris, Dupont, 1857)
- 9 *Phares de la mer des Antilles et du golfe du Mexique corrigés en février 1861* (Paris, Dupont, 1861). A second edition was published in 1869.
- 10 *Phares des côtes orientales de l'Amérique du Sud corrigés en août 1859* (Paris, Dupont, 1859)
- 11 *Dictionnaire français-anglais-japonais ... composé par M. l'abbé Mermet de Cachon et publié par les soins de M. A. Le Gras, pour la partie anglaise et de M. Léon Pagès pour la partie japonaise ...* (Paris, Didot, 1866)



Art. 1.^{er} Sont nommés élèves de la marine de 2.^e classe les soixante-treize jeunes gens provenant du collège royal d'Angoulême dont les noms suivent, savoir :

- Les sieurs LE DEAU (Camille-Alphonse);
 DE BRUIX (Théodore-Emmanuel-Eustache);
 MORIN DE LA RIVIÈRE (Jules-Charles);
 DE KERSAUSON (Aimé);
 DE MONTFORT (Camille-Christophe-Jean-Marie);
 SIMONNET DE MAISONNEUVE (Louis-Alexandre-Amédée);
 CAZANAÏVE (Jacques-Auguste-Joseph);
 DUMALLE (Louis);
 TASCHER DE LA PAGERIE (Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Eugène);
 PREVOST DE LA CROIX (Henri-Edmond);
 BRAC DE BOURDONNEL (Achille);
 DE LANSAC (Joseph-Pierre);
 (...)
 GEOFFROY (Louis-Raphaël-Paulin);
 DE GÉRÈS (Pierre-Joseph-Théophile);
 PRADIER (Edmond);
 ■ LE GRAS (Pierre-Alexandre);
 STOCHAN DE KERSABIEC (Dunstan-Louis);
 JOURDAN (Armand-Félix);
 BOUVIER DE CACHARD (Alexis);
 DUQUESNE (Joseph-Julien-Melchior).

2. Notre ministre secrétaire d'état de la marine et des colonies est chargé de l'exécution de la présente ordonnance.

Donné à Paris, en notre château des Tuileries, le douzième jour du mois d'octobre l'an de grâce mil huit cent vingt-huit, et de notre règne le cinquième.

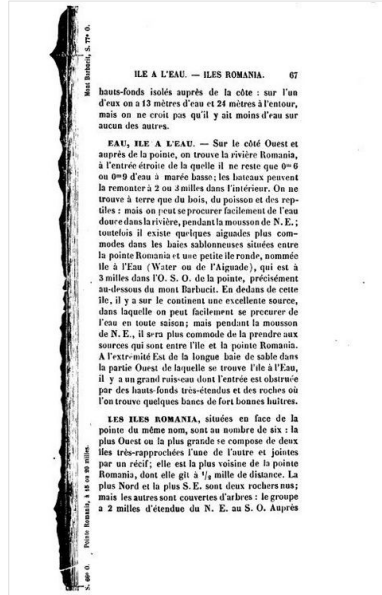
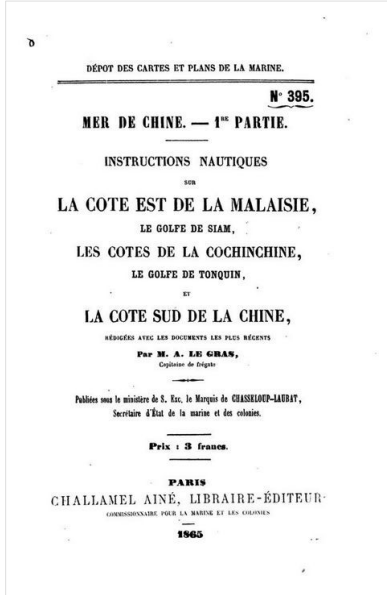
Signé CHARLES.

Par le Roi :

Le Ministre Secrétaire d'état de la marine et des colonies,

Signé B.^{on} HYDE DE NEUVILLE.

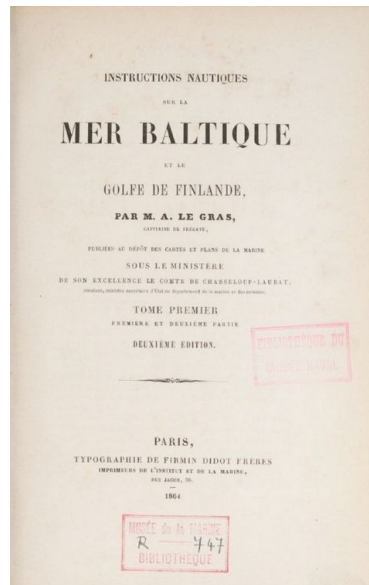
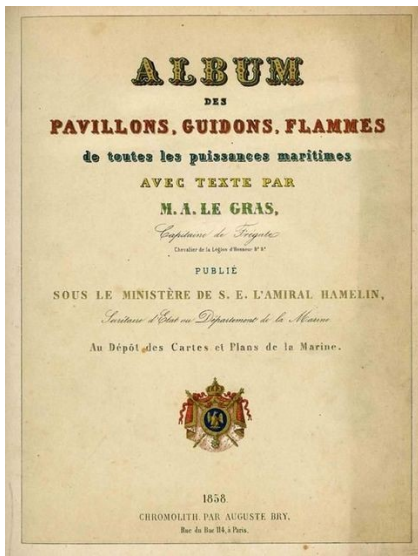
French official gazette: Le Gras is appointed an élève 2e classe



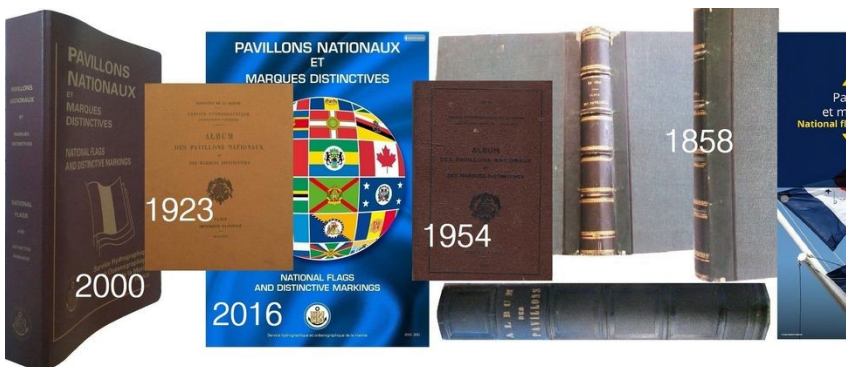
Le Gras East Indies pilot: left, title page; right, description of the southeastern Malaysian coast

Since then the French Navy's flag book has gone through a total of ten editions. The successor to the work of Motte and Le Gras was the *Album des pavillons nationaux et des marques distinctives des marines de guerre et de commerce*, first published under that title in 1889, and subsequently in new editions in

1923, 1954, 1965, 1978, 1990, 2000 and 2016.



Two title pages: left, the Le Gras *Album des pavillons*; right, the *Baltic Sea pilot*

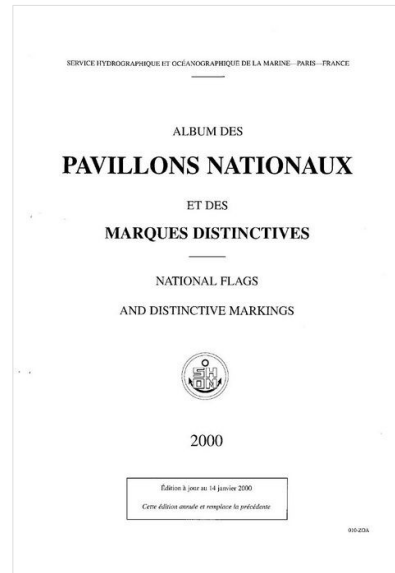
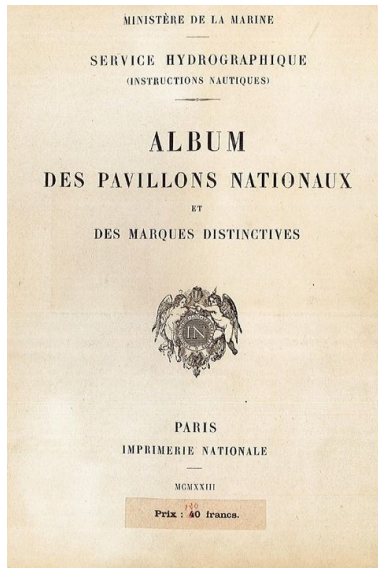


Album des pavillons: some previous editions



Album des pavillons: specimen pages from past editions

From the 1923 edition onwards, the *Album des pavillons* was expanded to include all the countries of the world. A further expansion came in 2000, when it not only became bilingual, in French and English, but also included much extra information, including flag proportions, with colours expressed as both CMYK and as PMS.



Title pages, past and present: left, 1923 edition; right, 2000 edition

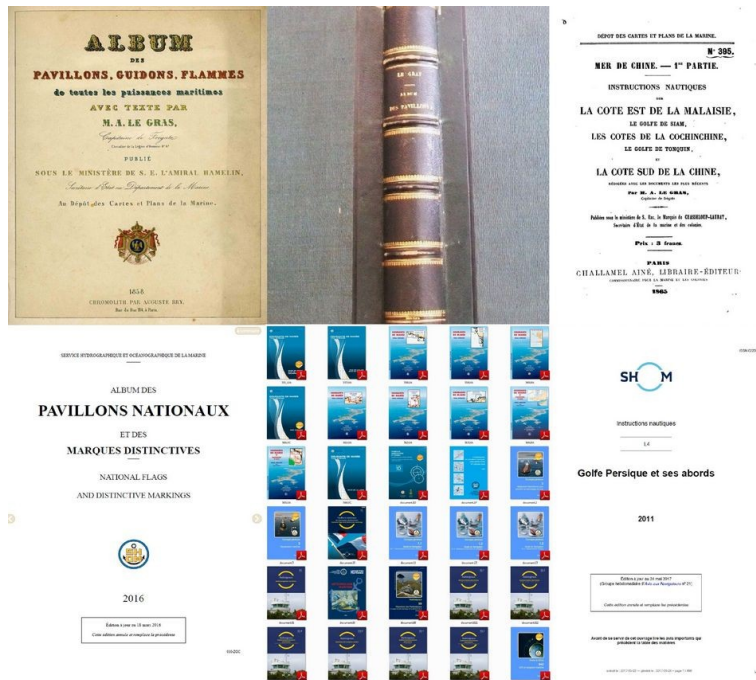
From the start, the *Album des pavillons* has been the responsibility of the editor, who had to divide his time between flags and the other output of SHOM, including sailing instructions. But a keyboard and the internet have now replaced his quill pens and sealed dispatches. A list of more than twenty editors forms an unbroken chain of effort.



Editors, past and present: left, Capitaine de frégate Alexandre Le Gras; right, Capitaine de frégate Roger Caminati, 1978



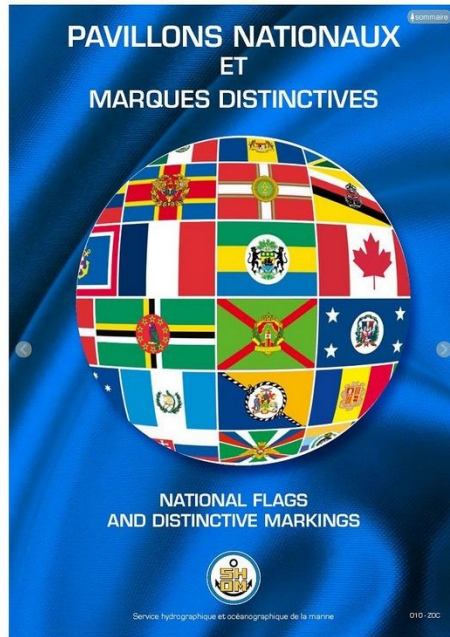
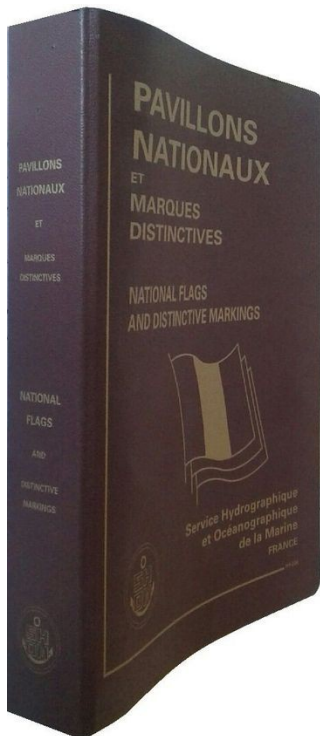
Editors, past and present: left, Capitaine de vaisseau (ER) Armand Noël du Payrat, 2000; right, Capitaine de frégate (R) Pierre-Jean Guionin, 2016 and 2019 (forthcoming)



Range and style of SHOM publications: 1858 and 2016

Digitisation

SHOM has adopted a policy of moving to digital charts and publications. For the *Album des pavillons*, it was a case of adapt or die. Accordingly, the 2000 edition would be the last 'paper' edition; the first digital edition was that of 2016, published as an interactive pdf. It took a year to redraw from scratch all the artwork in a suitable format.



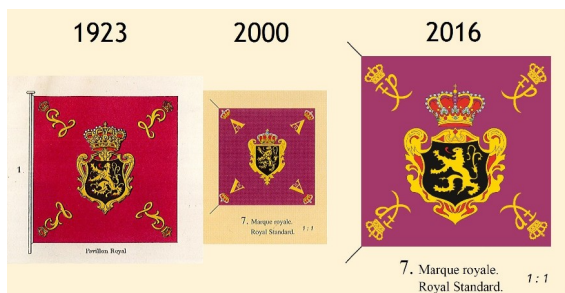
Changing front covers: left, 2000 edition; right, 2016 edition

The new edition contained 2,269 flags and national markings from 198 countries and international organisations, all digitised as vector illustrations.

The introduction to the 2000 edition by Michel Lupant, President of FIAV, was retained and updated for the 2016 edition.



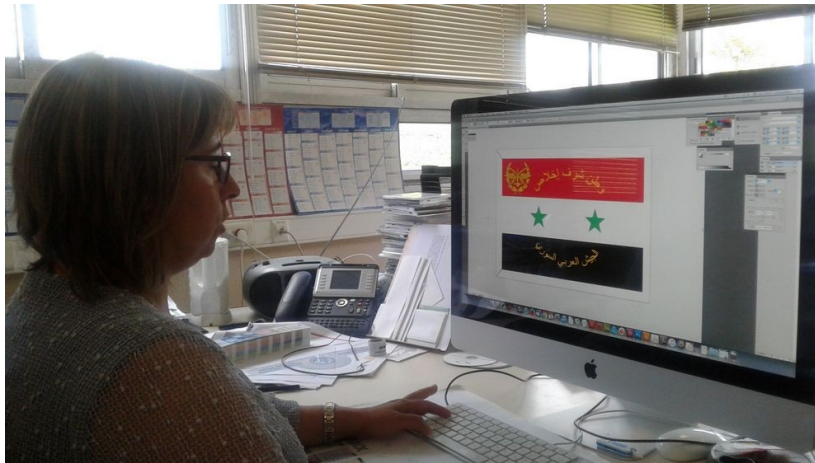
Digitisation of the national arms of Bolivia: left, 2000 edition; right 2016 edition



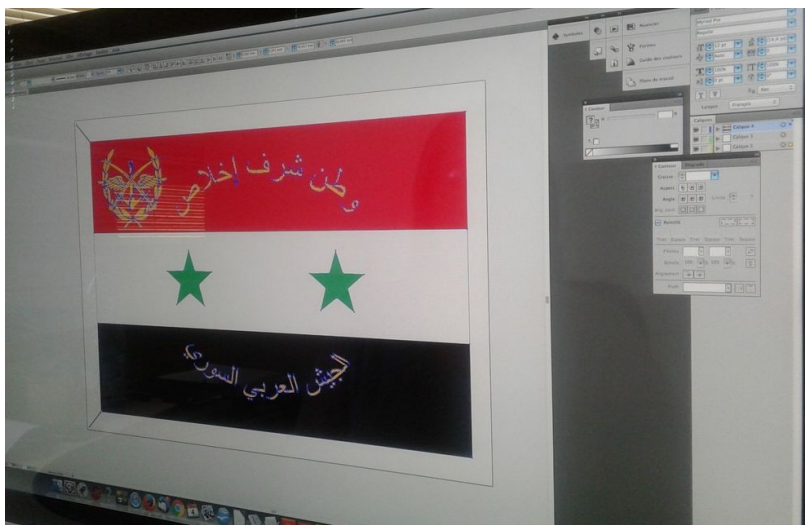
Digitisation of the personal standard of the King of the Belgians: 1923, 2000 and 2016 editions



*Members of the SHOM DAO team
(DAO = dessin assisté par ordinateur, i.e. computer-aided design)*



Preparing a vector drawing: flag of the Syrian Armed Forces



Finished drawing: flag of the Syrian Armed Forces



The modern SHOM house style: left, Album des pavillons; below, other SHOM publications



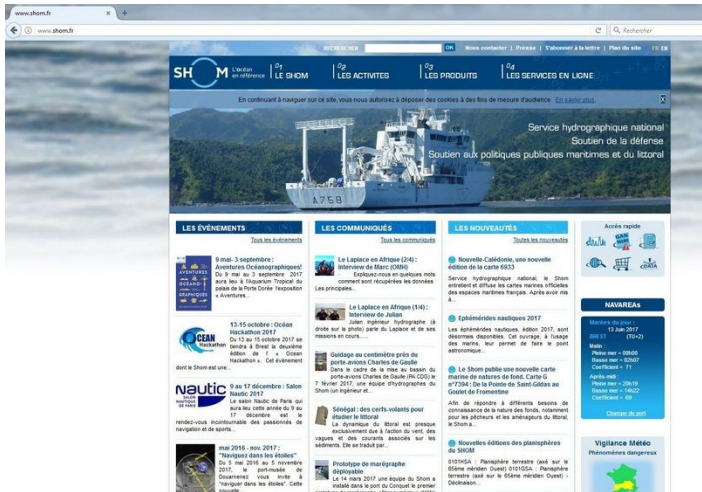
By turning to a digital format, it is now possible to buy the *Album* with a year's worth of updates.

MISES À JOUR			
Pays	N° de pavillon ou de marque distinctive	Page	Date
BAHREIN	4 – 5	28	Février 2017
ESPAGNE	2 – 4 – 7 – 10 à 15 – 26	91 à 93	Février 2017
INDE	2	130	Février 2017
IRAN	5	135	Février 2017
KAZAKHSTAN	5 – 14	148 et 149	Février 2017
KENYA	4 – 6	150	Février 2017
LIBYE	4 à 7	161	Février 2017
SYRIE	3 à 6	283	Février 2017
TURKMENISTAN	5 à 7	298	Février 2017
TURQUIE	2 – 3 – 14 à 32	299 à 301	Février 2017

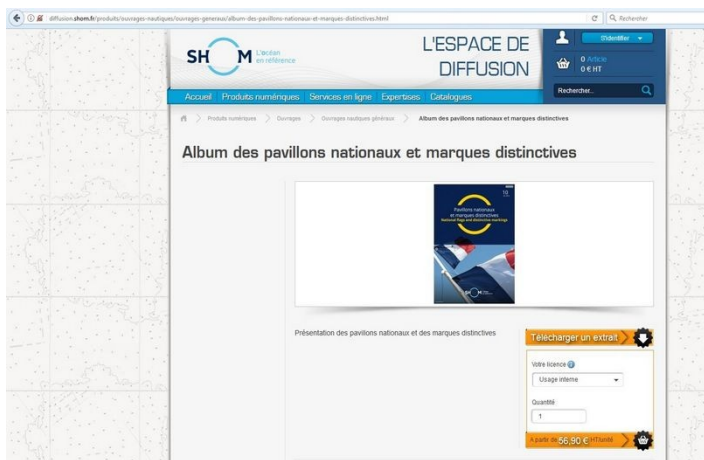
Regular additions and amendments keep the work up to date

The future

The year 2019 will be the bicentenary of the French Navy's flag publications. What will the new edition look like – a printed book of 340 pages, a CD-ROM, or a version on a USB stick?



SHOM website, homepage



Album des pavillons: digital edition, landing page