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**Od misji do protektoratu. Wietnam wobec francuskiej
ekspansji kolonialnej w drugiej połowie XIX wieku**

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Dissertation

**From the mission to the protectorate. Vietnam towards the
French colonial expansion in the second half of the 19th
century**

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INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a country situated on the eastern periphery of the Indochinese Peninsula, serving as a focal point within the Southeast Asian region. Its advantageous location provides Vietnam with efficient transportation routes, encompassing both land and water networks. Geographically, Vietnam acts as a pivotal gateway for deeper penetration into the mainland, facilitating connectivity with neighboring countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, China, as well as extending its reach to distant destinations like India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. This strategic positioning grants Vietnam inherent benefits from favorable natural conditions and abundant resources¹.

In the realm of politics, Vietnam entered a new developmental phase at the onset of the 19th century with the advent of the Nguyen Dynasty², marking the final feudal dynasty in Vietnamese history. Under the Nguyen rulers, a bureaucratic apparatus was instituted, characterized by authoritarianism and deep-rootedness. Throughout the annals of Vietnamese feudalism, there were instances of new dynasties emerging subsequent to the overthrow of foreign dominion or the replacement of deteriorating dynasties. However, the rise of the Nguyen Dynasty was a consequence of a war waged by waning feudal forces, bolstered by military assistance from external powers³, against the Tay Son⁴

¹ See Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 – 1896* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896), ed. Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Manh Dung and Le Thi Thu Hang, vol 6, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2017, p.34-35.

² The Nguyen Dynasty represented the final period of monarchy in Vietnamese history. Its inception occurred with the ascension of Nguyen Anh (Gia Long) to the imperial throne in 1802, while its conclusion transpired upon Bao Dai's abdication in 1945, encompassing a duration of 143 years. The Nguyen Dynasty constituted a significant epoch characterized by notable vicissitudes in Vietnam's historical narrative, most notably the French colonial invasion during the 19th century. (Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam Sử lược* (Vietnam History), Trung Bac Tan Van, first published in 1921. In the dissertation, I use this book published in 2010 of Times Publishing House, p.198).

³ The support provided by the French proved instrumental in bolstering the military might of the Nguyen forces, facilitating their ability to effectively counter the Tay Son movement. As noted by historian Tran Trong Kim, "Consequently, the power of the Nguyen rulers grew stronger day by day, with a steady influx of capable generals and troops, ample food supplies, and skilled soldiers. The campaign against the Tay Son forces became increasingly assured of success". (Tran Trong Kim, 2010, *op.cit.*, p.151-152, p.163).

⁴ Tay Son Dynasty (1778-1802) is used to call the dynasty of three brothers Nguyen Nhac, Nguyen Lu and Nguyen Hue. In 1778, after defeating Nguyen Phuc Thuan and Nguyen Phuc Duong, Nguyen Nhac proclaimed himself king, created the Tay Son dynasty, and established the capital in Quy Nhon. Nguyen Nhac

movement an uprising advocating for the rights of the people and the nation. Following its restoration, the Nguyen Dynasty established a governing regime through a specialized autocratic state structure, openly opposing societal forces and dissenting factions⁵. At the central administration level, Gia Long⁶ and Minh Mang⁷ upheld the organizational framework of the preceding dynasty. The Nguyen rulers erected a system of rule employing exceedingly harsh and barbaric punitive measures reminiscent of the medieval era, consolidating all authority within the monarchy's grasp⁸.

In the realm of financial economy, during the Nguyen dynasty, there was a gradual decline in the state's ownership of agricultural land, while the issue of landlords encroaching upon land became increasingly severe⁹. This phenomenon led to a heightened sense

appointed Nguyen Lu as command and Nguyen Hue as general. In 1788, Nguyen Nhac ceded the throne to his younger brother, Nguyen Hue, ie King Quang Trung. Quang Trung ruled the dynasty until 1802 when he was defeated by Nguyen Anh. (Phan Khoang, *Việt sử xứ Đàng Trong* (Vietnamese history of Dang Trong), Literature Publishing House, 2011, p.511).

⁵ Tran Trong Kim, 2010, *op.cit*, p.198 and Truong Huu Quynh, *Đại cương lịch sử Việt Nam từ thời Nguyên thủy đến năm 1858*, (History of Vietnam), ed. Dai Doan Phan, Canh Minh Nguyen, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, volume 1, 1998, p.438-440.

⁶ Gia Long (1762–1820), also known as Nguyen Phuc Anh, and commonly referred to as Nguyen Anh (阮暎), was a prominent Vietnamese political figure and military strategist. He played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty, which marked the culmination of feudal rule in Vietnamese history. Ascending to the throne in 1802, he held the position of monarch until his passing in 1820, effectively shaping the political landscape of Vietnam during his reign. Gia Long's leadership and governance left a lasting impact on the country's trajectory and set the stage for subsequent historical developments. (Dang Viet Thuy, Dang Thanh Trung, *54 vị Hoàng đế Việt Nam* (54 Emperors of Vietnam, Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 2008, p. 277 and Board of Directors of the Nguyen Phuc family, *Nguyễn Phúc Tộc thế phả* (Nguyen Phuc family annals), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, Hue, 1995, p.12).

⁷ Minh Mang (1791–1841), alternatively referred to as Minh Menh, ascended as the second emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, assuming reign from 1820 until his demise. Regarded as the epitome of success within the Nguyen Dynasty, Minh Mang's tenure epitomized an era of remarkable potency and influence, signifying the culmination of feudal governance in Vietnamese history. Commencing at the tender age of nine in 1800, Prince Dam (later known as Minh Mang) embarked on a path intertwined with his father, King Gia Long, partaking in battles and military expeditions. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol I, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.410, p.626).

⁸ Truong Huu Quynh, 1998, *op.cit*, p.438-440.

⁹ Vu Huy Phuc, *Tìm hiểu chế độ ruộng đất Việt Nam nửa đầu thế kỷ XIX* (Understanding Vietnam's land regime in the first half of the nineteenth century), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1979, p.126.

of concern within the Hue court regarding the prevalence of corrupt practices and embezzlement¹⁰. Despite being cognizant of these issues, the court found itself compelled to feign ignorance due to the overwhelming influence wielded by certain factions. With the absence of available public lands for bestowing upon officials as a means of social elevation, and the increased need for financial resources, the Nguyen dynasty resorted to resorting to exploitative measures and manipulating tactics to extract wealth from the populace¹¹. Consequently, due to the immense burden imposed upon them, numerous peasants were compelled to abandon their villages¹². A French observer once astutely remarked: "The general populace is subjected to unimaginable suffering, as the king and his officials engage in egregious exploitation"¹³.

In terms of foreign trade, the closed – door policy implemented during the Nguyen dynasty resulted in Vietnam's isolation from the international community, particularly Western nations. While limited trade interactions were maintained with neighboring countries such as China, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia through diplomatic envoys and maritime exchanges for essential commodities, research and promotion of foreign commerce were largely prohibited¹⁴. Notably, Western merchant vessels were heavily restricted from accessing Vietnamese waters, with exceptions made only for French ships¹⁵. Importation of goods was strictly regulated, allowing the court to selectively permit items deemed necessary for military purposes, such as lead, iron, and sulfur for ammunition production. Conversely, the export of goods was heavily controlled, with foreign nationals prohibited from purchasing silk and rice, resulting in a decline in commer-

¹⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXI, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1969, p.158.

¹¹ "King Gia Long employed a variety of methods to exert financial pressure on the population, leading to widespread grievances characterized by heightened injustices and abuses that surpassed even the tumultuous Tay Son era. Particularly noteworthy was the tripling of taxes and forced labor, which imposed an increasingly burdensome burden on the people". (Truong Huu Quynh, 1998, *op.cit*, p.456-457).

¹² In Hai Duong province, during a specific year, an unsettling trend of population displacement occurred, resulting in the abandonment of 108 villages and hamlets out of a total of 13 districts. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXI, 1969, *op.cit*, p.58).

¹³ J. Chesneaux, *Contribution à l'histoire de la nation Vietnamiennne*, Édition sociale, Paris, 1955, p.85.

¹⁴ J. Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p.271.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.275.

cial activities. Consequently, both the industrial and commercial sectors experienced stagnation, leading to scarcity of goods, impoverished living conditions, and constrained purchasing power among the general population. The Nguyen dynasty struggled to foster economic expansion and harness the productive capacities of its people in the nation-building endeavor¹⁶.

In the social realm, the Nguyen dynasty operated under a system of autocracy, which relied on a hierarchical structure comprising the landlord class and influential officials, thus eliciting animosity from the general population. The Nguyen monarchs employed stringent legal measures, maintained a large military presence, and exploited the conservative elements of Confucianism as tools to subjugate the people, thereby reinforcing the rigid and oppressive nature of the feudal order. Consequently, deep-seated social contradictions that existed from the outset became increasingly pronounced and resolute¹⁷. Vietnamese society, predominantly reliant on an agricultural economy, remained in a stage of economic subsistence, characterized by a predominantly rural landscape and communal village life¹⁸.

In the realm of religion, faith and religious practices, major religious traditions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Catholicism continued to exert influence on the spiritual and cultural lives of the Vietnamese people. During the 19th century, the Nguyen dynasty made deliberate efforts to reinforce the dominant position of Confucianism by imposing limitations on the construction of Buddhist pagodas and temples, prohibiting the adherence to Catholicism, and establishing churches¹⁹. Under the reign of Gia Long, Catholic priests enjoyed a degree of freedom, but during the reign of Minh Mang, the imperial court displayed an increasingly cool disposition towards France. The closure of the French consulate in Hue in 1829²⁰ and the heightened restrictions on Catholicism reflected a hardening stance. This was supported by a significant segment of the populace, scholars, and officials who regarded Catholicism as a religious path that “lacked veneration for ancestral spirits and departed from the reverence of ancestors. Moreover, it was

¹⁶ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các triều vua nhà Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society under the Nguyen Dynasty kings), Literary Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, p.214.

¹⁷ Dao Duy Anh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ nguồn gốc đến thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from its origin to the 19th century), Culture and Information Publishing House, 2002, p.454-455.

¹⁸ Nguyen The Anh, 2008, *op.cit*, p.45.

¹⁹ Dang Viet Thuy, Dang Thanh Trung, *op.cit*, p.308.

²⁰ Nguyen The Anh, 2008, *op.cit*, p.18.

seen as contrary to the true spiritual path, encompassing practices that deviated from ethical norms, threatened cultural values, and transgressed legal boundaries”²¹.

After more than 200 years of civil strife, Vietnam at the beginning of the 19th century was a country with a comprehensive territory, a unified market, currency, and numerous opportunities for economic development and the expansion of its economy, regional and global diplomatic relations, becoming a prosperous country. However, as time went on, the Nguyen Dynasty followed a downward trend, displaying signs of decline, weakness, and a clear regressive and reactionary nature of the ruling feudal class²².

By the mid-19th century, it can be observed that “the entire Southeast Asian region had come under the sway of Western colonial powers, signifying a new era of colonial domination. Major colonial powers such as Britain, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and the United States were actively asserting their imperial presence and delineating the map of Southeast Asia according to their own interests and ambitions”²³. In Vietnam, despite some developmental advancements during the final feudal dynasty, the prevailing socio-political system proved incapable of effectively addressing the looming crisis precipitated by the encroaching forces of colonialism²⁴.

Concerning French capitalism, the yearning for territorial control in the Far East by the French ruling elite was exemplified through the assertive statement made by Prime Minister Guizot²⁵ in 1843: “We must secure two essentials in the Far East: a permanent naval stronghold in the waters of China and a resilient colony adjacent to China... France cannot afford to be absent from such a vast global sphere, especially when other European

²¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol III, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.415.

²² Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Vietnam, Histoire et civilisation*, Paris, 1955, p.217-235.

²³ M. F. S. Heidhues, *Lịch sử phát triển Đông Nam Á* (Development History of Southeast Asia), translated by Kim Oanh Huynh, Viem Phuong Pham, Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p.143.

²⁴ Do Quang Hung, “Việt Nam nửa cuối thế kỷ XIX (1858 – 1896)” (Vietnam in the second half of the nineteenth century (1858 – 1896)), in: *Tiến trình lịch sử Việt Nam* (Vietnam's historical progress), Educational Publishing House, Hanoi, p.203, p.206-207.

²⁵ François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787 – 1874) was a French historian, orator, and statesman. Guizot was a dominant figure in French politics prior to the Revolution of 1848 (G. Raymond, *Historical Dictionary of France*. Scarecrow Press, 2008, p.179). He was a supporter of a representative system limited by property qualifications. His motto is associated with this - *Get rich!* (K. Chojnicka, H. Olszewski, *Historia doktryn politycznych i prawnych*. Podręcznik akademicki, Ars boni et aequi, Poznań 2004, p.208-209).

nations have already established their presence there"²⁶. The Treaty of Versailles (1787), signed on November 28, served as an agreement between Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine²⁷, acting on behalf of Nguyen Anh, and Count Montmorin²⁸. While the French government did not promptly execute the treaty upon its signing, it laid the foundation for subsequent administrations to pursue the objective of colonizing Vietnam²⁹.

In 1812, Napoleon I initiated a reassessment of the Treaty of Versailles, seeking pretexts for intervention and exerting pressure on the Nguyen dynasty to enforce provisions that would benefit France³⁰. This attempt aimed to revive an agreement that had been officially terminated by the Vietnamese court and even disregarded by Emperor Gia Long himself. Subsequently, in 1817, the French government dispatched a naval vessel

²⁶ Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.671.

²⁷ Pierre Joseph Georges Pigneau de Behaine, often referred to as Pigneau de Behaine (1741 - 1799), was a French Catholic priest who played a significant role in assisting Nguyen Anh in reclaiming political authority from the Tay Son dynasty during the late 18th century. He held the esteemed position of Bishop Representative of the Dang Trong Diocese, bearing the title of Adran, which subsequently led to his historical identification as Bishop Adran. Within Vietnamese historical accounts, he is recognized by the name Ba Da Loc (百多祿). (Pham Quynh, *Hành trình nhật ký: mười ngày ở Huế, một tháng ở Nam Kỳ, Pháp du hành trình nhật ký*. (Diary journey: ten days in Hue, one month in Cochinchina, France. Diary journey), Paris: Y Viet, 1997, p.391).

²⁸ The Count de Montmorin de Saint Herem (1745 - 1792) was a notable French statesman who held key political positions during the era of King Louis XVI. He served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Navy of France, playing a significant role in the diplomatic and maritime affairs of the nation. His tenure encompassed a critical period marked by significant domestic and international challenges. (See A. Bardoux, *Pauline de Montmorin, comtesse de Beaumont: Études sur la fin du XVIIIème siècle*, Paris, 1884, p.42).

²⁹ Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.666-667.

³⁰ As an example, Nguyen Anh consented to the concession of the coastal gateway of Da Nang and the Con Lon archipelago to France, thereby granting the French the privilege of engaging in unrestricted trade and assuming control over foreign commercial activities within Vietnam. (See Ta Chi Dai Truong, *Lịch Sử Nội Chiến ở Việt Nam từ 1771 đến 1802* (History of the Civil War in Vietnam from 1771 to 1802), Saigon: Viet Huong, 1973, p.183), Each year, a ship resembling the French aid vessel will be consigned to France, along with the provision of essential foodstuffs and crucial military provisions, in the event that France engages in a conflict with another nation in the Far East region. (See Nguyen Khac Thuan, *Đại cương lịch sử cổ trung đại Việt Nam* (Outline of ancient and medieval history of Vietnam), Education Publishing House, 2005, p.299).

to Dai Nam (Vietnam) with the purpose of enforcing the clauses pertaining to the concession of Da Nang and Con Lon Island. In response, King Gia Long instructed his officials to assert that since France had previously failed to fulfill those obligations, they were no longer considered valid³¹. Despite this, numerous French ships continued to arrive in Vietnam, presenting their demands. When faced with the steadfast stance of the Hue court, certain French envoys reacted with condescension, prompting them to urge the French government to expedite the occupation of Vietnam³².

The Vietnam Research Committee³³ assesses the immense benefits of Cochinchina, stating, "Cochinchina adequately meets all these requirements, if not in terms of consumption, then certainly in terms of production"³⁴. They consider it to be a region abundant in cotton, silk, sugar, rice, and timber resources for construction purposes. Addition-

³¹ Do Bang, *Hệ thống phòng thủ miền Trung dưới triều Nguyễn* (Central defense system under the Nguyen Dynasty), 2011, Culture and Information Publishing House, p.32.

³² National Archives Center 1 and Dong Thap Historical Science Association, *Cuộc kháng chiến chống Pháp ở Nam Kỳ và Đồng Tháp qua Châu bản triều Nguyễn* (The Resistance War against the French in Cochinchina and Dong Thap through Vermilion Records of the Nguyen Dynasty, Hanoi Publishing House, 2019, p.13.

³³ According to the proposal put forth by Évariste Régis Huc, the French royal government established the Commission for the Study of Vietnam (La Commission de la Cochinchine) on the 22nd of April, 1857. This commission was formed with the purpose of conducting a thorough investigation and examination of the Vietnam issue. Its establishment signified the official recognition and acknowledgment by the French authorities of the importance and complexity of the matters concerning Vietnam. The commission was tasked with studying various aspects related to Vietnam, including its history, culture, economy, geography, and political situation. Its findings and recommendations would later play a significant role in shaping French policies and actions towards Vietnam. (See Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.88).

Évariste Régis Huc (1813-1860) was a French missionary. He traveled to many places in China, Mongolia, and Tibet both to evangelize and to serve his travel interests. His passages became famous when he compiled and published a book: "Souvenirs d'un Voyage dans la Tartarie, le Tibet, et la Chine lines les Années 1844, 1845, et 1846" (published in Paris in 1850). By about 1852, he returned home and actively urged Napoleon III to launch offensive operations in Vietnam. (According to T. Stanley, "The Diplomacy of Imperialism: France and Spain in Cochinchina, 1858-1863", *The Journal of Modern History* 12(3): 334-356, 1940).

³⁴ Cao Huy Thuan, translated by Nguyen Thuan, *Giáo sĩ thừa sai và chính sách thuộc địa của Pháp tại Việt Nam (1857 – 1914) Les missionnaires et la politique coloniale française au Viet Nam (1857 - 1914)*, Hong Duc Publishing House, 2016, p.62.

ally, Cochinchina boasts a significant quantity of high-quality and affordable rice. Its infrastructure is well-developed, with robust water and land transportation systems, as well as secure harbors and ports. The committee contemplates the complete occupation of Vietnam rather than a mere treaty, simultaneously affirming that the British possess no rights in Vietnam, and that France has no legitimate concerns with the British regarding Vietnamese affairs³⁵. The unsuccessful utilization of “gunboat diplomacy” as a means to influence Vietnam compels French political, bourgeois, and clerical factions to decide upon employing military force to establish dominance over the Kingdom of Annam. Captain Charles Gosselin in the *L'Empire d'Annam* wrote as follows: “Our compatriots, due to a lack of historical knowledge, have believed that French intervention in Annam was solely to protect the clergy. In fact, the clergy were merely a pretext for our actions against Annam. The loss of India in the 18th century, and the rapid expansion of the British into the Far East, our perpetual rival, necessitated our foothold in the Chinese seas to avoid inferiority and subjugation. Annam presented us with an opportunity, and the massacre of French individuals who claimed to be clergymen provided us with a pretext to quickly seize it”³⁶.

Thus, the fundamental question arises: In the face of the colonial ambitions and invasion designs of the French colonizers, characterized by the specific conditions prevailing in Vietnam during the first half of the 19th century, how did the Nguyen Dynasty court and the Vietnamese populace respond to this invasive war? In truth, this is a subject matter that has received limited attention and comprehensive examination from both Vietnamese and foreign historians. Consequently, it represents a crucial aspect of inquiry that I seek to explore and elucidate within the framework of my dissertation.

To carry out the dissertation, I mainly rely on historical sources, documents compiled and issued by the contemporary feudal state³⁷ that have been translated by scientific

³⁵ E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam de 1851 à 1870*, t.3. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, p.79.

³⁶ C. Gosselin., *L'Empire d' Annam*, Perrin, Paris, 1904, p.125.

³⁷ From the late 18th century to the first half of the 19th century, historiography in Vietnam underwent remarkable advancements. A multitude of historical chronicles, commissioned by both governmental and private entities, were compiled and published during this period. Notably, in 1820, Emperor Minh Mang established the National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty, entrusted with the important task of collecting ancient historical manuscripts, reprinting chronicles of previous dynasties, and undertaking the composition of new historical works. This initiative aimed to preserve and disseminate historical knowledge,

agencies in the past time such as: *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South)³⁸, *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu*³⁹, *Khâm định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ* (Repertoire of Institutions and Regulations)⁴⁰, *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương*

reinforcing the significance of historical records in shaping the collective memory and cultural identity of Vietnam. The establishment of the National Historical Bureau signified a notable institutional commitment to the scholarly investigation and documentation of Vietnam's historical legacy during this era. (See Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.45).

³⁸ *Đại Nam thực lục* (Veritable Records of the Great South) represents a significant historical work in Vietnam, providing a comprehensive annalistic account of the Nguyen Lords and Nguyen Emperors' dynasties. Consisting of 584 volumes, it is primarily written in classical Chinese script and meticulously records historical events until 1925, excluding the reign of Emperor Bao Dai. (According to Hoang Anh Tuan, *Silk for Silver: Dutch-Vietnamese Relations, 1637-1700*, Leiden ; Brill, 2007, p.276).

In terms of authenticity, Emperor Tu Duc emphasized “the necessity of adhering to truthfulness in recording events, prioritizing a chronological framework to ensure the production of reliable historical records”. This assertion underscores the importance placed on the accuracy and integrity of the *Đại Nam thực lục* as a vital historical source for understanding the period of the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnam. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.150).

³⁹ The *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu* (Important documents on the Nguyen Dynasty, recording many ups and downs of history, especially the invasion of the French in the mid-19th century) (National Dynastic Essential Compilation) serves as a remarkable historical endeavor undertaken by the Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). It encompasses a comprehensive depiction, spanning from the reign of Emperor Gia Long to Emperor Dong Khanh, with a distinct emphasis on concise presentation rather than in-depth analysis or extensive commentary. This meticulous work adopts a succinct approach, ensuring accuracy without unnecessary embellishment. By offering a panoramic and impartial portrayal, the *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu* encapsulates the economic, political, cultural, and military facets of Vietnam over the course of more than a century. Within the context of Nguyen dynasty's state-building efforts, this invaluable historical compilation holds profound significance. (Thư viện Tổng hợp tỉnh Thừa Thiên Huế (Thừa Thiên Huế Provincial General Library) : <https://thuvien.thua-thienhue.gov.vn/?gd=27&cn=457&tc=34687#:~:text=Qu%E1%BB%91c%20tri%E1%BB%81u%20ch%C3%A1nh%20bi%C3%AAn%20to%C3%A1t%20y%E1%BA%BFu%20l%C3%A0%20m%E1%BB%99t%20b%E1%BB%A9c%20tranh,tri%E1%BB%81u%20%C4%91%E1%BA%A1i%20c%E1%BB%A7a%20nh%C3%A0%20Nguy%E1%BB%85n>). (accessed July 15, 2023).

⁴⁰ *Khâm định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ* (Repertoire of Institutions and Regulations) is a remarkable compilation undertaken during the Nguyen dynasty. This monumental work meticulously records protocols, regulations, and pertinent documents pertaining to the organizational structure and functioning of a dynasty. Compiled by the internal court of the Nguyen dynasty in the mid-19th century, it stands as a paramount

historical endeavor within Vietnam's extensive collection of ancient Chinese-scripted literary works. The arduous process of compiling this substantial volume spanned over 12 years (1843-1855).

Regarding its content, the Repertoire of Institutions and Regulations encompasses an extensive corpus of accurate knowledge and historical materials, notably focusing on the intricate design and operation of Vietnam's state apparatus during the Nguyen dynasty. Comprising 262 volumes with over 8,000 manuscript pages, its original texts were translated from the early 1960s and subsequently subjected to two rounds of meticulous editorial revisions. The publication of this influential work was a collaborative effort between the Institute of Historical Research and Thuan Hoa Publishing House, resulting in an eight-volume scholarly edition. (*Từ điển Bách khoa Việt Nam* (Encyclopedia of Vietnam), ed. by. Trung tâm biên soạn Từ điển Bách khoa Việt Nam (Vietnam Encyclopedia Compilation Center), vol I, Hanoi 1995, p.282).

*mục*⁴¹, *Châu bản triều Nguyễn* (Vermilion Records of the Nguyen Dynasty)⁴², *Châu bản triều Tự Đức* (Vermilion Records of the reign of King Tu Duc)⁴³, *Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu*

⁴¹ *Khâm định Việt sử Thông giám cương mục* (Imperially Commissioned Itemized Summaries of the Comprehensive Mirror of Vietnamese History) represents a significant historical work within the Nguyen dynasty, composed in the vernacular language. The compilation process was carried out by the National Historical Bureau from approximately 1856 to 1884 under the auspices of Emperor Tu Duc, specifically in his eighth year of reign (1856). This monumental undertaking, Imperially Commissioned Itemized Summaries of the Comprehensive Mirror of Vietnamese History, not only assimilated the accomplishments of earlier historians but also made unique and valuable contributions to the field of historical studies. Modern scholars recognize its pivotal role as an important foundation for investigating diverse facets of Vietnamese history. (Ngo Duc Tho editor, Nguyen Thuy Nga, Vu Lan Anh, Nguyen Duc Toan, *Thư mục sách Hán Nôm ở Thư viện Quốc gia* (Bibliography of Han Nom books at the National Library), Hanoi: Ministry of Culture and Information - National Library, 2002, p.193).

⁴² *Châu bản triều Nguyễn* (Vermilion Records of the Nguyen Dynasty) is a significant collection of administrative documents compiled during the Nguyen dynasty, spanning from the reign of Emperor Gia Long (1802) to the abdication of Emperor Bao Dai (1945). It comprises a diverse range of official texts, including decrees, proclamations, imperial directives, memoranda, reports, delegations, assignments, and correspondence, personally endorsed or annotated by the monarch using red ink. These records pertain to various aspects of governance, such as political affairs, military matters, foreign relations, economic activities, cultural developments, and social issues. Additionally, alongside the annotated documents, the collection also includes royal edicts issued directly by the emperor and international treaties and agreements. Preserved until today, the Vermilion Records of the Nguyen Dynasty consists of 773 original volumes, comprising approximately 200,000 pages of material from 11 of the 13 Nguyen emperors, including Gia Long, Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, Tu Duc, Kien Phuc, Ham Nghi, Dong Khanh, Thanh Thai, Duy Tan, Khai Dinh, and Bao Dai.

In terms of content, the Vermilion Records serves as the administrative backbone of the Nguyen dynasty, offering comprehensive insights into the history, economic activities, social structure, and cultural dynamics of Vietnam during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. It provides valuable information on political governance, military strategies, diplomatic interactions, economic policies, cultural expressions, educational systems, and healthcare practices. Recognized for its exceptional qualities, including its uniqueness, authenticity, and regional and international significance, the Vermilion Records of the Nguyen Dynasty was designated by UNESCO as part of the Memory of the World Programme for the Asia-Pacific region in 2014. Subsequently, in 2017, it received further recognition as a World Documentary Heritage. (Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia I – National Archives Centre N.1 - <https://archives.org.vn/chau-ban-trieu-nguyen/gioi-thieu.htm>). (accessed on July 16, 2023).

⁴³ Quốc sử quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Châu bản triều Tự Đức (1848-1883)* (Vermilion Records of the reign of King Tu Duc (1848 – 1883)), Edited by Vũ Thanh Hằng, Trà Ngọc Anh, and Tạ Quang Phát, Literary Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003.

(Essential Writings of Emperor Minh Mệnh)⁴⁴, *Đồng Khánh Khải Định chính yếu* (Essential Writings of Emperors Đồng Khánh and Khải Định)⁴⁵, *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies)⁴⁶... This is the source of documents by the Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty) (the only official historical compilation agency in Vietnam from 1821 to 1945). It is the main reference source for later works on the history of the Nguyen Dynasty, such as Tran Trong Kim's *A Brief History of Vietnam*.

⁴⁴ *Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu* (Essential Writings of Emperor Minh Mệnh) is a substantial literary work meticulously compiled by the National Historical Bureau of the Nguyen dynasty. Comprising 25 volumes organized into 22 sections, it serves as a comprehensive record of essential matters during the reign of Emperor Minh Menh. This collection is characterized by its diverse content, encompassing various aspects of governance and administration, including court affairs, legislative enactments, ceremonial customs, diplomatic relations, public security, land development, and urgent reforms. (According to *Từ điển Bách khoa Việt Nam* (Encyclopedia of Vietnam), *op.cit*, p.320. and *Dictionnaire Sino-Vietnamien* (簡要漢越詞典 – *Giản yếu Hán Việt từ điển*), ed. by. Dao Duy Anh, Publishing House Information Culture, 2005, p.182).

⁴⁵ This compilation is regarded as the final authoritative documentation produced by the National Historical Bureau of the Nguyen dynasty, serving to complete its comprehensive historical account. It represents an essential supplement that chronicles the subsequent historical events following the publication of the "*Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục*" and the "*Đại Nam thực lục*". The section dedicated to Dong Khanh spans 6 volumes, meticulously compiled from 1885 to 1888, while the Khai Dinh section comprises 10 volumes written between 1922 and 1923. By encompassing a wide range of topics such as court activities, legislation, ceremonial rituals, diplomatic affairs, social order, territorial expansion, and urgent reforms, this compilation serves as an invaluable addition to the historical scholarship of the Nguyen dynasty. (See Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đồng Khánh Khải Định chính yếu* (Essential Writings of Emperors Đồng Khánh and Khải Định), Nguyen Van Nguyen translated, Times Publishing House, 2010, p.5).

⁴⁶ *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies) is a significant historical work that documents the lineage and achievements of individuals within the Nguyen dynasty. Compiled by the National Historical Bureau during the Nguyen dynasty, this extensive collection is written in classical Chinese script. The Imperial biographies consists of 87 volumes and encompasses around 2,000 manuscript pages. Its primary purpose is to provide a comprehensive account of notable figures, including noble officials, exceptional women, revered monks, and others who contributed to the historical fabric of the era. Divided into two main sections, the *Tiền biên* (Preceding Compilation) and *Chính biên* (Main Compilation), this work serves as an invaluable resource for understanding the genealogy and achievements within the Nguyen dynasty. (Việt sử (Vietnamese history): <https://vietsu.org/dai-nam-liet-truyen-tap-2-4/>) (accessed on July 18, 2023) and *Hán Việt từ điển* (Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary), ed. by. Nguyen Van Khon, Khai Tri Publishing House, Hanoi 1960, p.114).

In the period before 1945, there were articles and a number of research works on the history of the French colonial period quite rich and diverse by Vietnamese and foreign authors such as: Charles Gosselin⁴⁷, Jean Koffler⁴⁸, Paul Doumer⁴⁹, Charles Maybon⁵⁰, Salles⁵¹, Prosper Cultru⁵², Schreiner A⁵³, Chaigneau. J. B⁵⁴, Coulet. G⁵⁵, Tran Trong Kim⁵⁶... The aforementioned works serve as a comprehensive historical record or, in some cases, focus on particular aspects of Vietnam's socio-economic characteristics and historical events over a prolonged period. Therefore, the machinations of the French colonialists, who sought to invade Vietnam under the guise of a missionary effort, as well as the Nguyen Dynasty's reactions to the invasion, are only briefly and summarily mentioned. Nevertheless, these works afford us diverse observations and evaluations concerning the French colonialists' scheme and the Nguyen Dynasty's responses. While these specific works may at times digress or even contradict one another, they provide valuable source material that we can refer to and exploit for scholarly purposes.

Furthermore, I draw upon additional works in the course of the dissertation, namely: *Sự hiện diện tài chính và kinh tế của Pháp ở Đông Dương (1859 – 1930)* by Jean-Pierre Aumiphin⁵⁷; *Thủ đoạn bóc lột của thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam* (Exploitation tricks of the French colonialists in Vietnam)⁵⁸ by Nguyen Khac Dam; *Thực trạng nông dân Việt Nam*

⁴⁷ C. Gosselin, *op.cit.*

⁴⁸ J. Koffler, "Description historique de la Cochinchine", *Revue Indochinoise* 15 (1911): 460.

⁴⁹ P. Doumer, *Situation de l'Indochine*, Hanoi, 1902 and P. Doumer, *L'Indochine française*, Paris, 1905.

⁵⁰ B. M. Charles, *Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam*, Paris: Plon, 1919.

⁵¹ A. Salles, *Le mémoire sur la Cochinchine de J. B. Chaigneau*. BAVH, 1923, N.2.

⁵² P. Cultru, *Histoire de la Cochinchine française des origines à 1883*, Augustin Challamen, 1910.

⁵³ A. Schreiner, *Abrégé d'Histoire d'Annam* (Annam sử lược), Saigon, 1906.

⁵⁴ J. B. Chaigneau, *Notice sur la Cochinchine*, BAVH, (4), p.1-21, 1926.

⁵⁵ G. Coulet, *Les sociétés secrètes en terre d'Annam*, Saigon, 1926.

⁵⁶ Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam Sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Trung Bac Tan Van, first published in 1921. In the dissertation, I use this book published in 2010 of Times Publishing House.

⁵⁷ J. P. Aumiphin, *Sự hiện diện tài chính và kinh tế của Pháp ở Đông Dương (1859 – 1939)* (La presance Financière et Economique française en Indochime (1859 – 1939)), translated by Dinh Xuan Lam, Vietnamese Historical Science Association, Hanoi, 1994.

⁵⁸ Nguyen Khac Dam, *Thủ đoạn bóc lột của thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam* (Exploitation tricks of the French colonialists in Vietnam), Van Su Dia Publishing House, 1957.

dưới thời Pháp thuộc (The reality of Vietnamese farmers under the French colonial period)⁵⁹ of Pham Cao Duong, *Việt Nam dưới thời Pháp đô hộ* (Vietnam under the French domination)⁶⁰ of Nguyen The Anh is also a useful reference source for me in the dissertation. These works represent valuable reference sources for me, providing insight into the characteristics of Vietnamese society towards the exploitation and protectorate policy of the French colonialists, as well as the hardships endured by the Vietnamese populace during the period of French invasion and protectorate.

Pertaining to the subject at hand, it is pertinent to acknowledge the source of primary documents that comprise records, diaries, and reports authored by foreign missionaries, merchants, and soldiers who visited Vietnam in the past. Notable examples include: *Histoire moderne du pays d'Annam (1592-1820)* by Charles B Maybon (published in Paris 1920), *Histoire of a Voyage to the China sea* by John White⁶¹ provides some very useful information about the French colonialist's plot and plan to invade Indochina. Many interesting details on the subject of research can be found in the *Histoire de L'expédition de Cochinchine en 1861* (translated to Vietnamese in 2008, Oriental Publishing House) by Léopold Pallu and *Français at Annamites Partenaires ou ennemis?* (translated to Vietnamese *Người Pháp và người An-nam: bạn hay thù? - French and Annamese - friend or enemy?*, 2006) by Philippe Devillers.

Regarding the source of materials are the journals and magazines *Revue Indochinoise* (RI), *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême – Orient* (BEFEO), *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* (BAVH), some foreign authors have provided useful information in many aspects, including the developments of the French colonial expedition in Indochina in particular and the overview of Vietnam towards the French colonial invasion in general in their records. For example: *Vietnam in the nineteenth century* through the memoirs of Edward Brown and Truong Vinh Ky (translation of Truong Ngoc Phu, Hue Research Journal, volume 2/2001); *Hue in the years 1876 - 1877 - The diary of the journey* of J.L. Dutreuil De Rhins (Buu Y translation, Hue Research Journal, volume 5/2003)... In recent years, articles in the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* (BAVH) have been translated and

⁵⁹ Pham Cao Duong, *Thực trạng nông dân Việt Nam dưới thời Pháp thuộc* (The reality of Vietnamese farmers under the French colonial period), Khai Tri Publishing House, 1967.

⁶⁰ Nguyen The Anh, *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ* (Vietnam under French domination), Saigon: Lua Thieng Publishing House, 1970.

⁶¹ J. White, *A Voyage to Cochinchina*, London: Longman, 1824.

introduced, including many articles related to the Nguyen Dynasty in many fields such as: *Souvenirs de Hue* of General Jullien (BAVH, No2-1828); *Campagne Franco – Espagnole du Center – Annam prise de Tourane 1858 – 1859* (France-Spanish campaign in Central-Central America occupied Taurane in 1858-1859) by Albert Salle (BAVH, No3-1828), *Le mémoire sur la Cochinchine de Jean Baptiste Chaigneau* (Review on Cochinchine by Jean Baptiste Chaigneau) annotated and introduced by A. Salles (BAVH, No2-1923), the series *Les Européens qui ont vu le vieux Hue* (Europeans have seen ancient Hue, many authors, published many times), *Les Français au service de Gia Long* (French people serving Gia Long, published many times) by L. Cadière⁶². There are also articles by the author Delvaux R.P⁶³ and Imbert H⁶⁴... In general, these documents address a range of topics, including politics, economics, social conditions, and military affairs from multiple perspectives, thereby providing me with a trove of references that can be harnessed to support the dissertation research. In addition to the above articles, it is also necessary to mention the Journal of Historical Research (in Vietnam) in 1988 with an article by Truong Huu Quynh⁶⁵. In 1993, this magazine launched a journal: "History of the Nguyen Dynasty in the first half of the 19th century" number 6 (271), in which I used as material the article of researcher Nguyen Van Kiem⁶⁶, with the overarching content being the analysis of the Nguyen Dynasty's policies and reactions to religion, thereby explaining the cause of the loss of national independence of the Nguyen Dynasty.

One cannot overlook the significant contribution of Cao Huy Thuan's work titled: *Les missionnaires et la politique coloniale française au Viet Nam (1857-1914)*⁶⁷ trans-

⁶² L. M. Cadière, "Les Français au service de Gia Long: Nguyen Anh et la mission (documents in édits)", BAVH, (13), p. 1 – 50, 1926 and Cadière. L, "A la suite de l'amiral Chamer: Campagne de Chine et de Cochinchine (1860 – 1864), Lettres de Ph. Aude", BAVH. p.1-28, 1932.

⁶³ R. P. Delvaux, L'ambassade de Minh Mạng à Louis Philippe, BAVH, No.2, p. 257 – 264, 1928.

⁶⁴ H. Imbert, Le Séjour en Indochine de Ambassa de Lord Macartney, Revue Indochinoise, No. 5-6-7-8, p. 375-393-45-67, 1793.

⁶⁵ Truong Huu Quynh, *Mấy vấn đề quan hệ giữa việc truyền bá đạo Thiên chúa và chính trị ở Việt Nam thế kỷ XVII-XIX* (Some issues of relationship between the propagation of Christianity and politics in Vietnam in the 17th and 19th centuries), "Journal of Historical Studies", 1988, Vol. 238-239, no. 1-2, p. 33-36.

⁶⁶ Nguyen Van Kiem, *Chính sách tôn giáo của nhà Nguyễn nửa đầu thế kỷ XIX* (Religious policy of the Nguyen Dynasty in the first half of the 19th century), "Journal of Historical Studies", 1993, No. 6 (November - December), p.21 – 31.

⁶⁷ Cao Huy Thuan, *op.cit.*

lated by Nguyen Thuan. This insightful and comprehensive study sheds light on the policies and religious agendas of the French government and its missionary clergy. I emphasize the role and interference of Catholic missionaries in Vietnamese politics, delving into the progression of the French colonial war and expansion. The work is rich in primary sources, notably including confidential letters, directives, and telegrams exchanged between Vietnamese authorities and French officials. Through this work, I gain a precise understanding of the French colonial policies and their implementation, as well as the responses of the Nguyen dynasty towards Catholicism. This study makes an important contribution to the understanding of the impact of French colonization and Catholic missionary activity on Vietnamese history.

In the period from 1945 to 1975, besides articles published in journals and magazines such as: Archeology (Saigon), History - Geography (Saigon), Hue University... Historical works related to the topic should also be mentioned such as: *La geste Francaise en Indochine* by G. Taboulet⁶⁸, *Sự khủng hoảng của chế độ phong kiến nhà Nguyễn trước năm 1858* (The crisis of the Nguyen feudal regime before 1858) by Tran Van Giau⁶⁹, *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử* (History of Vietnam during the French colonial period) of Phan Khoang⁷⁰, *Kinh tế - xã hội Việt Nam dưới thời các vua triều Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society Viet Nam under the Nguyen kings)⁷¹ published in 1971 and *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ* (Vietnam under the French domination)⁷² of Nguyen The Anh, *Le Vietnam, Histoire et Civilization*, Minuit Publishing House, Paris, 1955 and *Histoire du Viet Nam des origines à 1858*, Publishing House Sud Est Asie, Paris, 1981 by Le Thanh Khoi⁷³; Phan

⁶⁸ G. Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, t.1-2. Paris: Éditeur Adrien Maisonneuve, 1955, 1956.

⁶⁹ Tran Van Giau, *Sự khủng hoảng của chế độ phong kiến nhà Nguyễn trước năm 1858* (The crisis of the Nguyen feudal regime before 1858), Hanoi: Culture, 1958.

⁷⁰ Phan Khoang, *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử* (History of Vietnam during the French colonial period), Khai Tri Publishing House, Saigon, 1960.

⁷¹ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế - xã hội Việt Nam dưới thời các vua triều Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society under the Nguyen kings), Literary Publishing House, Hanoi 2008.

⁷² Nguyen The Anh, *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ...*, *op.cit.*

⁷³ These two works of Prof. Le Thanh Khoi were translated into Vietnamese by Nha Nam Culture and Communication Company and World Publishing House and published in 2014 under the title: *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ nguồn gốc đến giữa thế kỷ XX* (Vietnamese history from its origins to the mid-twentieth century).

Phat Huon with *Việt Nam giáo sử*⁷⁴ (History of Vietnam), vol. IV by Pham Van Son⁷⁵, *82 năm Việt sử 1802 – 1884* (82 years of Vietnamese history 1802 – 1884) by author Nguyen Phu Duc⁷⁶ ... are scholarly works of considerable depth and scope, covering a wide range of topics from economics, politics, and military affairs to cultural and social issues. These works were researched by scholars with diverse perspectives and ideologies, yet through this, I was able to explore and contrast the sources used in these works to accurately determine the sources used in their own research.

Since 1975, Vietnam has been peaceful and unified, providing favorable conditions for scholars to study the common issues of the nation's history. Among the valuable contributions in this field are the research works of Nguyen Thua Hy - Do Bang - Nguyen Van Dang⁷⁷ which provide a specialized examination of urban areas in Vietnam during the Nguyen Dynasty. Similarly, the analysis by Luu Anh Ro⁷⁸ offers a reasonable and persuasive explanation for the causes of France's colonial invasion of Vietnam, as well as the formation of the Franco-Spanish alliance, the developments, and the outcomes of the French colonial warfare in the battlefield of Da Nang.

The 2005 publication "France - Indochine. Au coeur d'une rencontre" by J. Pichon⁷⁹ presents a compelling historical perspective for researchers, particularly regarding Vietnam's history. Pichon's unique and astute approach to each topic showcases his dedication to interpreting the "encounter" between France and Indochina spanning 200 years, from the early 17th century to the early 19th century. The collection also features articles by North American scholars on Vietnam's history during this period, curated in the edited volume by Anthony Reid and Tran Tuyet Nhung⁸⁰. Additionally, the most recent addition

⁷⁴ Phan Phat Huon, *Việt Nam giáo sử* (History of Vietnamese Catholicism), volume I, Saigon: Cứu Thế Tùng Thư, 1958.

⁷⁵ Pham Van Son, *Việt sử tân biên*, Vol. IV, Khai Tri Publishing House, 1961.

⁷⁶ Nguyen Phu Duc, *82 năm Việt sử 1802 – 1884* (82 years of Vietnamese history 1802-1884), Hue University of Education, 1963.

⁷⁷ Nguyen Thua Hy, Do Bang, Nguyen Van Dang, *Đô thị Việt Nam dưới thời Nguyễn* (Urban Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 1999.

⁷⁸ Luu Anh Ro, *Đà Nẵng buổi đầu đánh Pháp (1858 – 1860)* (Da Nang first fought the French (1858 – 1860)), Da Nang Publishing House, 2005.

⁷⁹ J. Pichon, *France – Indochine. Au coeur d'une rencontre*, Éditions du Jubilé, Asie, 2005.

⁸⁰ Tran Tuyet Nhung, A. Reid, *Vietnam – Borderless histories*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

to the collection is a compilation of articles by Nguyen The Anh in the book "Parcours d'un historien du Viet Nam" edited by Philippe Papin⁸¹.

Research on Vietnam in Poland is scarce; however, Wiesław Olszewski's "*Historia Wietnamu*" published by Ossolineum in 1991 in Wrocław, offers a comprehensive overview of Vietnam's rich and complex history. This scholarly work explores Vietnam's journey from ancient times to its development into a modern nation, covering key periods such as Ancient Vietnam, Medieval Vietnam, the Colonial Period, 20th Century Conflict, and Postwar Vietnam. In the colonial section, Olszewski details the economic, social, and political changes under French rule and the rise of nationalist movements. His detailed and analytical approach provides deep insights into the cultural, political, and economic factors shaping Vietnamese history, supported by extensive research from various sources. *Historia Wietnamu* is a valuable Polish source that I used for my research.

Over the years, a number of research works compiled by Vietnamese historians have been published, particularly in the form of common history. Notable examples include the works by authors from the Institute of Vietnamese History⁸² under the Center for Social Sciences and National Humanities, Textbook of Vietnamese History, volume 4 from 1858 to 1918, edited by Nguyen Ngoc Co⁸³, research work by Nguyen Quang Ngoc⁸⁴, a multi-volume set of Vietnamese History by the collective authors of the Institute History of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences published in 2017⁸⁵... The works compiled into books on the Nguyen Dynasty have also been published in recent years such as An Collection of research papers on the Nguyen Dynasty⁸⁶, History of the Nguyen Dynasty: A New Approach⁸⁷; as well as the researches of the authors Nguyen Phan

⁸¹ Nguyen The Anh, *Parcours d'un historien du Việt Nam*, ed. Philippe Papin, Les Indes savantes, Paris, 2008

⁸² Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858 – 1896* (History of Vietnam 1858 – 1896), ed. Pham Quang Trung, Nguyen Ngoc Co Social Science Publishing House, 2003.

⁸³ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit.*

⁸⁴ Nguyen Quang Ngoc (editor), *Tiến trình lịch sử Việt Nam* (Vietnam's historical progress), Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 2016.

⁸⁵ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit.*

⁸⁶ "Tuyển tập những bài nghiên cứu về triều Nguyễn" (A collection of research articles on the Nguyen Dynasty), Research and Development Journal, Hue, 1999.

⁸⁷ Phan Ngoc Lien, *Lịch sử triều Nguyễn – Một cách tiếp cận* (History of the Nguyen Dynasty – A New Approach), Hanoi National University of Education Publishing House, 2005.

Quang⁸⁸, Do Bang⁸⁹, Le Nguyen⁹⁰ ... Recently, contributing to Vietnamese sources, there are also translation works such as Emmanuel Poisson's⁹¹, which have provided noteworthy research perspectives and evocative insights to Vietnamese sources.

On the basis of works of common history or deep into each specific historical period of Vietnam, works on Catholic History were mainly written by priests such as Phan Phat Huon⁹², Hong Lam⁹³, Cao The Dung⁹⁴, Bui Duc Sinh⁹⁵, etc... compilation; followed by research by author Nguyen Van Kiem⁹⁶, Nguyen Quang Hung⁹⁷... After many years, *The history of Vietnamese Catholic development* (2 volumes, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008) by author Truong Ba Can has also been published, contributing to the study of Catholic history in Vietnam and the process of French penetration into Vietnam through christianity...

The study of France's missionary activities in Vietnam, as well as Vietnam during the period of French colonial invasion, has attracted the attention of researchers for many

⁸⁸ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Triều Nguyễn và xã hội Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX* (Nguyen Dynasty and Vietnamese society in the 19th century), in *Historical issues of the Nguyen Dynasty*, Past and Present Magazine, Saigon Cultural Publishing House, 2006.

⁸⁹ Do Bang, *Biến cố Kinh đô Huế và Phong trào Cần Vương* (Events of Hue Capital and Can Vuong movement), Tri Thuc Publishing House, 2017.

⁹⁰ Le Nguyen, *Xã hội Việt Nam thời Pháp thuộc* (Vietnamese society during the French colonial period), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005.

⁹¹ P. Emmanuel, *Quan và lại miền Bắc Việt Nam – Một bộ máy hành chính trước thử thách (1820 – 1918)* (Mandarins and subordinates in northern Viet Nam – A bureaucracy put to the test (1820-1918)), Dao Hung and Nguyen Van Su translated from the original French *Mandarins et subalternes au nord du Vietnam – Une bureaucratie à l'épreuve (1820-1918)*, Danang Publishing house, 2006.

⁹² Phan Phat Huon, *op.cit.*

⁹³ Hong Lam, *Lịch sử Thiên chúa giáo Việt Nam* (History of Christianity in Vietnam), Đại Việt Publishing House, Hue, 1943.

⁹⁴ Cao The Dung, *Việt Nam Công giáo sử tân biên (1533 – 2000)* (History of Catholicism in Vietnam (1533 – 2000)), Media of the Christians Published, 2003.

⁹⁵ Bui Duc Sinh, *Giáo hội Công giáo ở Việt Nam* (Catholic Church in Vietnam), vol. 1-2, Calgary, Canada, 1999.

⁹⁶ Nguyen Van Kiem, *Sự du nhập của đạo Thiên Chúa ở Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XVII đến thế kỷ XIX* (The introduction of Christianity into Vietnam from the 17th to the 19th centuries), Institute for Religious Studies, Vietnam Historical Science Association, 2001.

⁹⁷ Nguyen Quang Hung, *Công giáo Việt Nam thời kỳ triều Nguyễn (1802 – 1883)* (Vietnamese Catholic in the Nguyen Dynasty 1802-1883), Religious Publishing House, 2007.

years and has achieved significant accomplishments. However, there remain certain issues that need to be addressed in the research of the history of France-Vietnam relations during this period. These include the need for a systematic and chronological view of the French invasion of Vietnam, as well as the reactions of the Nguyen dynasty court and the Vietnamese people in each stage of this process. In addition, there are numerous other issues that require further investigation.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the process of French incursion into Vietnam through the lens of religion, as well as the Nguyen dynasty's reactions to Christianity, the opposition within the Nguyen dynasty court and Vietnamese society to French colonialism, are still largely unexplored topics. It is necessary to synthesize and address these issues comprehensively in the study of this historical period.

The dissertation aims to shed light on the Nguyen dynasty court's response and the Vietnamese people's reactions to the colonial invasions and expansionist policies of French colonialism. Notably, the dissertation provides an account of the court's gradual submission and the people's resistance movements, including those in Southern Vietnam, the events in Danang in 1858, the events in Hanoi in 1873 and 1883, and the Can Vuong movement. It is centered on an in-depth analysis of the conspiratorial and expansionist policies pursued by France in Vietnam during the latter half of the 19th century. Moreover, the dissertation delves into the colonial exploitation policies of France in Vietnam. In addition, it examines the content of the treaties and peace agreements concluded between France and Vietnam during the period of 1858-1897.

Regarding the scope of the dissertation, the topic ***“From the mission to the protectorate. Vietnam towards the French colonial expansion in the second half of the 19th century”*** (*Od misji do protektoratu. Wietnam wobec francuskiej ekspansji kolonialnej w drugiej polowie XIX wieku*) focuses on the period from 1858 to 1897. The year 1858 marks the beginning of France's military campaign in Vietnam, while 1897 marks the start of France's first phase of colonial exploitation under the governorship of Paul Doumer. This phase was marked by the French occupation of northern Vietnam, territorial disputes with China, border delineation, pacification campaigns, and the suppression of the Can Vuong movement.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the opposing reactions between the Nguyen Dynasty and the domestic Vietnamese populace. Within the societal framework, while the ruling elite advocated for conciliatory measures and acquiescence in response

to French incursions and the imposition of a protectorate regime on Vietnam, the Vietnamese people exhibited unwavering resistance against the benevolent policies of the Nguyen court and the colonial subjugation by France.

Within this historical context, the dissertation accentuates the indomitable spirit and patriotic fervor displayed by the Vietnamese people during the latter half of the 19th century. The enduring legacy of patriotism and the protracted struggle for national independence constitute invaluable cultural assets of the Vietnamese nation.

Moreover, this research endeavors to delve into the fundamental reasons underlying France's selection of Vietnam as the target for its colonial enterprise in Southeast Asia. By meticulously analyzing the contents of diverse treaties, this study aims to scrutinize the process of French aggression and annexation in Vietnam while unraveling the contributing factors that eroded the national sovereignty of the Nguyen dynasty.

Considering the above research objectives, in my dissertation, I find the answers to the questions: How did the French spread Christianity in Vietnam from the first half of the 19th century and what was the attitude of the Nguyen court to this issue? What are the causes and developments of the French invasion of Vietnam in the second half of the 19th century as well as the reaction of the Nguyen kings and mandarins and the Vietnamese people to the invasion activities of the French colonialists? How did the French rule and colonize Vietnam and how has Vietnamese society changed since France officially imposed the protectorate?

Under the guidance and suggestions from Prof. Dr. hab Jolanta A. Daszynska, Ph.D Piotr Robak and to address the objectives raised from the research question, the dissertation is expected to be divided into 5 chapters according to topic and time sequence based on the research questions. In each specific chapter, topics are presented in different ways, either chronologically, by topic or by a combination of both.

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, several key questions are addressed: How did French missionary activities unfold in Vietnam from the first half of the 19th century? In what ways did French colonialists utilize Catholicism as a tool in their strategy to invade Vietnam? How did the Nguyen Dynasty respond to, and what policies did they implement towards, Catholicism during this period?

To answer these questions, I provide a comprehensive analysis of France's involvement in Vietnamese politics during the first half of the 19th century, specifically under the Nguyen Dynasty. I examine how the French government strategically used Catholicism to create conducive conditions for the invasion of Vietnam. French missionaries,

associated with various foreign missionary societies, played a crucial role in advancing French maritime interests and infiltrating Vietnamese state affairs, regularly reporting to the French government and lobbying for intervention in Vietnam.

Furthermore, I analyze the Nguyen Dynasty's reactions, attitudes, and policies toward French Catholic missionary activities. Despite the promotion of Confucianism and ancestor worship, the Nguyen rulers consistently adopted a stringent stance against Christianity, enacting measures to prohibit, dismantle, and vehemently oppose the spread of the religion.

In Chapter 2, I address the central question: How did the Nguyen feudal court and the Vietnamese populace react to the French colonial invasion between 1858 and 1862? Before delving into this, it is essential to resolve the preliminary question: What were the causes and motives that led the French colonialists to ally with Spain to invade Vietnam?

I begin with a comprehensive analysis of the causes and conditions that precipitated the French invasion of Vietnam. This invasion was driven by the Western colonial powers' need to gather resources and expand markets to consolidate their global positions and compete with other Western nations such as Spain, Portugal, and England. I examine the formation and actions of the Franco-Spanish alliance, highlighting their collaborative efforts in the invasion.

Subsequently, I focus on the reactions and actions of the Nguyen feudal court and the Vietnamese people in response to the French invasion. Despite opportunities to mount a strong resistance, the Nguyen court's response was weak and ineffective, failing to mobilize internal resources and support among the populace. Conversely, the Vietnamese people displayed resilience and determination, actively resisting the French colonialists and protesting against the perceived complicity of the feudal court. Ultimately, I conclude with an analysis of the Hue court's gradual capitulation, culminating in the signing of the Treaty of 1862, which ceded territory to France.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the primary question: How did the Nguyen Dynasty and the Vietnamese people react to the increasingly aggressive expansion and invasion by the French colonialists? Prior to this, I also investigate how the French colonialists expanded their invasion of Vietnam?

To answer these questions, I analyze the escalating activities of the French colonialists, which grew increasingly aggressive and audacious. Meanwhile, the Hue court continued to harbor unrealistic hopes of reconciliation and land redemption, missing the op-

portunity to harness the potential and capability to defend the homeland. The court maintained a resistant attitude and dismissed proposals for national innovation. In contrast, the Vietnamese people remained steadfast in their resistance against the French colonialists. The outcome was another incomplete treaty, the Treaty of 1874, which involved various compromises and concessions. Nevertheless, France emerged as the primary beneficiary, gaining significant advantages, most notably the legal recognition of French ownership over all six provinces of Cochinchina.

In Chapter 4, I delve into the central inquiry: What actions did France take to complete the colonization of Vietnam? Based on this, how did the Nguyen court respond, and what were the reactions of the Vietnamese people?

In this chapter, I examine how France, employing a cunning and strategic perspective, viewed the Nguyen Dynasty not as an enemy to be eradicated but as a threat to be intimidated and subdued. The French aimed to prevent a nationwide uprising that could potentially unify the Hue court and the masses. I analyze the activities that culminated in the complete colonization of Vietnam by France. Despite the Nguyen government's persistent conciliatory approach, which relied on diplomatic negotiations rather than mobilizing popular support, the resulting treaties were compromise agreements, exemplified by the treaties of 1883 and 1884. These events marked the end of a period of delusion for Vietnamese leaders, whose policy of appeasement ultimately led to capitulation and betrayal. While the Nguyen Dynasty managed to survive, this survival came at the cost of the Vietnamese people's subjugation. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese populace remained steadfast in their determination to resist French colonial rule.

In Chapter 5, I investigate several fundamental queries: How was the colonial government apparatus organized in Vietnam? What policies did France impose on its colonial territories? How did the Can Vuong Movement, a significant response by the Vietnamese people to French colonial actions, unfold? Finally, what fundamental transformations occurred in Vietnamese society following the official establishment of the French colonial protectorate?

I begin by examining the organization of the colonial government in Vietnam, detailing the administrative structure and mechanisms France implemented to maintain control. I then analyze the policies imposed by France on its colonies, focusing on economic exploitation, cultural assimilation, and political repression.

Next, I explore the Can Vuong Movement, highlighting its significance as a notable resistance effort against French colonialism. This section provides a concise yet comprehensive account of the movement's origins, key events, and outcomes.

Finally, I address the profound transformations in Vietnamese society resulting from the imposition of the French colonial protectorate. These transformations include changes in social structure, economic practices, and cultural dynamics, which collectively reshaped Vietnamese society during this period.

To commence this dissertation, I would like to express my utmost appreciation and gratitude to Prof. Dr. hab Jolanta A. Daszynska and Ph.D Piotr Robak for their unwavering support and guidance throughout my research endeavors, starting from the smallest research details. Their invaluable insights, advice, and encouragement have been instrumental in the successful completion of this dissertation. Additionally, I extend my thanks to the University of Lodz Board of Directors, Director Joanna Sowa, Secretary of the Doctoral School of Humanities, lecturers of the University of Lodz, Faculty of Philosophy and History staff, the University of Lodz Library, and the Dormitory XIV, VII Management Board for providing me with a conducive environment to pursue my studies and stay in Poland.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PARTICIPATION OF FRANCE IN VIETNAMESE POLITICS AND NGUYEN DYNASTY'S CHRISTIAN PROPAGANDA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1.1 Changes in government in France and French participation in Vietnamese politics under the Nguyen Dynasty

1.1.1 Changes in the ruling government in France

The early 19th century in France was a significant era for European affairs, marked by the reign of Louis XVIII (1814 – 1815) and the political leadership of Prime Minister Richelieu (A.E.S.S du Plessis, 1766-1822). Richelieu's agenda included assessing the Treaty of Versailles and the conduct of Bishop Adrian¹, while simultaneously dispatching a diplomatic delegation to Vietnam with the goal of establishing trade relations. During this period, the French business community was highly active in trading with Vietnam and other countries in the Far East.

In France, governmental shifts often led to changes in Catholicism policy. Despite this, the government aimed to maintain cordial relations with the Holy See², which had been significantly overshadowed by the rule of Napoleon I (1804-1814). Nevertheless, the spiritual role of the Pope was still viewed as essential for ensuring stability in both government and society³. Following the Revolution of 1789, the French Church experienced a decline, marked by insufficient funding and the closure of missions and seminaries.

During the reign of Napoleon I, Catholicism ceased to be the official state religion but continued to be recognized as the dominant faith of the French population. Napoleon established a French church that comprised 10 archbishoprics and 50 bishoprics, led by

¹ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)* (France's diplomatic activities to strengthen its base in Cochinchina (1862-1874)), World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, p.30.

² Dang Thanh Tinh, *Lịch sử nước Pháp* (History of France), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006, p.70

³ *Ibidem*, p.86.

state-appointed pastors who lacked papal authority⁴. Although the influence of hermeneutics persisted, it was considerably diminished after 1815. When Louis Napoleon Bonaparte became President of France (1848 – 1852) and restored the monarchy, he reinstated Catholicism's preeminent position in French society. He pursued peaceful relations with the Holy See and sought to expand French influence in Asia, notably in Vietnam.

The existence of the MEP (Missions Étrangères de Paris) was in jeopardy, and it would have ceased to operate had there been more political and business support. Although it was revived by Napoleon I in 1804, it did not fully resume its operations until 1820⁵. The MEP's Paris headquarters were reopened in 1823, and its activities were largely sustained by local clergy and lay assistance. Presently, the MEP has taken on a "new form", with its priests providing cover for political and commercial matters. However, as they operate unofficially, they do not represent their country⁶.

In the 1820s, there was a significant advancement in the missionary movement in France, marked by the official founding of the Cause of the Faith (Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi - OPF) in Lyon in 1822. Prior to this, from 1816 onwards, the MEP and the Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi regularly produced New Letters of Encouragement (Nouvelles Lettres édifiantes) and later The Chronicle Spreading the Faith of God (Annales de Propagation de la Foi Chrétienne - APF), which was published in August 1825 and included numerous letters from missionaries. These endeavors positioned France as a leading nation in missionary activity in Europe and expanded its outreach to Asia⁷.

The OPF emerged as the primary funding organization for missions, prompting Pope Pius X to relocate its headquarters from Lyon to Rome and transform it into a papal

⁴ Cao The Dung, *Việt Nam Công giáo sử tân biên* (1533 – 2000) (History of Catholicism in Vietnam 1533 – 2000), Media of the Christians Published, 2003, p.1705.

⁵ Tran Van Canh, Foreign Missionary of Paris (Société des Missions étrangères de Paris) / 350 years of building the Vietnamese Church; Lesson 2: <http://ghhv.quetroi.net/63TVCANH/63TVCANHMEP03.htm> (accessed on August 20, 2021).

⁶ Social Science Committee, Government Committee for Religion, *Một số vấn đề Lịch sử đạo Thiên chúa trong lịch sử dân tộc Việt Nam* (Some Issues of Catholic History in Vietnamese National History), Ho Chi Minh City, 1988, p.114.

⁷ Cao Huy Thuan, *Đạo Thiên chúa và Chủ nghĩa thực dân tại Việt Nam* (Catholicism and colonialism in Vietnam 1858-1914), Huong Que, 1988, p.27.

charity. During the 19th century, France established 30 nunneries with the primary objective of spreading the faith abroad, setting a record for having nearly two-thirds of the world's missionary nuns⁸.

During the 1820s to 1830s in Vietnam, the religious climate (specifically, Catholicism) existed alongside two interrelated contexts: religious debates and a diverse cultural landscape, all occurring within the process of cultural and territorial assimilation⁹. This period marked the reign of Minh Mang and was characterized by the "dismantling of Southern Power" and "cultivation" policies, as well as the "Vietnamization" process discussed by scholar Choi Byung Wook in their dissertation¹⁰.

In the 19th century, the APF demonstrated an understanding of the social conditions in Vietnam and the repression of the French colonizers. The contemporary press relied on this information to report on the persecution of Catholics in Vietnam and China. As noted by J. Ramsay, this marked the MEP's initial capacity to allocate considerable funds towards missionary work in Asia. Therefore, "these reports fostered a profound sense of empathy towards the "Annamite Catholics", who were subject to persecution by ignorant officials, factions, and oppressors"¹¹.

The APF exerted a significant influence on Catholicism in Europe and France, evident in the increase of sponsorship, support, and charity. The funds received in 1822-1823 amounted to 23,000 francs, which had risen to 255,000 francs by 1827¹² and continued to surge in subsequent years. The Marchand incident¹³ in Vietnam stirred European

⁸ Bui Duc Sinh, *Giáo hội Công giáo ở Việt Nam* (Catholic Church in Vietnam), vol 2, Calgary - Canada, 1999, p.299, 302.

⁹ J. Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs. The church and the Nguyen dynasty in early nineteenth – century Vietnam*, Stanford, California, 2008, p.100-105.

¹⁰ B. W. Choi, *Southern Vietnam under the Reign of Minh Menh (1820 – 1841). Central Policies and Local Response*, 2004, Cornell University, 2004, p.86.

¹¹ P. Devillers, *Người Pháp và người An-nam: bạn hay thù?* (French and Annamese - friend or enemy?) Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 2006, p.43.

¹² J. Ramsay, *op.cit*, p.101.

¹³ Saint Joseph Marchand Du (1803 - 1835) was a French missionary who traveled to Vietnam and was a member of the Paris Foreign Missions Society. In 1833, he was suspected of being involved in the uprising led by Le Van Khoi, the adopted son of the late Governor Le Van Duyet. On September 8, 1835, shortly after completing a Mass, he was arrested, subjected to physical abuse, and imprisoned in a small cell. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1964, p.55).

On October 15, 1835, he was transferred to Hue Imperial City and imprisoned in a small cell. On November 30, he was executed, becoming a martyr of the Catholic faith. (According to M. Bunson, *Paul II's Book of Saints, Our Sunday visitor*, USA, 1999, p. 61) and: "The rebellious figure Khoi caused chaos and harm to the people, while secretly colluding with the French missionaries and seeking support from the Kingdom of Siam, intending to carry out a massive massacre. Fifteen members of the Western religion followers were all executed by beheading and their heads were displayed on high stakes for the public to see..." (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1964, p.409).

Le Van Duyet (1763 - 1832). He was an eminent patriot, a brave general, and above all a loyal friend of the French, whom he had cherished from the very beginning, but only a small group of the French, but they followed the call of Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine, helped King Gia Long regain the throne to establish the Nguyen dynasty. Le Van Duyet was appointed by King Gia Long to hold the position of Governor of Gia Dinh citadel. After succeeding his father, Minh Mang appointed Le Van Duyet as Governor of Gia Dinh citadel for the second time to suppress the Cambodian uprising in Tra Vinh. In fact, this was an opportunity for this king to exclude from the court the honest and resolute old general who did not support King Minh Mang's opposition to the French and the Catholic community living in Vietnamese territory. Returning to his previous position, Le Van Duyet no longer had the strength to protect his old friends from the persecution of King Minh Mang.

One day Le Van Duyet received the first edict against the Catholics and the French, he cried out: "Why is that! "We will persecute the faithful of Bishop Adran and also the Catholics of the French, thanks to them, we have rice to eat. No! As long as I live, I will not do so. Let the king do what he wants after I die".

His historic act of opposition has greatly hindered King Minh Mang's plans for many years. In 1832, after Le Van Duyet's death, Minh Mang had his grave chained and punished 100 times and ordered the murder of those close to him. (TC 826 - Indochina Journal No. 95, dated June 25, 1942, currently preserved at the National Archives Center D) <https://www.archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiiep-vu/ta-quan-le-van-duyet.htm> (accessed on October 24, 2022).

Le Van Khoi (?– 1834) the adopted son of Le Van Duyet, was the leader of the uprising against the Nguyen Dynasty in Phien An Citadel (now part of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) (*Đại Nam chính biên liệt truyện*, p.1016). The traitorous Khoi's burial site was excavated, his bones were crushed and scattered into the pit latrines across six provinces (Southern Vietnam), his flesh was cut into pieces and fed to dogs, while his severed head was enclosed in a box and sent to the capital (Hue), along with the heads of other criminals, which were displayed in markets throughout the country before being thrown into the river. As for his followers, regardless of age or gender, they were all executed outside the city walls and buried in a large pit, covered with soil and rocks, upon which a memorial stone was erected: a reminder of the fate of these rebel bandits, as an example of national justice" (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies). vol 1. Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.1938).

"Unlike the accounts provided by the Nguyen Dynasty's historians, who depicted Le Van Khoi as an ordinary troublemaker with ambitious and reckless behavior, the truth is that Khoi was a highly skilled martial

society, leading to a rise in funds up to 2.5 million francs at the time. The establishment of the Children's Church, La Société pour la Sainte Enfance, in Paris in 1843 coincided with the expansion of missionary activities in Vietnam targeting children, such as the rescue of orphans and trafficked children, and conducting baptisms for children "donated" at a rate of 1 franc for every 4 children¹⁴. The first funds for this endeavor, amounting to 4,000 francs, were recorded in East Cochinchina in 1846¹⁵.

The French Revolution of 1789 had a significant impact on French territories abroad. The missionaries were denied support from the government and could only rely on the laity for help¹⁶. However, the revolution also led to the growth and maturity of the French missionaries, as they were influenced by the nationalistic spirit that was prevalent during the early 19th century.

In their reports and other writings, terms such as "Religion and Fatherland (Dieu et la patrie)," "citizenship", "children of France", and "our compatriots" began appearing from 1840. The missionaries held a shared belief that they were both followers of Christ and French citizens, and their national and religious interests were intertwined¹⁷.

In East Asia, the British intervened in response to the Chinese invasion of their flag, while the French also took action - albeit derided as "low as a duck's feet" - either in response to the killing of a French envoy or due to religious motivations. These countries sought to demand the opening of unequal treaties by any means necessary. The majority

artist with noble character, excellent communication skills, strong determination, a heroic spirit, and capable leadership...thus earning the admiration of those around him. It was because of these qualities that, following Khoi's call, hundreds of thousands of families in the Southern region rose up..." (The words of Mr. Gaultier as cited by Pham Van Son, *Việt Sử tân biên* (Revised History of Vietnam), Vol IV, Khai Tri Publishing House, 1961, p.352).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.102.

¹⁵ The occurrence happened at the start of King Tu Duc's reign. According to E. Veuillot, "In Vietnam, a big family is seen as an honor for both the wealthy and the less fortunate, but poverty often compels parents to sell or send away some of their children for a meager sum to obtain assistance. This led the court to later accuse missionaries of using money to attract the poor." (E. Veuillot, *La Cochinchine et le Tonkin. Le pays, l'histoire et les missions*, Société Générale De Librairie Catholique, Bruxelles, Paris, 1883, p.78-79).

¹⁶ Phan Phat Huon, *Việt Nam giáo sử* (History of Vietnamese Catholicism), vol I, Saigon: Cứu Thế Tùng Thư, 1958, p.245.

¹⁷ T. Yoshiharu, Nguyen Dinh Dau (translated) *Nước Đại Nam đối diện với Pháp và Trung Hoa (L'Empire Vietnamien face à la France et à la Chine (1847-1885))*, Tri thuc Publishing House, Ha Noi 2014, p.169.

of nations in the Asian region were faced with two options: coerced or voluntary integration¹⁸.

1.1.2 The participation of the French in Vietnamese politics under the Nguyen Dynasty

To date, France's involvement in Indochina has generated limited outcomes, primarily characterized by the efforts of missionaries and a few daring individuals operating in remote areas. Despite the French court's senior officials outlining plans for expeditions to the Vietnamese coastline in 1769 and 1775, a lack of funding and insufficient enthusiasm impeded their complete execution. The ultimate French foray in Indochina before the revolution achieved some success with the involvement of Pigneau de Béhaine. After a three-month sojourn in Paris, the bishop eventually persuaded the king of the strategic significance of commercial and military power in Cochinchina as a counterbalance to England. Pigneau believed that establishing a French presence in Cochinchina would enable France to dominate the seas surrounding China and emerge as the "arbiter of all commercial activities in that part of the world"¹⁹. However, Pigneau's aspirations were unrealistic, and the bishop "could only instigate a revolution in Cochinchina alone"²⁰.

Prior to the reign of Napoleon I (1799-1804), the foreign policy of France was significantly constrained by the instability resulting from the constant turnover of governments and the conflict between the royalist feudal system and the monarchy. The territorial expansion of the First Empire (1801-1814) was primarily confined to Europe and achieved through military conquest. The frequent clashes with other European nations created formidable obstacles for France to compete globally. Consequently, the French struggled to contend with numerous challenges and encountered animosity from other

¹⁸ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 – 1896* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896), ed. Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Manh Dung, Le Thi Thu Hang, vol 6, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2017, p.76.

¹⁹ A. Faure, *Les Français en Cochinchine au XVIII^e siècle. Mgr Pigneau de Béhaine, Évêque d'Adran*, Paris, 1891, p.84.

²⁰ G. Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, t. 1, Paris: Éditeur Adrien Maisonneuve, 1955, p.600.

European powers, resulting in a dissonance between the central government's decisions and its efforts to maintain a secure French presence abroad²¹.

Only three years after the establishment of the new government in 1807, the executive committee of the Ordinance for Navy Captain Lancher aimed to establish commercial bases in the Philippines and Vietnam²². They re-examined Bishop Adran's efforts with the goal of monopolizing Vietnam and preventing other Western nations from gaining a foothold there.

In 1811, driven by a desire to extend his influence in Asia, Emperor Napoleon ordered a review of commerce. The French court subsequently considered revising the Versailles Treaty (1787) to facilitate this objective in 1812. An ambitious naval expedition project involving the deployment of naval forces and warships was proposed. However, the French government did not give its approval²³, and the emperor refrained from intervening in the political and military dynamics unfolding in Europe²⁴.

In early 1818, the French government sent the ship *La Cybèle* to Vietnam to explore diplomatic relations. The captain, Colonel Achille de Kergariou, stated that King Louis XVIII had sent them to enforce the agreements signed by Pigneau de Béhaine in 1787 regarding the cession of the city of Da Nang and the Con Lon Island. However, Gia Long, the ruler of Vietnam, refused to receive them. In the same year, Prime Minister Richelieu sent a letter to J.B. Chaigneau²⁵, informing him about the situation in Dai Viet (Vietnam).

²¹ French interest in Vietnam and Laos during 1820-1860 was inconsistent except for missionary activities. The MEP, dissolved in 1792, was restored after 1815. The transformation in the French church led to recognition of the clergy's efforts by the Pope in 1839, who emphasized France's dominance in missionary work in the Far East. (See Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.77).

²² Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Vietnam des origines à 1858*, Sud Est Asie, Paris, 1981, p.181-192.

²³ "Tuyển tập những bài nghiên cứu về triều Nguyễn" (A collection of research articles on the Nguyen Dynasty), Research and Development Journal, Hue, 1999, p.9.

²⁴ Napoleon I issued a written response, stating, "Kindly return this journal to the Naval Ministry and solicit their feedback and opinions regarding its contents". (Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)* (The beginning of the installation of the French colonial system in Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)), Hong Duc Publishing House, 2018, p.41.

²⁵ Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau (1769-1832) was a notable French military officer and explorer who played a significant role in the historical context of Vietnam. He provided vital assistance to Nguyen Anh during the protracted conflict against the Tay Son dynasty, ultimately leading to the unification of the country under Nguyen Anh's rule and the establishment of the Nguyen dynasty, with Nguyen Anh assuming the title of Emperor Gia Long. Chaigneau's contributions were instrumental in the success of Nguyen Anh's campaign,

The letter included the following passage: "Sir, you can gain the government's favor by using all means at your disposal to support the business ventures of our ship owners and then send me accurate information that will help me determine the best course of action to establish regular and permanent trade with the country where you reside"²⁶.

Between 1817 and 1819, a number of ships, including Le Henry of Philippon et Cie, La Rosse of Balguerie company, and Sarget et Cie arrived in Da Nang and Saigon for trading purposes. Although Chaigneau offered assistance, negotiations ultimately fell through. In 1821, J. B. Chaigneau arrived in Vietnam as the French consul aboard Le Larose, bearing a letter from King Louis XVIII proposing trade relations. King Minh Mang responded with a translated statement that any relationship must abide by Vietnam-

ultimately shaping the course of Vietnamese history. (According to Tran Tuyet Nhung, A. Reid, *Vietnam – Borderless histories*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, p.121) and A. Salles, *Le mémoire sur la Cochinchine de J. B. Chaigneau*. Bulletin des amis du vieux Hué (2), 1923, p.424-427.

²⁶ “*Veillez, Monsieur, vous associer aux perspectives favorables du gouvernement en soutenant, avant tout, par tous les moyens que votre position actuelle vous permet, les premières affaires de nos armateurs, et ensuite, en m'envoyant des informations précises pour me permettre de déterminer les meilleures actions à entreprendre afin d'atteindre l'objectif visé, à savoir établir un commerce régulier et permanent avec le pays où vous résidez*”.

(Cao Huy Thuan, translated by Nguyen Thuan, *Giáo sĩ thừa sai và chính sách thuộc địa của Pháp tại Việt Nam (1857 – 1914) Les missionnaires et la politique coloniale française au Viet Nam (1857 - 1914)*, Hong Duc Publishing House, 2016, p.41 and A. Salles, *Souvenir de l'expédition de Cochinchine*, Paris, 1865, p.172).

ese laws, but no headway was made. In 1822, both the ship *La Cleopâtre* and John Crawford²⁷ arrived, but neither was received²⁸. In 1826, France sent Eugène Chaigneau²⁹, the grandson of J.B. Chaigneau, to serve as the consul in Hue, Vietnam. However, he was not accepted. In 1830, King Charles X attempted to send Eugène Chaigneau again, but the effort was unsuccessful. The same year, some French individuals anchored their ships in Da Nang and climbed Tam Thai mountain without obtaining permission from the local authorities. The governors stationed there were dismissed and punished due to the French ships' unauthorized climb of Tam Thai mountain. In 1831, *La Favorite* arrived in Cua Han with a letter of nationality, but it was unsuccessful as the court was not proficient in the language³⁰.

During the 1840s, French ships visited Da Nang for nominal trade. In 1842, Foreign Minister François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, who held positions such as Minister of Education (1832-1837), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1840-1847), and Prime Minister (7/1847-2/1848), ordered the French navy to search for a base in the Far East³¹. The halt of trade with foreign countries by the end of Thieu Tri's reign was due to several reasons. Firstly, the bombardment of Da Nang by the French battleship in 1847 was perceived as

²⁷ John Crawford (1783-1868) was a prominent Scottish scholar, explorer, politician, and author renowned for his extensive academic pursuits. He gained notable recognition for his significant contributions to the study and exploration of Southeast Asia during the 19th century. Crawford's intellectual pursuits spanned various disciplines, including philosophy, linguistics, geography, history, and politics. His profound knowledge and scholarly endeavors greatly advanced the understanding and documentation of the region's cultural, linguistic, and historical aspects. Through his research and writings, Crawford left an indelible mark on the academic landscape, shedding light on the complexities of Southeast Asia and its multifaceted societies. (Viện Nghiên cứu phát triển phương Đông (Eastern Development Research Institute): <https://ordi.vn/phai-bo-john-crawford-anh-quoc-tai-cac-trieu-dinh-viet-nam-va-xiem-la-nam-1822.html>). (accessed on September 12, 2022).

²⁸ G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.312.

²⁹ Eugène Chaigneau was a French explorer and diplomat who lived from 1828 to 1906. He is primarily known for his extensive travels and diplomatic activities in Africa, particularly in the regions of West and Central Africa during the late 19th century. (See Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Times Publishing House, 2010, p.320).

³⁰ Nguyen Manh Dung, *Quá trình xâm nhập của Pháp vào Việt Nam từ cuối thế kỷ XVII đến giữa thế kỷ XIX – Nguyên nhân và hệ quả* (The process of French infiltration into Vietnam from the end of the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century – Causes and consequences), Hanoi National University Press, 2018, p.213.

³¹ Nguyen Manh Dung, *op.cit*, p.214.

a humiliation, leading to a decision to cut off trade with the West. Secondly, the case of Dao Tri Phu³²'s embezzlement in 1848, which involved several other officials, also contributed to the halt of trade. Additionally, five years later, Dao Tri Phu was implicated in the rebellion case of Hong Bao³³, leading to the loss of their positions and the ascent of Hong Nham, who later became King Tu Duc³⁴.

British and American missions made attempts to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with Vietnam during the 19th century, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful. For instance, in 1822, John Crawford of Britain was received by Le Van Duyet

³² Dao Tri Phu (? - 1854?), was a court official in the Nguyen Dynasty in the history of Vietnam. Around 1854, he was executed for being involved in a conspiracy to seize the throne of Nguyen Phuc Hong Bao. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), Translation by National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1998, p.319.

³³ Nguyen Phuc Hong Bao (1825-1854) was the eldest son of Thieu Tri. Despite being the eldest, he was not chosen to inherit the throne, which went to his half-brother Hong Nham (who later became Tu Duc). The reason for his removal from succession was recorded in the Nguyen Dynasty's history, which states that before his death, King Thieu Tri said to his courtiers: "Among my children, although Hong Bao is the eldest, he is dull-witted and uneducated, only interested in pleasure-seeking, and not fit to carry on the family's legacy. My second son, Hong Nham, is intelligent and studious like me, and is worthy of inheriting the throne... You must respect my wishes and not violate my will". (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), *op.cit.*, p.351).

Hong Bao, who did not accept the transfer of the throne to Tu Duc, attempted to rally the support of the Catholic community by offering them both freedom and his influence to convert his kingdom into a Christian nation. Despite two failed attempts to reclaim the throne in 1851 and 1854, the eldest prince was eventually imprisoned by Tu Duc and ultimately met a tragic demise while in custody. (Pham Van Son, *op.cit.*, p.16) and (*Từ điển nhà Nguyễn* (Dictionary of the Nguyen Dynasty), ed. by. Vo Huong An, vol. 1, A-M rhyme, Irvine: Nam Viet, 2015, p.195).

³⁴ Tu Duc (嗣德 1829 – 1883), originally known as Nguyen Phuc Hong Nham (阮福洪任), was the fourth emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnam. His reign began in October 1847, following the abdication of his father, Emperor Thieu Tri. At the tender age of 19, Tu Duc assumed the throne, marking the beginning of his lengthy and influential rule. Notably, he holds the distinction of being the longest-reigning monarch in the history of the Nguyen Dynasty, governing the kingdom from 1847 until his death in 1883. Throughout his extensive tenure, Tu Duc played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-political landscape of Vietnam. His reign witnessed significant developments in governance, diplomacy, and cultural affairs, leaving a lasting impact on the history of the Nguyen Dynasty and the nation as a whole. (*Từ điển nhà Nguyễn* (Dictionary of the Nguyen Dynasty), vol. 2, N-Y rhyme, ed. by. Vo Huong An, Irvine: Nam Viet, 2015, p.186).

in Gia Dinh, but was not well received in the capital by Minh Mang. American envoy Edmund Roberts³⁵ made two visits to negotiate a treaty under President Andrew Jackson³⁶, but both attempts were unsuccessful³⁷.

During October 1847, numerous ships representing Britain and the United States arrived in Vietnam bearing gifts. Their stated intention was solely to engage in trade and not to propagate their respective religions. They sought permission for commercial activities and made formal requests for trade relations. However, all of these overtures were met with rejection by the Nguyen Dynasty's court. The court argued that “the ships from these countries had not engaged in any unlawful killings in the past and asserted that the Vietnamese people, who were primarily engaged in agriculture and strawberry cultivation, had no inclination towards foreign novelties. The court further contended that any potential trade endeavors would yield no significant benefits”³⁸.

During the early 19th century, endeavors to foster trade relations with Vietnam encountered repeated setbacks attributable to multifarious factors. These included the isolationist policy of the Vietnamese monarch as well as France's lack of a definite foreign policy, whereby Vietnam was relegated to a secondary priority in their strategic rivalry with Britain in Asia. The rising European and American presence in the region compounded the predicament by transforming the political landscape into a complex international challenge³⁹.

³⁵ Edmund Roberts (1784 - 1836) was an American diplomat. He was appointed by President Andrew Jackson and served as the first United States envoy to carry out diplomatic missions to the Far East from 1832 to 1836. (Nguyen The Anh, *Bibliographie critique sur les relations entre le Viêt-Nam et l'Occident*, Paris, 1967, p.156).

³⁶ Andrew Jackson (1767 - 1845) was an American lawyer, military officer, and politician. He served as the seventh President of the United States from 1829 to 1837. (H. W. Brands, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times*, Doubleday, 2005, p.11-15) and J. Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*, Random house Trade Paperbacks, 2009, p.219).

³⁷ L. Sogny, "Notulettes: II. Une mission américaine en Annam sous Minh Mang", BAVH, XXIV, No 1, Jan-Mars, 1937, p.19-40.

³⁸ Quốc sử quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Châu bản triều Tự Đức (1848-1883)* (Vermilion Records of the reign of King Tự Đức (1848 – 1883)), Edited by Vũ Thanh Hằng, Trà Ngọc Anh, Tạ Quang Phát, Literary Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003, p.30.

³⁹ P. Brocheux, D. Hémery, *Indochine, An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858-1954*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009, p.12.

In the 1840s, King Louis Philippe of France aimed to curtail the Holy See's influence and upset the existing order in Vietnam. G. Taboulet, the author, presented a hypothesis about Louis Philippe's attitude through an account from a Vietnamese envoy to France, which states: "Upon returning to Vietnam, one of the envoys recounted that a high-ranking military official said to them that all these foreign missionaries in their country were merely destitute vagabonds. If there were any complaints about the king executing them, we [the French] wouldn't care about that either"⁴⁰. While these hypotheses will naturally face skepticism and dismissal due to their lack of credibility and accuracy⁴¹, further research is necessary. However, the recorded accounts partially reflect Louis Philippe's stance on the Catholic issue and provide some understanding of the hypothesis that the French authorities faced pressure from the Vatican concerning the delegation led by Minh Mang.

In 1843, F. P. Guizot established a Far East naval division under the command of Admiral Cécille⁴². Meanwhile, despite not being instructed to do so, some French officers took it upon themselves to intervene in Vietnam, using the pretext of protecting French missionaries. Based on information obtained from Vietnam, Cécille expressed his desire for Guizot to intervene, but the Minister opposed this idea. The officers operating in the Far East expressed frustration with Guizot's decision. According to them, such travel and patrolling of the coastal regions served no purpose as there was nothing to protect, including both trade and territory⁴³. Eventually, under public pressure, Guizot adopted more drastic measures to safeguard the missionaries and military, but France did not engage in any conflicts.

In February 1843, the French warship L'Héroïne arrived in Da Nang and demanded that the Hue court release the missionaries. In March 1845, the United States warship Constitution docked at Da Nang and demanded that the Nguyen court release a French missionary, Bishop D. Lefèbvre⁴⁴. In the same year, Admiral Cécille of the ship

⁴⁰ G. Taboulet, 1955, t.1, *op.cit*, p.347-348.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Jean-Baptiste Thomas Médée Cécille (1787, Rouen – 1873) was a French Admiral and politician who played a significant role in France's intervention in Vietnam. He is also known for his voyage around the world. (J. Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p.189).

⁴³ P. Devillers, *op.cit*, p.56.

⁴⁴ Dominique Lefèbvre (1810 - 1865) was a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church. He was ordained a priest on December 20, 1834, and arrived in North Vietnam (Tonkin) in 1835. (J. Buttinger, *op.cit*, p.391).

L'Alcmène also demanded the release of Bishop Lefèbvre. After being released and taken to Singapore, the bishop quickly returned to Vietnam and was subsequently arrested again and taken to Singapore in 1847. According to the available records, Lefèbvre refused the British offer to help him return to Vietnam⁴⁵.

During the early months of 1847, against a backdrop of persecution in Vietnam, the Louis Philippe government approved a forceful intervention in Vietnam, believing that there were no longer any French nationals in the country and that there was little risk of retaliation. As part of this intervention, two French warships, La Gloire and La Victorieuse, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Regault de Genouilly⁴⁶, arrived in Da Nang to demand that the Hue court embrace Christianity and release the imprisoned French missionary. The French warships attacked Vietnamese boats in the port of Da Nang, sinking five bronze ships and causing numerous casualties before withdrawing⁴⁷. The following day, they left a letter behind, which included the following statement: "This is a lesson in showing respect and obedience... If this is not enough, more will follow"⁴⁸.

The history of the Nguyen dynasty records the following about the event: "Two French boats were docked at the port of Da Nang... The king dispatched the officer of the Board of Rites, Ly Van Phuc⁴⁹ to investigate. The commander arrived with several dozen

⁴⁵ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.83.

⁴⁶ Charles Rigault De Genouilly (1807 – 1873) in 1827, he joined the French navy and served with the Morea expedition. In 1834, he was promoted to lieutenant and commanded the corvette Victorieuse on the Yellow Sea expedition, China. In 1853, he was promoted to major general, in charge of the Ville de Paris, which participated in the Crimean War. In November 1857, he was authorized by Emperor Napoleon III to launch an expedition to invade Vietnam. In October 1859, Admiral François Page came to Cochinchina to take his place. In 1867 he was appointed Minister of the Navy of France and in 1869 Minister of War. After the French defeat at Sedan, he resigned and returned to Spain to spend the last years of his life. (Nguyen Quang Trung Tien, "Da Nang Front (1858-1860) through the report of the Colonel Henri de Ponchalon". *The Journal of Research and Development*, 2018, 147(4): 44-66, A. Thomazi, *Histoire militaire de l'Indochine française*, Hanoi, 1931, p.169).

⁴⁷ P. Devillers, *op.cit*, p.47; G. Taboulet, 1955, t.1, *op.cit*, p.373.

⁴⁸ G. Taboulet, 1955, t.1, *op.cit*, p.372-373; Nguyen Van Kiem, *Sự du nhập của đạo Thiên Chúa ở Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XVII đến thế kỷ XIX* (The introduction of Christianity into Vietnam from the 17th to the 19th centuries), Research Institute of Religion, Vietnam Association of Historical Science, 2001, *op.cit*, p.153.

⁴⁹ Ly Van Phuc (李文馥, 1785-1849) was a prominent scholar-official during the Nguyen dynasty. He was known for his literary achievements and held various government positions, although he faced setbacks at times but later regained his position. (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen

armed soldiers and headed straight to the public square, where they couldn't be stopped. They presented a letter written in Chinese characters, mostly containing blasphemy. When the delegation refused to proceed, The commander shouted to intimidate and placed the letter on a chair before leaving. Ly Van Phuc decided that "it's a crime to accept the letter, but it's also a crime to burn it, so the best option is to send the soldiers back to report". Ly Van Phuc returned to the capital to face the consequences. The king was furious about the dishonor to the country and ordered bodyguards to arrest and detain them, removing them from office and handing them over to the court's mandarins for further discussion"⁵⁰. The Westerners, becoming increasingly aggressive, frequently went ashore and into villages. Many people in Vietnam still followed their traditional religion, but most of them watched the Westerners in secret and reported their movements. The Westerners captured patrol boats at the coast and made off with them. The history records that there were "Five copper-covered boats that had not yet set sail were stranded and caught in a vulnerable position at Tra Son, where they were attacked and their boats seized and bound by the enemy. The king ordered soldiers to reinforce the garrison. Four additional copper-covered boats were sent to support the forces at the gate of Tra Son. They immediately launched a ruthless attack, leaving no survivors. It was strictly forbidden for those following the Christian faith to venture out and spy, ensuring complete secrecy. Suddenly, the Westerners fired their guns with a thunderous roar, sinking all five copper-covered boats in an instant. As a result, over 40 soldiers from the court perished, 90 were injured, 104 disappeared without a trace, and a significant number of guns and ammunition were lost. The Western boats swiftly retreated, and no one pursued them"⁵¹.

The French landing of troops in Da Nang broke the long-standing foreign policy⁵². The king was extremely angry about the French landing troops in Da Nang and disrupting the peace at the seaport, causing him constant distress⁵³. The king ordered the imperial

Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol 2, Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.512).

⁵⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VI, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.975.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p.984.

⁵² P. Devillers, *op.cit*, p.47.

⁵³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VI, *op.cit*, p.984.

soldiers to shoot at the Western soldiers as targets⁵⁴. "Thieu Tri⁵⁵'s initial tolerance turned into intense anger upon hearing about the destruction of his fleet by French warships. According to reports, he expressed his rage by personally capturing servants and destroying European objects in the royal residences. An edict was issued stating that a missionary's head would be worth 30 taels of silver and that all Europeans caught in the territory of the kingdom would be subject to death without trial...."⁵⁶.

From an alternative perspective, the incident marked a transition "from the religious to the political domain", "Tu Duc issued strict decrees due to his apprehension that Catholics would form an alliance with France to fight against Vietnam, thus regaining their privileges under old treaties". "The authorities were greatly apprehensive of the political machinations of the priests, and they voiced their complaints, without being sure of their validity, about the alleged conspiracies attributed to them"⁵⁷. The French naval artillery officially put an end to the scene of "people danced inside to celebrate spring, and outside, from a distance, paid tribute and presented gifts" during the rule of Thieu Tri. "Christianity is an evil faith that led to conflict"⁵⁸. Some scholars believe that the 1847 event marked the start of armed conflict in Vietnam. The claim of "protecting missionaries" was just a guise to conceal the plan to invade Vietnam⁵⁹, and marked the initiation of the policy of "gunboat diplomacy".

1.2 French missionary activities and preparation for the invasion of Vietnam. Colonial properties will be established

⁵⁴ L. E. Louvet, *La Cochinchine religieuse*, t. 2 (1800 - 1884), Paris, 1885, p.167; Cao The Dung, *op.cit*, p.1628.

⁵⁵ King Thieu Tri (紹治 1807-1847), whose real name Nguyen Phuc Dung, later changed to Nguyen Phuc Mien Tong, was the third emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty. He was the eldest son of King Minh Mang and was handed over the throne by his father in 1841. After 7 years in power, Thieu Tri passed away. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol V, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.695 and Board of Directors of the Nguyen Phuc family, *Nguyễn Phúc Tộc thế phả* (Nguyen Phuc family annals), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, Hue, 1995, p.361).

⁵⁶ C. Gosselin, *L'Empire d' Annam*, Perrin, Paris, 1904, p.123.

⁵⁷ T. Yoshiharu, *op.cit*, p.67-68.

⁵⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VI, *op.cit*, p.985.

⁵⁹ Cao The Dung, *op.cit*, p.1619.

1.2.1 Missionary activities of the French before the invasion of Vietnam

“Evangelization... Does that have anything to do with colonial policy? No one answers that no, unless there is a prejudice...”. Bishop Guébriant, superior of the Paris Missionaries, wrote in the *Correspondant* magazine, January 25, 1931⁶⁰. Thirty-seven years later, in 1968, in the midst of the hot war in Vietnam, the following letter from French Christian teachers was sent to their colleagues in the United States: *“Admittedly, because it is political According to the policies adopted by their respective governments, Christians are often assimilated, before the eyes of the Afro-Asian peoples, with empires and colonists, yesterday as well as today. It's too simple to see the problem like that, and it takes a lot of work for the Christian churches to re-establish the truth. But to this day, many other forms of intervention by countries considered to be Christian have created new obstacles to the introduction of the Bible into Asia-Africa. Bombing in North Vietnam was not the only form of intervention, but the most revealing”*⁶¹.

These two quotations represent distinct historical epochs and reflect differing Christian perspectives. The head of the Paris Missionary Society, who personified a composed moral voice during the colonial era, emphasized the interrelation between mission and colonial policy. Conversely, the French Christian educators of the postcolonial era appear to grapple with a conscience that is fraught with complexity. Their aim is to absolve the Church of any wrongdoing and instead hold nations accountable for exploiting religion to further colonial interests. Vietnam is a case in point of abuse. This is a typical example of a colonial model that takes religion as a means and an end to domination⁶².

First of all, in the history of European colonization, one can see the parallel development between colonial action and missionary action. To say "parallel" is also not quite right, because as a French diplomat witty remarked, "it is two parallel lines that overcome all the laws of geometry to meet again and again"⁶³.

⁶⁰ Quoted by P. Lesourd, *L'oeuvre civilisatrice et scientifique des missionnaires catholiques dans les colonies francaises*, Avant – propos, de S.E Mgr Chaptal, Préface de M. Gabriel Hanotaux, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1931, Introduction.

⁶¹ Truong Vinh Ky, *Souvenirs historiques sur Saïgon et ses environs, conférence faite au collège des inter-prètes*, Saigon, 1885, p.82.

⁶² Quoted by Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.8

⁶³ F. R. Charles, *Evêques française de jadis et expansion coloniale française*, La Nouvelle Revue Française d'Outre-Me, No.7, juillet-aout 1954, p.56.

In the context of the Afro-Asian world, the spread of Christianity was typically linked to colonial expansion, military domination, territorial concessions, and political oppression. This made Christianity a highly effective tool for the assimilation of subjugated peoples, a policy that was traditionally embraced by France and other Latin countries⁶⁴. The logical consequence of the assimilation policy was the erasure of indigenous cultures, a task that Christian missionaries undertook with great zeal. In Asia, for example, missionaries specifically targeted ancestor worship, which was deeply ingrained in Chinese society. According to G. Curzon, “most missionaries were uncompromisingly hostile toward all indigenous religions and moral philosophies. They disregarded the positive aspects and moral influence of these traditions, as well as their authority over the Chinese mind. Instead, missionaries insisted on the complete rejection of such beliefs and practices. Confucian ethics, which emphasized filial piety and national duty, were a prime target for missionaries. By demanding the rejection of Confucian principles as a precondition for citizenship, missionaries forced Chinese converts to abandon the very foundations of their ethical and moral code”⁶⁵.

In order to evangelize effectively, conquest and colonial expansion were deemed necessary, and Christianity was often used as a tool for this purpose. Consequently, political and religious actions became closely intertwined, with European countries relying on Christianity as a powerful weapon.

Studying the situation of Christianity in Vietnam and the Franco-Vietnamese relationship before 1857, I would like to recall the relationships that existed before 1857 between maritime expansion and missionary work and explain in what context the religious issue provided a pretext for military intervention.

It is important to note the nationalities of the ships involved in the arrival of Westerners in Vietnam. The Portuguese were the first to arrive in Vietnam and had significant power as a maritime nation. They began frequenting Hoi An in Dang Trong⁶⁶ in 1557,

⁶⁴ H. Georges, *Théories de la colonisation moderne et principes chrétiens*, Rythmes du monde, No.1, 1949, p.32.

⁶⁵ G. N. Curzon, *Problems of the Far-East*, London, 1894, p.309.

⁶⁶ Cochinchina or Nam Ha, Dang Trong, Southern Kingdom was the name of the territory of Vietnam in the Dai Viet era under the control of the Nguyen lords, determined from the Gianh River (Quang Binh) back to the South. (Le Van Huu, Phan Phu Tien, Ngo Si Lien, *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (Record of Vietnamese History from 2879 BC to 1675), Translation by Vietnam Institute of Social Sciences, Hanoi Social Science Publishing House, 1993, p.129).

which was under the rule of Lord Nguyen⁶⁷ at the time. The Dutch, on the other hand, established their permanent capital in Batavia in the early 17th century and followed in the footsteps of the Portuguese, but they focused their efforts on doing business with Tonkin⁶⁸, which was under the rule of Lord Trinh⁶⁹, and even in Hanoi.

Following the merchants were the missionaries. The first missionaries to establish bases in Vietnam in the early 17th century were Portuguese Jesuit missionaries who maintained their autonomy and monopoly. In 1649, Alexandre de Rhodes⁷⁰, who had been permanently expelled from Vietnam a few years earlier, submitted a plan to establish a bishopric outside the jurisdiction of the Portuguese congregation in Portugal. He also wanted to separate missionary work in Asian countries from Portuguese secular authority with the pope's favor. The French Jesuit missionary of Avignon descent agreed and decided to make the establishment of dioceses a French task. However, Alexandre de Rhodes' plan had to wait until 1658, after his death, to see results. Rome appointed two French Nuncios, Francois Pallu and Lambert de la Motte, to work directly with the Pope. It was during this time that the Overseas Missionary Association (Société des Missions

⁶⁷ Nguyen lords is the name used to refer to the head of Cochinchine. Nguyen Hoang was the first person to laid the foundation (1600), followed by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, Nguyen Phuc Lan, Nguyen Phuc Tan, Nguyen Phuc Thai, Nguyen Phuc Chu, Nguyen Phuc Chu, Nguyen Phuc Khoat, and Nguyen Phuc Thuan. Lord Nguyen reigned until 1777, he was defeated by the Tay Son army. (Phan Thuc Truc, *Quốc Sử Di Biên*, Culture-Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2009, p.135).

⁶⁸ Tonkin (or Annam, Dang Ngoai, Northern Kingdom), the name of the Vietnamese territory controlled by Trinh lords under the Dai Viet era, determined from the Gianh River (Quang Binh province) back to the North (1600). (Le Van Huu, Phan Phu Tien, Ngo Si Lien, *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (Record of Vietnamese History from 2879 BC to 1675, *op.cit*, p.130).

⁶⁹ Lord Trinh was a feudal lord who sought to manipulate the power of the Le Trung Hung dynasty to rule the land of Tonkin. A total of 12 Trinh lords ruled over Tonkin for more than 2 centuries (1545-1787), including: Trinh Kiem (1545-1570), Trinh Coi (1570), Trinh Tung (1570-1623), Trinh Trang (1623). - 1652), Trinh Tac (1653-1682), Trinh Can (1682-1709), Trinh Cuong (1709-1729), Trinh Giang (1729-1740), Trinh Doanh (1740-1767), Trinh Sam (1767-1782), Trinh Tong (1782-1786), Trinh Bong (1786-1787). (Ta Chi Dai Truong, *Lịch Sử Nội Chiến ở Việt Nam từ 1771 đến 1802* (History of the Civil War in Vietnam from 1771 to 1802), Saigon: Viet Huong, 1973, p.216).

⁷⁰ Alexandre de Rhodes (1593 – 1660) was a missionary of the Society of Jesus and a linguist from Avignon. He was one of the priests who made significant contributions to the Catholic propagation process in Vietnam. (Nguyen Hong, *Lịch sử truyền giáo ở Việt Nam: Các thừa sai Dòng Tên (1615–1665)* (History of Catholicism in Vietnam: The Dominican Missionaries (1615-1665)), Publisher: Present, Saigon, 1959, p.133-134).

étrangères de Paris - MEP) was established, and its history became closely related to the history of French colonial occupation in Vietnam.

In contrast to the Portuguese, the French did not engage in commercial ventures in Vietnam until the appointment of the Apostolic Nuncio. Francois Pallu⁷¹ believed that the success of Western trade was closely tied to the success of missionary work. In 1658, Pallu proposed the establishment of the French East Company, a trading company intended to do business with the Far East. Pallu asserted that although the primary purpose of the journey to China was to spread the word of God and convert souls, the economic benefits of such a venture should not be overlooked. He argued that with proper planning, the return on investment could be more than three hundred percent⁷².

To achieve this goal, in 1660, he entered into an agreement with a company located in Rouen, which was responsible for outfitting a ship for his journey to Vietnam. The terms of cooperation specified that the company would facilitate the stability of the journey of the bishops by accepting only their entourage, subordinates, and missionary clerics on board. Additionally, the company would provide free accommodation, food, and transport to one or more ports in Tonkin, Cochinchina, or China as per their preference. Article XIII outlines these terms. Furthermore, in response to this agreement, the bishop was requested by the company to ensure that no detail was overlooked during his visit to those countries, and to send someone to accurately record all transactions to enable a comprehensive report upon their return. Article XIV details this obligation⁷³. Unfortunately, the Rouen ship was destroyed by a storm, resulting in the failure of this plan.

In 1664, the establishment of the East India Company by Colbert prompted Pallu to concentrate the company's efforts on Tonkin. Pallu communicated commercial and political developments in the region he was evangelizing to Colbert via correspondence. While Pallu was en route to Tonkin, a storm hit the Philippine coast, interrupting his journey. Nonetheless, he carried with him a proposal to establish a base for the Royal Indian company in the kingdom of Tonkin. However, the merchants were aware of “the

⁷¹ François Pallu (1626-1684) was a French Catholic bishop. He was a founding member of the Paris Foreign Missions Society and a missionary in Asia. He and Pierre Lambert de la Motte were the first two bishops to govern the ministry in Vietnam. (Tran Tuyet Nhung, A. Reid, *Vietnam – Borderless histories*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, p.222).

⁷² H. Cordier, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, episode III (1368-1820), Librairie Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1920, p.55.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p.52.

aggressive and ambitious nature of the missionaries, who sought to establish trade deals in Tonkin to facilitate the expansion of their mission”⁷⁴.

The arrival of French missionaries in Vietnam coincided with a period during which the Lords had adopted a tough stance against the propagation of Christianity. Although the eviction order was initially lax, it gradually became more severe. The discord between the Portuguese Jesuits and the Apostolic Nuncio further fuelled the Lords' doubts. The Portuguese missionaries portrayed the Apostolic Nuncio as corrupt and disruptive. Despite the expulsion order, the Jesuits, who were accomplished physicians, surveyors, and mathematicians, were trusted more by the Nguyen Lords. They continued to reside in Cochinchina and held important positions within the Lords' court, similar to their counterparts in China⁷⁵. Meanwhile, in Tonkin, Spanish Dominican missionaries were summoned by French bishops from Manila and had established bases on the left bank of the Red River since 1673⁷⁶.

In 1787, the first treaty between France and Vietnam was established. Nguyen Anh, who had been expelled by Tay Son, sought refuge in Ha Tien where he met Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine in 1784. As a member of the MEP, the bishop advised Nguyen Anh, who subsequently requested King Louis XVI's assistance. Lord Nguyen Anh accepted the French proposal, and the bishop promptly travelled to France to negotiate a treaty of alliance with Foreign Minister Montmorin⁷⁷. The treaty, signed on November 28, 1787, entailed the French monarch pledging to provide troops and warships to aid Nguyen Anh in restoring his authority over his lands. In return, the King of Cochinchina agreed to cede to the French the islands near Da Nang and Con Lon and to grant the French exclusive rights to trade, disallowing other European nations from trading in the region⁷⁸. Nonetheless, this treaty was ultimately invalidated. The French monarchy was weakened and financially strained due to the ongoing war in the Americas and could not afford to participate in a distant conflict.

⁷⁴ P. Isoart, *Le Phénomène nation vietnamien*, Paris, L.G.D.J, 1961, p.83.

⁷⁵ Truong Ba Can, *Lịch sử phát triển Công Giáo ở Việt Nam* (History of Catholicism in Vietnam), vol.1, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, p.89.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p.91.

⁷⁷ N. Cooke, *Southern regionalism and the composition of the Nguyen ruling elite (1803 – 1883)*, “Asian Studies Review”, 1999, vol. 23, No.2, p.6.

⁷⁸ Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.30-31.

Upon ascending the throne as Gia Long, Nguyen Anh was cautious in forming politically binding relationships with Western governments to avoid repeating the mistakes that led to India's colonization. Hence, he declined to reestablish commercial ties with England, which had been severed since 1700. Likewise, he rejected the request of Kergarion, captain of the French ship *Cybèle*, to enforce the stillborn 1787 treaty that had ceded Con Dao. In 1817, Duke Richelieu dispatched Chaigneau, a former naval officer who served during King Gia Long's reign, to request information about Vietnam. In his letter, the Duke urged Chaigneau to aid the shipowners' enterprises and furnish him with precise information to achieve the goal of establishing regular and permanent trade with the country⁷⁹.

Upon Gia Long's death during the British takeover of Singapore, Minh Mang ascended the throne, continued to maintain a cautious and reserved attitude towards European ambitions. When King Louis XVIII proposed to sign a trade treaty, Minh Mang replied: "If the people of your country want to come and trade in our kingdom, they must obey the laws of this country, that is reasonable"⁸⁰.

Between 1831 and 1839, diplomatic ties between France and Vietnam were severed, leaving only missionaries present in the country. However, to the Nguyen Kings, the missionaries' activities appeared even more threatening than Western commercial pressure. In particular, their involvement in Le Van Khoi's rebellion from 1833 to 1836 aimed to establish Cochinchina as a separate and pious kingdom, angering Minh Mang and leading to the first ban on evangelism⁸¹. Furthermore, it was under King Minh Mang's

⁷⁹ In the letter, the Duke wrote: "*Veillez, Monsieur, vous associer aux perspectives favorables du gouvernement en soutenant, avant tout, par tous les moyens que votre position actuelle vous permet, les premières affaires de nos armateurs. Ensuite, veuillez m'envoyer des informations précises pour me permettre de déterminer les meilleures actions à entreprendre afin d'atteindre l'objectif visé, à savoir établir un commerce régulier et permanent avec le pays où vous résidez*". ("Sir, you can participate in government favors by, first of all, with every means available to you in your current position, supporting the first businesses of our shipowners. Then you send me accurate information that helps me see what is best to do to achieve the defined goal. That is to establish a regular and permanent trade with the country where you are"). (According to Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asia, volume 27, sheets 136-137, quoted by Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.60).

⁸⁰ J. Silvestre, *La politique française en Indochine*, Proceedings of the School of Political Science, 1895, p.132.

⁸¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol XIII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1964, p.180.

reign that the first missionaries were persecuted, marking a shift from his predecessor Gia Long's more tolerant approach⁸².

1.2.2 The process of French preparation for invasion of Vietnam

During the 1850s, French missionaries in Vietnam persistently sent appeals for help to ameliorate the religious conditions in the country. These pleas were directed towards garnering support from various quarters, including a segment of the French aristocracy. Notably, this influential group not only expressed their endorsement but also prepared a detailed and proactive intervention plan, which involved the occupation of Da Nang⁸³. In October 1855, Montigny⁸⁴ was dispatched to France to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce, as well as to secure religious freedom and missionary activities in Siam and Vietnam upon their return to French-held Shanghai. Nonetheless, divergent perspectives

⁸² “Le Van Khoi caused chaos and harmed living beings, but also secretly associated with leftist Catholicism, asked for help from Siam, tried to make a big massacre... his accomplices also had 15 people following the Western religion, all of them were executed their back, then cut off their head and hung it on a high pole to let the people know”. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol XII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1964, p.409).

⁸³ G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p. 384. Since the end of 1852, Bourboulon had made a plan with 3 main points: religious freedom, establishing relations between the two countries, recalling the rights in the 1787 Agreement. From May 1855, Bourboulon offered to seek Spain's support in the permanent occupation of Vietnam. (E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam de 1851 à 1870*, vol 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, p.58-59.

⁸⁴ Louis Charles de Montigny (1805–1868) was a French diplomat who operated in Asia in the 19th century. He was the first French consul in Shanghai from January 23, 1848, to June 10, 1853 (K. L. MacPherson, *A Wilderness of Marshes: The Origins of Public Health in Shanghai*, 1843-1893, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 6). In 1856, de Montigny was appointed as the representative of France to King Rama IV of Thailand (O. Chapuis, *A history of Vietnam: from Hong Bang to Tu Duc*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996, p.195).

existed within the French court, with Foreign Minister Walewski⁸⁵ questioning the appropriateness of pursuing closer relations with the Vietnamese government at that particular juncture⁸⁶.

In late 1855, Montigny departed France and reached Singapore by mid-May 1856. In mid-August of that year, Montigny concluded the "Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation" with Siam, which comprised 24 provisions. The treaty obliged Siam to uphold religious freedom, and the Siamese king assented to dispatch a diplomatic mission to France. Subsequently, Montigny forged a treaty with Cambodia, which featured 14 clauses, encompassing 3 articles (namely articles 2, 10, and 11) pertaining to religious matters.

Based on available records, Montigny composed a letter to a prominent minister (referred to as the "premier ministre") at the Hue court while he was in Bangkok. The letter, dated August 4, 1856, included the following excerpt: "I have been instructed by the Emperor to notify your government that this shall constitute the final instance, whereby your king and his ministers shall be solely accountable for any repercussions resulting from their refusal to honor the previously established treaty of amity between Cochinchina and France during the reign of Louis XVI"⁸⁷. Montigny's plans did not unfold as anticipated in subsequent developments.

After failed negotiations using various approaches in Vietnam, Bishop Pellerin⁸⁸ realized that the most viable option was to appeal directly to Emperor Napoleon III. With

⁸⁵ Alexandre Florian Joseph Walewski (1810- 1868), known as the Duke of Walewice and Bóbrka, held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of France during a crucial period in the country's history. Walewski had a notable diplomatic career and played a significant role in advancing France's diplomatic goals during his tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1855 to 1860. (Nguyen Luong Bich, *Lược sử ngoại giao Việt Nam các thời trước* (A brief history of Vietnam's diplomacy in previous times), People's Army Publishing House, 1996, p.157).

⁸⁶ E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol 1, *op.cit*, p.57-60.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p.39-40.

⁸⁸ François Marie Henri-Agathon Pellerin (1813 – 1862) was ordained a priest on December 17, 1836, at the Couvent des Oiseaux Chapel. In July 1843, he joined the Paris Mission Society. He received the decision to go to Cochinchine, Vietnam on November 8, 1843. In February 1857, he left Hue for Hong Kong and then returned to France (May 20, 1857). Through the introduction of Cardinal Bonnechose, Pellerin met with Emperor Napoleon III in Biarritz to report on the situation in Vietnam. (Cao The Dung, *op.cit*, p.235).

guidance from Montigny⁸⁹, Bishop Pellerin departed from Hong Kong in March 1857 en route to France⁹⁰.

Amidst mounting reports from China and Vietnam, Emperor Napoleon III undertook a more in-depth examination of the Cochinchine issue. At the end of April 1857, he established the "Committee on Cochinchine" (La Commission de la Cochinchine). The committee promptly convened an urgent meeting in light of the ongoing conflict between Britain and China, with the details of the gathering being published in full in E. Vo Duc Hanh's work⁹¹.

Initially, the committee reviewed the documents of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of 1787. After examining "France's historic rights", the committee concluded that "France had failed to fulfill its commitments in the treaty, so it is difficult to rely on that to claim any land or privileges from the Nguyen. Conventionally, the Treaty of 1787 is too imperfect a title, to enable the government to demand a strict implementation"⁹².

Subsequently, the committee deliberated on the commercial benefits that Cochinchine could offer France. While these advantages were not based on prior historical experiences, the committee deemed them significant, noting that "Cochinchine fully satisfies France's needs, particularly in terms of production, if not consumption"⁹³. According to the committee, the region was abundant in cotton, silk, sugar, rice, and wood for construction. Furthermore, it had a plentiful supply of rice, which was reasonably priced and of high quality. In addition, Cochinchine boasted excellent infrastructure, including numerous waterways, land routes, and secure ports⁹⁴.

Finally, the committee also examined religious interests, which they deemed to be the most prominent and pressing issue for France's activities in Cochinchine. Given that

⁸⁹ G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.385.

⁹⁰ Dinh Xuan Lam, *Triều Nguyễn trước âm mưu bành trướng của tư bản phương Tây (1802 – 1858)* (Nguyen Dynasty before the expansionist conspiracy of Western capital (1802 - 1858)), "Journal of Historical Research", 1993, No. 271, p.6-12.

⁹¹ E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam*, vol 2, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1969.

⁹² G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.408.

⁹³ Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.62.

⁹⁴ H. Cordier, *La France et la Cochinchine 1852 - 1858: La mission du Catinat à Tourane (1856)*. T'oung Pao 7(2): 497-505, 1906.

the outdated Treaty of 1787 was of no value, and that commercial interests still remained somewhat ambiguous, the committee found it challenging to persuade the Emperor to launch an expedition. This was especially true since France had recently participated in the Crimean War and lacked the resources to send its army far away, while also facing difficulties in swaying public opinion. Thus, the committee faced a significant obstacle in advocating for a military intervention.

The central challenge that the committee faced in their deliberations was the issue of religious persecution in Vietnam. The committee's discussions primarily focused on the potential, pressing, and "justifiable" reasons for France to intervene in Cochinchine. After more than a month of considering various factors, the committee ultimately reached a decision:

Initially, the Committee arrived at the determination that engaging in negotiations with the Hue court was an infeasible endeavor. As a result, the sole viable course of action would involve the utilization of military might to enforce a desired status, mandate or relinquishment of a strategic foothold within the Asian region. Alternatively, acquiescence to a "protectionist" regime may be deemed necessary in order to secure a sustained commitment from Vietnam.

Secondly, the committee deemed it necessary to organize an expedition that would be both straightforward and cost-effective. The committee had received previous reports from missionaries situated in Vietnam, who portrayed a favorable outlook. "The local populace is kind-natured, hardworking, and receptive to the propagation of the divine faith. They are currently enduring the most repugnant of tyrannies. We will be received with open arms as philanthropists and liberators. It will only require a brief period to completely convert them to Catholicism and loyal to France..."⁹⁵. However, Committee Chairman Brenier espoused a more cautious stance, stating that there is a possibility of receiving support from the faithful, but effective cooperation cannot be anticipated, apart from a probable willingness on the part of the laity, which is also dubious. The missionaries appear to prefer the current situation over an intervention since guaranteeing perpetual and reliable protection would prove challenging⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam*, vol 3, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1969, p.50.

⁹⁶ P. Devillers, *op.cit.*, p.50-51.

Thirdly, the committee discussed the occupation of all of Vietnam instead of a treaty, and affirmed that Britain did not have any rights in Vietnam and that France did not have any problems with the British on the Vietnam issue⁹⁷.

Fourthly, after careful deliberation on factors such as the status of the Nguyen Dynasty's monarch, the potential for popular uprisings following the overthrow of the Hue court, and post-war governance, the committee arrived at a conclusion: that a protectionist regime, or protectorate, would be a fitting approach. This would allow for reduced obligations while still reaping the benefits of a direct occupation. *"The proposed plan was deemed highly commendable for our policy, advantageous for religion, commerce, and the general welfare of the nation. Given the present circumstances, the plan could be executed with ease and at a low cost. Ultimately, it met nearly all the criteria required for submission to the Emperor for approval"*⁹⁸. The commission adjourned on May 10, 1857. The Duke of Walewski was proposed to the Emperor of France as a suitable candidate to oversee the protectorate.

The report was promptly presented to Napoleon III on July 16. After receiving advice from Empress Eugénie⁹⁹ and other relevant parties, the Emperor officially sanctioned the report's contents. It was subsequently determined that Napoleon III was persuaded by these recommendations, as he did not have a well-defined colonial strategy at the time¹⁰⁰.

In the middle of July 1857, news of the incident reached some ministers who expressed opposition to the expedition. Their concern stemmed from the anticipated expenses and unpredictable hazards associated with the venture. The Department of the Navy and Colonies, in particular, was highly skeptical of the potential profits from Cochinchina and its suitability as an ideal consumer market¹⁰¹.

⁹⁷ E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol 3, *op.cit*, p.79.

⁹⁸ *Les circonstances le rendent opportun, l'exécution en est facile et peu coûteuse, il semble enfin réunir toutes les conditions qui peuvent le recommander à l'approbation de l'Empereur.* (G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.409).

⁹⁹ María Eugenia Ignacia Augustina de Palafox y Kirkpatrick (1826-1920), or commonly known as Eugénie de Montijo, was the last Empress of the French from 1853 to 1870, as the wife of Emperor Napoleon III. (L. Badinguet, *L'Impérial Socialiste*, Massot Éditions, 2017, p.83).

¹⁰⁰ Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.50.

¹⁰¹ W. C. James, *Spain and the French Invasion of Cochinchina*, "Australian Journal of Politics and History", 1974, vol. 20, No. 3, p.335-345.

Prior to the committee's convening, Bishop Huc's proposal was subjected to a thorough evaluation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry, in fact, was largely opposed to the expedition and the establishment of a new colony. This position was articulated in a State Department thesis that advocated for several key points. Firstly, it called for the complete rejection of the continuation of the Treaty of Versailles from 1787. Secondly, it opposed the occupation of Da Nang. Thirdly, it cautioned against fostering the impression that French trade in the Far East “*was of minimal consequence when compared to that of England, as any such delusion could prove harmful*”¹⁰². Fourthly, the thesis emphasized that policies related to the Far East were of secondary importance, if not altogether meaningless, when compared to Europe both in terms of economics and politics.

In a report submitted to the emperor on July 16, 1857 - one week after the commission had concluded - Prince Walewski conveyed that his colleagues in the Ministry had not reached a consensus on the Cochinchine issue. Nevertheless, Rear Admiral Rigault de Genouilly was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in the Far East during the same time that France decided to engage in warfare with China. The Emperor sanctioned the decision to take action against Vietnam, much to the surprise of the Cabinet, who could only submit to the Emperor's authority. Two key points merit consideration here. Firstly, the Emperor disregarded the official stance of the French government, and instead opted for a flexible approach based on the specific situation at hand¹⁰³. This meant that the French could choose to establish a protection base, conduct a limited occupation, or withdraw completely. Secondly, it appeared that the "Cochinchine question" was driven more by the Emperor's personal interests in Catholicism rather than by colonial interests, as perceived by the Ministers.

Towards the end of November 1857, directives were issued with regards to the anti-Vietnamese campaign, outlining two main objectives. The first objective pertained to the matter of the Christian population, emphasizing the desire to put an end to the recurring oppression suffered by the religious community and to secure their well-being under the effective protection of France. The second objective aimed at establishing diplomatic relations between France and Vietnam¹⁰⁴. In January 1858, Admiral Rigault de Genouilly

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, p.73.

¹⁰³ Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.75-76.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p.77.

was tasked with the immediate commencement of military hostilities against Vietnam, contingent upon the evaluation that the war in China had become superfluous. The specific objective outlined in his orders was the capture of the strategic port of Da Nang. However, the Admiral was granted the authority to establish a protective administration if deemed strategically advantageous, while exercising caution to prevent excessive expenditure of resources for this campaign. Notably, de Genouilly was reminded not to overlook the ongoing conflict in China, thus highlighting the interconnectedness of the regional dynamics at play during this period¹⁰⁵.

In the summer of 1857, two warships, one French and one Spanish, arrived on the shores of Vietnam following the ordination of José Maria Diaz Sanjurjo¹⁰⁶ as the Apostolic Nuncio in the North and bishop of Central Tonkin. Bishop Diaz, who had joined the religious order in 1842 and arrived in the Eastern diocese in 1845, was ordained as coadjutor bishop of Central diocese in 1849 and served as the apostolic vicar of the diocese. However, he was arrested in late May 1857 and executed just two months later. The execution of Bishop Diaz caused great shock and outrage among the Spanish people, as described by Bishop Retord¹⁰⁷ in the APF¹⁰⁸. In September of 1857, the French ambassador in Yanjing (China), Count Gros¹⁰⁹, received an urgent plea for assistance from the Spanish consul in Macao, requesting aid in securing the release of French missionary Diaz, who was being held captive in Vietnam. To this end, Count Gros dispatched Rigault de Genouilly to utilize the Portuguese vessels *Le Catinat* and *Le Lilly*, which had been leased

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p.78.

¹⁰⁶ Bishop Fray José María Díaz Sanjurjo (1818-1857) was a Spaniard. Due to suspicions related to Western spying activities, on July 20, 1857, King Tu Duc ordered his execution in Nam Dinh. This event caused many Western countries to react violently, including Spain. (F. A. Marín, *Martínez se va a la guerra. Intervenciones militares de España en el extranjero*. Barcelona: Inédita Editores, 2005, p.179-180).

¹⁰⁷ Bishop Pierre-André Retord (1803 – 1858) was ordained a priest in Saint-Georges, Lyon in 1828. In 1831, he joined the Paris Missions Society and then went to Tonkin to do preaching. In 1839, he was appointed Apostolic Vicar for the West of Tonkin. The following year, he was ordained a bishop. After 27 years of dedication to the faith in Vietnam, he passed away in Ha Nam on October 22, 1858. (Do Quang Hung, *Nghiên cứu tôn giáo: nhân vật và sự kiện* (Religious studies: characters and events), Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 2009, p.84-87).

¹⁰⁸ Truong Ba Can, *Lịch sử phát triển Công Giáo ở Việt Nam* (History of Catholicism in Vietnam), vol 2, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, p.174.

¹⁰⁹ Jean-Baptiste Louis Gros (1793-1870) was a French diplomat and military officer. He served as the French Ambassador to Vietnam from 1847 to 1865. (Dang Thanh Tinh, *op.cit*, p.127).

by the Western Fleet, to transport De Kleczkowski¹¹⁰ to Vietnam to negotiate for Diaz's freedom and gather intelligence for the imminent invasion. Kleczkowski subsequently relayed his findings to the French Foreign Ministry in October of that year. In December, the French Foreign Ministry expressed interest in Spain's proposal to join the conflict, and with a sizeable troop presence in the Philippines, the Spanish government promptly accepted France's offer of aid without requiring any exchange¹¹¹. However, it is probable that Spain would not have intervened had the incident of violence not occurred. This was due to the concern that expanding its sphere of influence may detract from attention given to its own bases. Moreover, Diaz was a personal acquaintance of Empress Eugénie de Montijo of France during her formative years, and given that the Empress was a member of the Spanish royal family, she actively advocated for Spain's involvement.

Despite initial opposition from the French Minister of the Navy and Colonies to sharing their interests with Spain, Minister Hamelin ultimately formed an alliance with Spain based on their shared religious concerns. The Philippine Gazette reported in October 1858 that Spain's motivation for entering the war was solely based on their Catholic beliefs¹¹². In November 1862, the Spanish Ambassador to Paris confirmed that religion and relations with France were the driving forces behind their actions¹¹³. However, Genouilly, following the conclusion of the war, downplayed the significance of religion in the alliance. The execution of Bishop Diaz was recognized as only one factor in their decision to intervene, as news of the incident did not reach Paris until October 1857, whereas the Emperor had approved intervention in July of that year.

In the early months of 1858, de Genouilly led the capture of Guangdong province while the Anglo-French coalition seized Tianjin in May. The Tianjin Treaty¹¹⁴ was signed

¹¹⁰ Alexandre de Kleczkowski (1836-1895) was a French diplomat and politician. He had a notable career in the field of French diplomacy and was recognized as an important representative in building diplomatic relations with various countries. (*Ibidem*, p.131)

¹¹¹ "without talking to the French, before or after the expedition, about the price that the French must pay for their help". (According to Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.86).

¹¹² W. C. James, *Spain and Cochinchina, 1858-1863*, "Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali", 1975, vol. 42, No.3, p.392-398.

¹¹³ Cao Huy Thuan, 2016, *op.cit*, p.87.

¹¹⁴ The Treaty of Tianjin (1858) is different from the Treaty of Tianjin that China signed with France in 1885. The Treaty of Tianjin in 1858, was signed by China mainly with Britain and France. Contents include: 1/Representative of Britain and France freely residing in Beijing. 2/ English and French missionaries freely

at the end of June, which established the opening of numerous new ports for international trade. Minister Hamelin had already made the decision to reinforce the French fleet in the Pacific by sending various warships, including the Phéleto, Primauguet, first-class gunboats such as La Dragonne, L'Avanlanche, la Fusée, la Mitraille, the battleship Némésis, and a detachment of heavy artillery. After completing his mission in China, de Genouilly turned his attention to Vietnam, where on August 31, 1858, more than ten French and Spanish warships were present at Da Nang port, officially marking the beginning of the French invasion of Vietnam.

1.3 The Nguyen Dynasty's policy towards the Catholic propaganda activities of the French clergy

Prior to the 19th century, the French held a preeminent position as Western representatives at the Hue court and within the cultural and societal milieu of Vietnam. This prominent standing can be traced to the historical connections, pacts, and undertakings forged between the Nguyen Dynasty's founder and the French Bishop Adran (Pigneau de Béhaine) during the latter half of the 18th century¹¹⁵.

Towards the close of 1784, Nguyen Anh, prompted by familial interests, attempted several times to solicit the assistance of the King of Siam and Spanish colonial powers to suppress the Tay Son rebellion but to no avail. Consequently, he turned to France for

evangelize inland China. 3/Open more trading ports for trade. 4/British and French citizens have consular jurisdiction, that is, if they commit crimes on Chinese soil, they will be prosecuted by their consular officers; If they have a dispute with the Chinese, it will be handled by the Chinese mandarin together with the consul. The Treaty of Tianjin in 1885 consisted of 10 articles, which can be summarized as follows: China agreed to withdraw its troops from Vietnamese territory (Article 1). China recognizes the French protection of Vietnam (Article 2). The two sides will continue to negotiate on the Vietnam-China border issue (Article 3). The two sides will discuss a trade pact (Articles 5, 6). France agreed to withdraw its troops from Taiwan and the Pescadores (Article 9). (A. S. De Doncourt, *Les français dans l'Extrême-Orient: Chine, Japon, Indo-Chine, Annam, etc*, Paris, 1884, p.137-140).

¹¹⁵ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.54 and Nguyen Quang Hung, *Công giáo Việt Nam thời kỳ triều Nguyễn (1802 – 1883)* (Vietnamese Catholic in the Nguyen Dynasty 1802-1883), Religious Publishing House, 2007, p.70.

succor¹¹⁶, beseeching Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine, the chief of the Foreign Mission Society and a former overseer of a seminary in Hon Dat (Kien Giang province), to convey his 4-year-old son to France with the objective of seeking aid from the French government¹¹⁷.

Nguyen Anh, driven by a desire for revenge and self-serving familial interests, solicited the aid of foreign forces, thereby becoming a pawn in the designs of French colonialists who sought to invade Vietnam. It should be noted that during this period, the French financial system was beleaguered, political upheaval was rife, the French Revolution loomed, and the reign of King Louis XVI was uncertain¹¹⁸. Nonetheless, Count Montmorin, acting on behalf of the French, signed the Treaty of Versailles (Traité de Versailles de 1787) with Nguyen Anh (represented by Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine) on November 28, 1787¹¹⁹.

The Treaty of Versailles was, in essence, a pact by which Nguyen Anh ceded the country to French colonialists¹²⁰. For their part, the French promised to aid Nguyen Anh in restoring his dominion, furnish him with four warships, 1650 soldiers, and weapons, and establish several bases on the mainland if required¹²¹. Their ulterior motive to invade Vietnam was all too evident.

The Treaty of Versailles flagrantly contravened Vietnam's independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. Even Nguyen Anh himself came to realize the duplicity and intentions of the French invasion a few years after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

¹¹⁶ Bishop Adran advised Nguyen Anh that: not only rely on the Siamese but should find ways to mobilize the whole of France to send reinforcements. (see Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.110). And Nguyen Xuan Tho, *op.cit*, p.25.

¹¹⁷ Nguyen Xuan Tho, *op.cit*, p.26 and Dang Viet Thuy, Dang Thanh Trung, *54 vị Hoàng đế Việt Nam* (54 Emperors of Vietnam), Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 2008, p.278-279.

¹¹⁸ Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.151-152

¹¹⁹ O. Chapuis, *op.cit*, p.175.

¹²⁰ [Tran Van Giau – Luận về những nguyên nhân Việt Nam mất nước về tay Pháp (Discussing the causes of Vietnam's loss of country to France)]: <https://web.archive.org/web/20171002215439/http://tuanbaovan-nghetphcm.vn/luan-ve-nhung-nguyen-nhan-viet-nam-mat-nuoc-ve-tay-phap/> (accessed on September 18, 2022).

¹²¹ Ta Chi Dai Truong, *op.cit*, p.182-183.

Despite the non-execution of the Treaty of Versailles resulting from the French bourgeois revolution (1789-1794), the essential character and aspiration of French aggression remained unaltered¹²². The 1789 French bourgeois revolution objectively impeded the progress of France's plan to invade Vietnam. However, for the French bourgeoisie, subjugating Vietnam was “a national policy that successive governments had pursued through various revolutions”¹²³.

The French colonialist's plan to invade Vietnam unfolded through a series of events, and various colonial figures have been lauded by French historians for their contributions to this effort. Pigneau de Béhaine is deemed a "patriot", and “his political influence is highly esteemed among scholars of Vietnam's colonial expansion. Additionally, opponents of Vietnam's colonization have acknowledged his contributions”¹²⁴. An English observer noted that Pigneau de Béhaine was an exceptional individual, who, had he been given slightly more opportunity, could have established a larger empire in Asia than the English¹²⁵.

Upon ascending to the throne and establishing the Nguyen dynasty in 1802, Gia Long displayed an initial inclination towards distancing himself from the French. He even demonstrated a growing inclination to maintain a greater separation from Catholicism¹²⁶.

Regarding King Gia Long's stance on missionary activities, it is apparent that the role of French missionaries was impacted following Pigneau de Behaine's passing in 1799 and the establishment of the Nguyen dynasty. Thus, it is feasible to determine their distinct position in Vietnam's religious life from 1799 until 1820. The correspondence between French missionaries and officials is particularly useful in demonstrating Gia Long's impact on parish life. Specifically, there was a marked shift in the final years of Gia Long's reign, with a growing suspicion of the Crown Prince (subsequently King Minh

¹²² *Ibidem*, p.184.

¹²³ H. Galloi, *L'expédition de la Cochinchine et la politique dans l'Extrême - Orient*, Revue des deux Mondes, 1861, p.176.

¹²⁴ A. Launay, *Histoire générale de la Société des Missions étrangères (Lịch sử Hội truyền giáo đối ngoại)*, Paris, 1894, p.120.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.121.

¹²⁶ Truong Ba Can, vol.2, 2008, *op.cit*, p.18.

Mang)¹²⁷. In 1803, Archbishop Labartette¹²⁸ wrote that Gia Long's actions were motivated "not out of love for our religion but because of politics, out of gratitude"¹²⁹. In 1816, before death, Bishop Guérard Doan¹³⁰ in west of Outer Land wrote: "The only thing that worries me is that our mission parish situation is pitiful. Bishop Longer is in a difficult position"¹³¹. According to A.B. Woodside, "The French missionaries initially enjoyed the support of the Gia Long dynasty, only to be abruptly disfavored when Minh Mang ascended the throne"¹³².

In the realm of commerce, subsequent to Gia Long's accession to the throne, the French expressed marked eagerness to engage in planned trade with the newly-installed king. However, unlike their evangelical campaign, all such promotional endeavors were rebuffed by Gia Long for diverse reasons. Following an interlude of trade mediation, Emperor Gia Long granted Chaigneau permission to return home and visit his family. From 1815 onward, the French ploy to coerce Gia Long into enforcing the 1787 Treaty engendered a significant upheaval in Gia Long's disposition towards the French. Concomitant with their irrational and unjustifiable stipulations, the court at that time commenced to harbor anxieties regarding sovereignty, expressed skepticism towards the French author-

¹²⁷ Crown Prince Nguyen Phuc Dam (1791 – 1841) (later King Minh Mang) was an anti-Equatorial Catholic and had no sympathy for the French. (According to Dang Viet Thuy, Dang Thanh Trung, *op.cit.*, p.287 – 288).

¹²⁸ Archbishop Jean Labartette (1746 – 1823) was a Missionary of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) (<https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/blabaj.html>) (accessed on September 20, 2023). He served in the Diocese of Qui Nhon for 50 years and was one of the longest-serving missionaries in the history of the diocese from 1659 to 1850 (Diocese of Qui Nhon: <https://gpquinhon.org/q/on-co-tri-tan/cac-thua-sai-mep-o-giao-phan-qui-nhon-4066.html>). (accessed on September 20, 2023).

¹²⁹ A. Launay, *Histoire de la mission de la Cochinchine (1658-1823)*, Documents historiques. vol. III. Paris, 1925, p.425.

¹³⁰ Jean – Jacques Guérard (1816 – 1823), He was a Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of Western Tonking (<https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bguej.html>). (accessed on September 21, 2023).

¹³¹ Bui Duc Sinh, *Giáo hội Công giáo ở Việt Nam* (Catholic Church in Vietnam), vol. 1-2, Calgary, Canada, 1999, p.488.

¹³² A. B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: the Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988, p.17.

ities, strengthened their defenses, enforced seclusion, and instituted religious proscriptions¹³³. While the attitude of King Gia Long could be construed as "negative" in the French perspective, it bears emphasizing that the king exhibited impartiality in general European trade promotion activities, without any hint of discrimination. Indeed, King Gia Long even disregarded French evangelical activities in the region¹³⁴.

In the past, Vannier¹³⁵ reported to the French on Prince Dam's response, stating that "the court's intrigues and the prince's suspicion prevented any success and led to the rejection [of the offer to meet with King Gia Long] based on the laws of the country" and citing other reasons related to the diplomatic relations between the two nations: "How could a Prince betray his own people by siding with Europeans, especially the French, who have conquered our country..."; "Moreover, the Prince spoke of the persecution of our religion..."; and "It is very disadvantageous for us when the [Gia Long] king dies... Not only do we have complaints against the prince, as he still feigns friendship, but we also have to be constantly vigilant with almost all officials..."¹³⁶ However, after Minh Mang came to power, the French situation underwent a fundamental shift. Minh Mang not only did not continue the accommodating policy towards the French, but he also demonstrated a clear bias in favor of British trade activities for a long period of time¹³⁷. Therefore, all French attempts to negotiate a treaty under Minh Mang failed.

During the reigns of Gia Long and Minh Mang of the Nguyen Dynasty, French attempts at diplomacy following the return of Chaigneau and Vannier proved unsuccessful. Minh Mang's actions were recorded in the annals of Nguyen Dynasty history, wherein

¹³³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol III, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.162-166, 166-168, 168-169.

¹³⁴ According to F. De Montézon, *Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonkin*. Paris: Charles Douniol, 1858, p.84-85.

¹³⁵ Philippe Vannier (1762-1842), known as Nguyen Van Chan in Vietnamese, was a French naval officer and adventurer. He was one of the French individuals who participated in assisting Nguyen Anh (later Emperor Gia Long) in his fight against the Tay Son dynasty. (See Tran Tuyet Nhung, Reid A., *op.cit.*, p.206).

¹³⁶ H. Cosserat, "Notes biographiques sur les Francaise au service de Gia Long", BAVH, 4ème Année No 3 Juillet-Sept, 1917, p.193, 424.

¹³⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu*, vol.2. Translated by Vũ Quang Khanh and Võ Khắc Vân. [Saigon]: Phủ Quốc Vụ Khanh Đặc Trách Văn Hóa, 1972, p.432-433.

he explained his reasoning for refusing French overtures. In 1824, Minh Mang noted that France and England were at odds, and that although England had offered Mass on several occasions, the Vietnamese had refused. Therefore, Minh Mang suggested that it might be appropriate to allow France to demonstrate its filial piety. However, he also acknowledged that Vietnam had received assistance from France in the past, and that it would be ungrateful to immediately reject their advances¹³⁸.

Two years later, in 1826, a French ship arrived to request trade, but the king only offered a mild reprimand before ignoring the request. Despite this, the king provided the ship with various gifts, including elephant, pangolin, and tiger skins. Four years later, Minh Mang clearly articulated his foreign trade policy: “Vietnamese authorities would not actively resist foreign traders, but would also not actively engage with them. Foreign boats were not permitted to interact with local people and were only allowed to sell their goods before departing. The Vietnamese government aimed to strictly control foreign trade, leaving no room for exploitation by foreign traders”¹³⁹.

According to Yoshiharu Tsuboi's analysis, Minh Mang's approach to foreign influence was one of resistance coupled with openness. Vietnam during that period was not completely isolated in terms of tradition and knowledge, despite Minh Mang's efforts to limit European influence¹⁴⁰. From 1826 onwards, Minh Mang showed an appreciation for French culture, criticizing court officials who failed to recognize the benefits of integrating foreign practices into Vietnamese society. He began to imitate Western automobile models, experiment with telescopes and barometers, and purchased ships, cannons, and machinery. In an effort to achieve self-sufficiency, Minh Mang even dismantled old ships to learn how to construct these items himself. The king's expanding knowledge was also aided by translated books from missionaries and Chinese newspapers brought back by merchants from Guangdong. By the late 1820s, Minh Mang was even discussing complex scientific problems such as whether the earth was square or round and whether the sun was closer to the earth at noon or in the morning. By 1839, Minh Mang was criticizing

¹³⁸ According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol II, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.388.

¹³⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu*, vol.2, *op.cit*, p.465.

¹⁴⁰ T. Yoshiharu, *op.cit*, p.51.

his elders for their lack of knowledge regarding a lunar eclipse¹⁴¹. Overall, Minh Mang's approach to foreign influence was a cautious one that sought to balance the benefits of exposure to new ideas with the preservation of Vietnamese traditions and culture.

Regarding the religious landscape during the early Nguyen Dynasty, it is noteworthy that Gia Long's last will and testament to Minh Mang included a directive not to prohibit the three main religions in Vietnam - Confucianism, Buddhism, and Catholicism. Gia Long recognized the value of these religions and warned that persecution of any one of them could lead to social unrest¹⁴². In the initial years of Minh Mang's reign, both missionaries and laypeople were able to practice their religious beliefs with relative freedom¹⁴³. Catholic missionaries were particularly active during this period, establishing schools and hospitals throughout the country. However, the situation would later change, and religious persecution would become a significant issue under Minh Mang's rule¹⁴⁴.

In the wake of Minh Mang's ascension to the throne, the status of missionary activity and Catholicism in Vietnam became increasingly contentious. Subsequent rulers of the Nguyen Dynasty adopted an increasingly negative stance towards Catholicism, as evidenced by their attitudes and public statements¹⁴⁵.

During his reign, Minh Mang sent delegations to England and France between 1839 and 1841, in addition to receiving French delegations. This marked the second such diplomatic mission, the first being those undertaken by Nguyen Anh of Pigneau de Béhaine

¹⁴¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu*, vol 3, Translated by Vũ Quang Khanh and Võ Khắc Vân. [Saigon]: Phủ Quốc Vụ Khanh Đặc Trách Văn Hóa, 1972, p.540.

¹⁴² See Phan Phat Huon, *op.cit*, p.368.

¹⁴³ Nguyen Van Kiem, 2001, *op.cit*, p. 205; Truong Ba Can, vol 2, 2008, *op.cit*, p.10.

¹⁴⁴ Nguyen Quang Hung, *Những lý do văn hóa – chính trị và tôn giáo trong chính sách cấm đạo của Minh Mạng* (Cultural, political and religious reasons in Minh Mang's policy of banning religion), "Philosophy Magazine", 2004, No. 7, p.158.

¹⁴⁵ In January 1883, Minh Mang ordered the eradication of the religion, referring to it as "left-wing religion", which mentioned two typical cases of Duong Son (Thua Thien Hue) and Mong Phu (Son Tay) three years ago. This is considered the first prohibition edict and the king directly instructed the Royal Censorate and the Board of Punishments to execute them under torture. In July of the same year, the Le Van Khoi incident occurred, so the order was even more severe. The most severe measure was issued in the middle of 1838. During this period, nearly 20% of parishioners were beheaded due to their persistence in their faith, refusal of favors, and over 90% of priests and native teachers who escaped (however, of the 117 martyrs consecrated in 1988, 58 were under Minh Mang) (See Truong Ba Can, vol 2, 2008, *op.cit*, p.10).

and Prince Canh¹⁴⁶ in the previous century. Minh Mang's motivations for the trip have been the subject of much scholarly debate. Some have argued that he was concerned about the growing influence of Europeans in the region, while others have suggested that the Pope requested French intervention due to objections from the French press or a lack of enthusiasm from the French King. Regardless of the specific reasons, most scholars agree that Minh Mang was interested in observing Britain and Europe, particularly their naval power¹⁴⁷. The trip ultimately failed in terms of diplomacy, and the reasons for this failure remain a topic of scholarly inquiry.

In his ascension to the throne, Thieu Tri exhibited a mild temperament. He perceived that Minh Mang's edicts on religious prohibition were overly explicit and comprehensive, and therefore, he refrained from making any additional moves to evade causing disruption among the populace and overwhelming the court¹⁴⁸. Consequently, his vision for governance only involved following the path charted by Minh Mang. Nonetheless, he was faced with the "inheritance" of the Western religious issue that Minh Mang had bequeathed after his demise, since "a despotic monarch [Minh Mang] is liable to commit blunders and numerous evils"¹⁴⁹.

During Thieu Tri's reign, he decided to imprison foreign missionaries instead of killing them. "The persecution continues, but the bloodshed has stopped; prison and deportation have replaced previous forms of death"¹⁵⁰. He believed that Minh Mang's decrees on the prohibition of religion were too severe and did not want to further disturb the people or preoccupy the court. However, Thieu Tri was preoccupied with the situation in Siam, and in September 1841, he withdrew from Cambodia to stabilize the six southern provinces. Later, from 1845 to 1846, there was a war with the Siamese army, and Thieu

¹⁴⁶ Prince Canh (1780-1801), real name is Nguyen Phuc Canh (阮福景). He was the eldest son of King Gia Long (Nguyen Anh) and the first crown prince of the Nguyen dynasty. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), Translation by National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1998, p.28).

¹⁴⁷ Historian Tran Trong Kim said that because Christianity could not be banned in Vietnam, he went to France to negotiate with the French court on this matter (According to Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.457).

¹⁴⁸ Nguyen Van Kiem, *Sự du nhập của đạo Thiên Chúa ở Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XVII đến thế kỷ XIX.*, 2001, *op.cit*, p.215.

¹⁴⁹ Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.419.

¹⁵⁰ G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.321.

Tri was forced to abandon his plan to annex Cambodia and several Laos emirs in the area of Siam's influence¹⁵¹.

In regards to relations with the West, despite continuing the policy of isolating and not allowing Westerners to base their bases on Vietnamese territory as well as being anti-Christian, the influence of the war on opium and the tearing of the Chinese market made Thieu Tri have a more conciliatory attitude. In the early years, although he did not abolish the ban on religion, Thieu Tri still allowed it to be free, as if the court did not know. After 1847, the court and literature assimilated religion with the West: the West is Catholicism, Christianity is the West. The military action of the French "made many historians rely on this historical fact to affirm Catholics to the West"¹⁵². Thus, anti-Catholicism has shifted to a new context of anti-invasion and Westernization. After that, Thieu Tri issued a radical ban on religion. However, according to the assessment of Vietnamese historians, it did not cause damage because a few months later (November) the king died¹⁵³.

Therefore, the French encountered a challenging period after the "golden age". The dynamics of France-Vietnam relations were established during the first three reigns of the Nguyen Dynasty, making it difficult for France to restore its former influence. The long-standing conflicts and the natural evolution of both countries made a military confrontation and the end of the diplomatic phase inevitable. Consequently, subsequent negotiations were accompanied by military intervention.

In the midst of dynamic international changes, the Nguyen Dynasty faced significant challenges in responding to Western influences. When Tu Duc assumed the throne at the end of 1847, he was urged to adhere to the traditions of his forefathers and heed the counsel of his eminent ministers. Initially, his priority was to enforce the policies of his predecessors, Thieu Tri and Minh Mang. Nevertheless, the times had altered, with Western naval vessels dominating the seas. Despite some scholars contending that Tu Duc's ascension saw an escalation in anti-Christian sentiment: "*immediately he showed an aversion to Christians*"¹⁵⁴. However, as a person who "*seldom goes out, was thin and weak when he was a child*", "*Tu Duc is not as dictatorial as Minh Menh and had no enmity*

¹⁵¹ A. Forest, Condominas G., *Les missionnaires français au Tonkin et au Siam, XVIIe - XVIIIe siècles: Histoires du Siam*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1998, p.74-77.

¹⁵² Cao The Dung, *op.cit*, p.1625.

¹⁵³ Truong Ba Can, *Lịch sử phát triển Công Giáo ở Việt Nam...*, vol 2, 2008, *op.cit*, p.10-11.

¹⁵⁴ P. Devillers, *op.cit*, p.48.

towards Catholics like Minh Menh ..." should "anti-Catholicism under reign Tu Duc, a large part of the responsibility belongs to the views of the great minister"¹⁵⁵.

During the mid-nineteenth century in Vietnam, the growth of Catholic communities was characterized by a depth-centric rather than a breadth-centric approach. Missionaries resorted to monetary incentives to procure orphans or children from impoverished households as a means to increase their followers. Despite these efforts, the overall number of parishioners never surpassed 5% of the population. Philippe Papin, drawing on the research of D. Hémery and P. Brocheux, presented evidence to support this assertion: "*This policy of religious persecution is completely contrary to the development of Christianity in other countries in Asia, especially in China where fourteen dioceses were opened between 1844 and 1860...*"¹⁵⁶. During this period, the French missionaries were highly active in Vietnam; however, the actions taken by the Nguyen court were not as stringent as those implemented during the Minh Mang era when the activities of French missionaries were restricted within the broader context.

During the Minh Mang era, the collapse of the Gia Dinh citadel government following the demise of Le Van Duyet marked the termination of a historical trend characterized by the persistence of those in power. In a broader context, this event highlighted a resolute reversion to the socio-political model espoused by Minh Mang. As a result, the Gia Dinh government emerged as a pivotal site for redressing erroneous and subjective policies towards Western powers, thereby rendering the foreign policy of the Nguyen Dynasty more flexible yet simultaneously more extreme. "*If we still affirm this, many views and actions of Le Van Duyet, especially in the last years of King Minh Mang's reign, have contributed to limiting the harmful extent of that policy. And objectively, he has made specific contributions to changing the extreme Confucian view of this new Western infiltration of an alien religion*"¹⁵⁷. According to J. Ramsay: "Despite the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty in 1802, the southern territory of Gia Dinh, which served as the Nguyen Anh's base from 1780 to 1790, remained a distinctly separate border area throughout the 19th century. This locale was characterized by the presence of a Vietnamese minority and a weak central government that encountered persistent opposition. Although the Nguyen Dynasty's inception marked a turning point in the political history of

¹⁵⁵ Phan Phat Huon, *op.cit*, p.397-398.

¹⁵⁶ P. Devillers, *op.cit*, p.48.

¹⁵⁷ Do Quang Hung, *op.cit*, p.150-151.

Gia Dinh, Cochinchina continued to be viewed as a peripheral region throughout the 19th century. The land was typified by communities and local authorities who retained a long-standing ownership of the land, even as the Nguyen Dynasty sought to regain control over the region”¹⁵⁸.

At the end of 1851, there was a very remarkable event that King Tu Duc summoned the mandarins to consult on a policy against Catholicism. According to the document of author E. Vo Duc Hanh, this conversation had a passage: “The king asked how to make Catholics come to their senses and return to the right? Hunting them hard, my heart can't bear, but if we are tolerant, how can we correct the evil? The good rule of the nation requires everyone to think seriously about this incident ... In order to match the popularity of the people and the rule of the country, what is the best countermeasure to quell the sanctions, to the plowing prosperity, to eliminate injustice and eradicate Jesus' evil religion? Should be treated harshly or use peaceful measures”¹⁵⁹. When looking back at the edicts of 1848 and 1851, it is suggested that they were all due to pressure from the court because the king was only 19 years old at that time: “The king is young and the throne is uncertain. Therefore, despite the favorable tendencies towards Catholicism, he still had to give in to the demands of the great ministers that the king dreaded”¹⁶⁰.

The aforementioned event has prompted extensive discussions on the issue of Catholicism, which has been a longstanding societal dilemma. It has also shed light on the extent of power and control wielded by the king, and more broadly, the attitudes of Tu Duc and the court towards Catholicism during that period. The rift between non-Catholics and lay people was substantial, as was the divide within the court and government apparatus, from the central to the local level. Social unrest, combined with the perceptions and actions of the ruling elite, gave rise to tensions between the past and present. This represents a broader tragedy in Asia, where knowledge is available but there has been a lack of learning in response to the West. While Dai Viet society had at times embraced an "Alternative China" model, the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty represented a restructuring and re-establishment of the Chinese institutional model, despite its decline

¹⁵⁸ J. Ramsay, *Mandarins and Martyrs, The Church and the Nguyen Dynasty in Early Nineteenth-Century Vietnam*, Stanford University Press 2008, p.21.

¹⁵⁹ E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam de 1851 à 1870*, vol 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, p.286.

¹⁶⁰ Truong Ba Can, *Lịch sử phát triển Công Giáo ở Việt Nam...*, vol 2, 2008, *op.cit.*, p.152.

and impediment to modernization and Westernization. The majority of countries deeply influenced by China have struggled with self-reliance, making the choice and determination to pursue a new development model an urgent need in the East Asian context at that time.

While in France was speeding up the intervention in Vietnam, in 1855, King Tu Duc issued a very strict edict¹⁶¹. At the end of 1856, after the French disturbance in Da Nang, King Tu Duc arrested General Ho Dinh Hy¹⁶² on suspicion of tacit dealings with foreign countries. The history of the Nguyen Dynasty records: "*Ho Dinh Hy implicitly followed the Catholic religion... Approved the dismissal, forced the chain to investigate. After completing the investigation (April 10, year 10), in the end, Hy was guilty of following the evil cult and plotting treason, immediately executed*"¹⁶³. "That was the first reaction of the Hue court towards Catholicism after the French ship bombardment of Da Nang port in September 1856"¹⁶⁴. Immediately after the Montigny negotiations failed, in May 1857, King Tu Duc issued an edict encouraging the destruction of Christianity. "*These mature religious people are very skillful in inciting the sympathy of the parishioners to make them ready to sacrifice at any cost. And if unfortunately the leaders are caught, they can immediately have thousands of taels of silver for them to find a way to escape. So the land is where the people who were bought by money on the spot have abandoned the law*"¹⁶⁵. At that time, the synagogues were packed with Catholics, the seminary was scattered, the clergy ran everywhere, the churches and villages where parishioners were burned.

¹⁶¹ "It took six months for the people and soldiers to renounce their religion...have to burn all the churches and rectory, throw the cellars and caves, ban the faithful from gathering; or use all means to destroy the evil sectarian religion" (See Nguyen Van Kiem, 2001, *op.cit*, p.228; Phan Phat Huon, *op.cit*, p.297).

¹⁶² Ho Dinh Hy (1808-1857) was a Vietnamese Catholic believer who held an esteemed position within the Nguyen Dynasty. He was martyred during the reign of Emperor Tu Duc and was canonized as a saint by Pope John Paul II in 1988, within the Roman Catholic Church. (Hội đồng Giám mục Việt Nam (Vietnamese Bishops' Conference): <https://hdgmvietnam.com/chi-tiet/thanh-micae-ho-dinh-hy-tu-dao-ngay-22-thang-5-nam-1857-48926>) (accessed on October 27, 2022).

¹⁶³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.472.

¹⁶⁴ Truong Ba Can, *Lịch sử phát triển Công Giáo ở Việt Nam...*, vol 2, 2008, *op.cit*, p.161.

¹⁶⁵ Nguyen Van Kiem, *Sự du nhập của đạo Thiên Chúa ở Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XVII đến thế kỷ XIX...*, 2001, *op.cit*, p.229-230; E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol 2, *op.cit*, p.316-317.

In general, official historical documents record very little about the current situation of Vietnam, for example, *Châu Bản triều vua Tự Đức* (Vermilion Records of the reign of King Tự Đức (1848 – 1883)) recorded the events of 1857¹⁶⁶ as follows:

January 3: The Infantry reported the arrival of French ships in Da Nang and requested to be taken to the capital Hue to speak to a top official. The Infantry suggested that the mandarins in Da Nang wear court clothes, welcome and negotiate with them. If the French arbitrarily send the ship to Thuan An, they will handle it depending on the situation.

January 6: The infantry reported being ready to open fire if French ships from Da Nang arbitrarily towed to Thuan An. January 29: The Board of Punishments reported on the trial of Christians. On August 29, it was recorded that last month, two Western ships came to the sea to rob and find parishioners. In the following months, the Infantry reported on arming and creating some new weapons.

In 1858, the Infantry provided a report on the French invasion in Da Nang, which prompted the king to take direct action and actively defend against the French. Following the construction of additional fortresses, the king and his court enforced the prohibition of Catholicism. It is worth noting that information about religious bans from China or Japan influenced King Tu Duc's decision to implement large-scale religious bans. Moreover, whenever the king felt dissatisfied with his dealings with the French, he would execute Catholics as a means of alleviating his anger, rather than adhering to a formal policy¹⁶⁷.

During the reign of King Tu Duc, there was a significant expansion of the royal family, which led to a concurrent increase in the number of factions. Concurrently, societal malaise, widespread hunger, and rampant disease were responsible for a significant number of fatalities¹⁶⁸. This resulted in a decrease in social cohesion. Furthermore, during the Nguyen dynasty, there were instances of direct attempts to overthrow the throne, as well as threats from both Catholic and non-Catholic factions. From the above expressions, a researcher said that: “*The Nguyen Dynasty faced imminent collapse during the reign of*

¹⁶⁶ Quốc sử quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Châu bản triều Tự Đức (1848-1883)* (Vermilion Records of the reign of King Tự Đức (1848 – 1883), *op.cit.*, p.1425-1426.

¹⁶⁷ Pham Van Son, *op.cit.*, p.61.

¹⁶⁸ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các vua Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society under the Nguyen Dynasty kings), Literary Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, p.115.

King Tu Duc, were it not for the inadvertent intervention of the French. This intervention unintentionally saved the Nguyen from the repercussions of mounting internal tensions”¹⁶⁹. From a scholarly perspective, it could be argued that the French intervention generated an exogenous shock that played a role in the breakdown of the prior development paradigm.

According to scholar J. Buttinger: “For Minh Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc, the fight against missionary clerics has always been the inseparable part from the struggle against Western political interference. The intellectuals who reigned on the throne suffered from a general deviation from class ideology. They saw the spiritual and material forces of the West as a single hostile whole... The Vietnamese authorities were equally powerless to exploit contemporary French public opinion against military action in the East”¹⁷⁰.

In the course of relations and moves from the two sides, “Vietnam's hostility towards the West has strengthened and promoted the motivations for Western aggression. On the other hand, Western threats and demands strengthened the determination of the Nguyen emperors to eliminate all foreign influences within the national borders. They may have overestimated the level of aggression in French policy toward Vietnam prior to 1850, but they can cite the examples of India and Burma. After 1840, they also experienced the shock of British and French intervention in China. Unable to learn the proper political lesson, they continued to abuse but they did so out of their own growing fear of being persecuted”¹⁷¹. The period ushered in an endless conflict between the power of the king, the dynasty and the missionary clergy¹⁷². Historian Tran Trong Kim once remarked: “If a king as strict as the Holy Ancestor [Minh Mang] cannot be banned, of course he must be killed. While banning and killing like that, he still thought he was doing his duty as king, but he didn't know that he was doing damage to the people for the country”¹⁷³.

In the broader context of the region and the global arena, the influx of French capital into Vietnam has progressively intensified. Paradoxically, akin to other Eastern nations, “the Vietnamese perceived the French expedition as a harbinger of peace. Nevertheless,

¹⁶⁹ Nguyen The Anh, *Parcours d'un historien du Việt Nam*, ed. Philippe Papin, Les Indes savantes, Paris, 2008, p.197.

¹⁷⁰ J. Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p.275-276.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p.276.

¹⁷² P. Brocheux, D. Hémary, *op.cit*, p.26.

¹⁷³ Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.418.

this phenomenon has led to a surge in the brutal repression of Christianity throughout the country”¹⁷⁴. Regrettably, even the French expedition commander Regault de Genouilly subsequently acknowledged the court's erroneous judgment: "the court was deceived, made a mistake", "The Vietnamese were not strong enough to maintain control of their country, yet they continued to engage in cruel actions. They prevented foreigners from engaging in business and oppressed those who attempted to proselytize. It is for these reasons that France and Spain launched an attack on Vietnam"¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol 1, 1969, *op.cit*, p.341.

¹⁷⁵ Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.471.

CHAPTER 2

THE NGUYEN DYNASTY'S COMPROMISE AND THE RESOLUTE RESISTANCE OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE: A STUDY ON VIETNAM'S STRUGGLE FOR SOVEREIGNTY AGAINST FRENCH INCURSIONS (1858-1867)

2.1 French Invasion of Vietnam: An Analytical Exploration of Motivations and Factors

Prior to the 1840s and 1850s, France's political landscape underwent significant changes with the emergence of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I. Louis Napoleon Bonaparte ascended to the highest echelons of political power, starting as President in 1848 and ultimately becoming Emperor of France as Napoleon III from 1852 until 1870. This period marked a new phase of development for France as industrial and commercial activities expanded in scale and scope, while urbanization accelerated. However, it is important to note that this society was predominantly characterized by speculative practices, financial exploitation, and oppressive behavior, despite being carefully concealed from public view. As a result, the country's values of "Freedom, Equality, Fraternity" were replaced by a reliance on military strength, including artillery, cavalry, and infantry¹.

In terms of foreign affairs, France made significant strides, marked by a strong colonial effort "by the end of the French empire, it had more than 900,000 km² of colonies with a population of 6.5 million, second only to England²". For England, this was a period marking their dominance on the seas. For them, foreign policy was about creating a balance of power among European countries, as long as countries maintained their equilibrium, England could act as an arbiter and be free to conquer colonies³. In his speech in 1853, Emperor Napoleon III declared the French empire to be one of peace (*L'Empire*,

¹ Nguyen Manh Dung, *Quá trình xâm nhập của Pháp vào Việt Nam từ cuối thế kỷ XVII đến giữa thế kỷ XIX – Nguyên nhân và hệ quả* (The process of French infiltration into Vietnam from the end of the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century – Causes and consequences), Hanoi National University Press, 2018, p.252.

² Dang Thanh Tinh, *Lịch sử nước Pháp* (History of France), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006, p.185.

³ Vu Duong Ninh (editor), *Lịch sử quan hệ quốc tế* (History of international relations), Publishing House University of Education, Hanoi, 2010, p.49.

c'est la paix). However, in reality, Napoleon III pursued a strong foreign policy to expand the power and glory of France. After the Crimean War (1854-1856), France prioritized the Southeast Asian region. Napoleon III's foreign policy aimed to enhance France's power and prestige on the global stage. Following the Crimean War (1854-1856), France turned its attention towards the Southeast Asian region, although penetrating the Far Eastern market was fraught with difficulties. In comparison to other European nations of the period, France missed out on numerous opportunities for expansion. For instance, in 1840, there were only three French merchant ships present in Chinese ports, while the British had 34 ships. Similarly, in 1841, the estimated value of France's trade with East Asia amounted to a mere 40.5 million francs, whereas British exports to China alone reached 310 million francs. By 1845, of the 108 Western commercial establishments in China, the French owned only one, while the British owned 68⁴. As the first nation to undergo an industrial revolution, England quickly emerged as a preeminent global power, known for its extensive colonial empire, maritime dominance, and industrial prowess. During Napoleon III's reign, France participated in several wars, including conflicts in Russia, China, Vietnam, Italy, and Mexico.

Upon ascending to power, Napoleon III made efforts to reconcile with the Vatican and the French clergy, who were not entirely supportive of freedom at the time. Catholic associations held significant sway, and the Church's influence in France gradually diminished. In order to appease and reconcile with the Church, Napoleon III supported various demands overseas, seeking to reinforce France's historical position as the "Eldest Daughter of the Church" and boost the Emperor's prestige. Contrary to his wife, the French Emperor was not deeply devout. However, the considerable support he received from the Empress and the clergy was a crucial factor in his ascension to the throne. According to J. Buttinger, this support played a significant role in the early stages of the Emperor's reign, and "pressure from the clergy was responsible for the political and social reactions within the country as well as for Napoleon III's colonial policy, particularly regarding Vietnam and Mexico"⁵.

Another aspect to consider is the status of the French bishops in Vietnam, which has been subject to differing assessments. While some argue that the bishops represented

⁴ P. Brocheux, D. Hémery, *Indochina, An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858-1954*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009, p.30-31.

⁵ J. Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p.396.

the Holy See and were independent of French or Spanish churches, others maintain that the Missions Etrangères de Paris (MEP) was a national missionary society⁶ and that the Holy See had no influence over its expansionist plans. For example, Bishop Pellerin once visited Emperor Napoleon III before going to Rome⁷, highlighting the MEP's relationship with the French court. In the early 1850s, France sought to expand its diplomatic missions to East Asia, with some French missionaries working to draw attention to the region. Following the consolidation of its foreign and domestic policies and after the Crimean War - a “minor war” aimed at strengthening its throne⁸ - Emperor Napoleon III adopted an official policy towards Vietnam.

Thus, under the reign of Napoleon III, France's policy raised the issue of Indochina to a much higher level. Although Napoleon III did not value Indochina in his strategic calculations, under pressure, the more important factor was the severe shortage of colonies and trade over a large area “For a considerable time, France's expansion in Asia had been driven by limited financial and commercial interests of the metropolis, particularly in East Asia. However, this ambition was largely contingent on initiatives in Europe. A pressing factor driving the French empire's pursuit of Indochina was the need to counter-balance strong external impetus, which exerted significant economic and social pressure on France from 1850 onwards. The expansion of French capitalism into the world market, with a focus on industrial growth to address the narrowness of the domestic market and weak consumption, provided momentum for this overseas economic expansion. Yet, the short-term strategies of the business environment and the French colonial traders in Indochina were not mechanistically related. Instead, this relationship was inextricably

⁶ Cao The Dung, *Việt Nam Công giáo sử tân biên* (1533 – 2000) (History of Catholicism in Vietnam 1533 – 2000), Media of the Christians Published, 2003, p.1710-1711.

⁷ In 1858, the joint Franco-Spanish military assault on Da Nang occurred during a period when the relationship between France and the Holy See was severely strained. This was a time when the concept of “France is the whole world” (Qu'est-ce que la nation - C'est tout le Monde) was being instilled in the new generation. The Missions Etrangères de Paris (MEP) complied with the letter of canon law and upheld the prestige of the Church, but did not have a significant impact on local customs. The MEP proposed the appointment of bishops through the Ministry of Missionary, with the Pope issuing an order to legitimize the appointment. The Pope called upon the world to aid in the protection of the Vietnamese Catholic population, a sacred obligation and duty of the Church. (according to Nguyen Manh Dung, *op.cit*, p.167).

⁸ Vu Duong Ninh (editor), 2010, *op.cit*, p.63.

linked to the overseas economic expansion of French capitalism, particularly in the textile and metallurgy industries⁹.

The policy towards Indochina during the reign of Napoleon III was primarily driven by the imperative to preserve France's political dominance, despite the undeniable importance of economic interests¹⁰. “Never before in this 19th century has the prestige of a great power needed to reach such a global scale; and this importance can only be obtained in Asia”¹¹. It was the imperative of that vital interest that drove the French Emperor to the determined decision to conquer Vietnam - one of the remaining "free" spaces. For the government of Napoleon III, “Southeast Asia was one of the last frontiers, thereby doubling the urgency of expansion”. As their later ambition demonstrated, they sought to transform “Saigon into a French-controlled Singapore (*faire Saigon un Singapour français*)”¹².

It can be said that both the economic concern and the strategic geographical position in Indochina prompted France to expedite its intervention in Vietnam. On the other hand, the significance of the strategic competition level also forced France to make timely adjustments, even though its naval strength was inferior to that of England and the regional interests of other Western countries at that time.

Preparation and intervention strategies of the French military in Vietnam

Upon ascending to the throne, King Tu Duc promulgated a decree aimed at suppressing Catholicism, resulting in the execution of several French clergymen. In response, Bishop Pellerin wrote a missive to France in late 1854, appealing for immediate intervention as the only means of putting an end to the persecution. Nevertheless, such a course of action was not unanimously supported, with concerns raised that it could exacerbate the repressive measures undertaken by the Vietnamese authorities. Under these circum-

⁹ P. Brocheux, D. Hémery, *op.cit*, p.21.

¹⁰ Extensive naval programs were implemented during this period, including the establishment of navy units in the East Sea starting from 1840. However, there was no investment in expanding their influence during this decade. To enhance naval capabilities, the government of Napoleon III established a network of specialized stations for transporting coal, wood, and other essential resources. The government recognized that without such infrastructure, they would not be able to compete with the British. (according to P. Brocheux, D. Hémery, *op.cit*, p.21-22).

¹¹ P. Brocheux, D. Hémery, *op.cit*, p.21-22.

¹² *Ibidem*.

stances, the government was only able to request that the French residing in Macau furnish them with information and materials about Vietnam, thereby enabling them to make an assessment of the political situation in the ensuing May¹³. The Treaty of Huangpu was signed between France and the Qing Dynasty in 1844, and contained nine articles related to religion¹⁴, which granted the French not only commercial rights, but also special protection for their religious followers throughout China.

In the current context, the emergence of the United States in the region has generated significant concerns for Britain and France. Since the 1840s, the United States has collaborated with European countries in occupying China via treaties with the Qing dynasty. By the mid-19th century, the United States had begun to articulate its political and strategic interests in Asia with greater clarity. As a continental power situated between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the United States recognized the importance of its position. "... According to the President's [US] opinion... all nations in the world will be united by the early establishment of a steamship route from California to China..."¹⁵. "Asia suddenly became our neighbor, with a calm ocean lying between two continents, the steamships of the United States will have a greater commercial advantage than any other European countries"¹⁶.

At this time, the US overseas officials were quite aware of the internal situation in Vietnam, but at the same time they saw the limitations of the invasive schemes of these European countries. In Admiral M.Perry¹⁷'s official report to the US, he wrote: "Although

¹³ Nguyen Manh Dung, *op.cit*, p.260.

¹⁴ E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam de 1851 à 1870*, vol 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, p.77-78.

¹⁵ In a directive sent on June 10, 1851, US Secretary of State Daniel Webster (1782-1852) passionately articulated this new awareness to Admiral John H. Aulick, Commander of the East India Fleet. (According to R. H. Miller, *The United States and Vietnam 1787 – 1941*, National defense University Press, Washington DC, 1990, p.57-65).

¹⁶ In 1848, US Treasury Secretary R.J. Walker had previously commented. (According to M. B. Jansen, *The Cambridge history of Japan*, vol V, The nineteenth century, The Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.268).

¹⁷ Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794 – 1858) was a Vice Admiral of the United States Navy. He is known in history for commanding the East India Squadron to Japan to force the country to open its doors to foreign trade after over 200 years of implementing a policy of seclusion. (W. E. Griffis, *Matthew Calbraith Perry: A Typical American Naval Officer*. Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1887, p.32).

some feeble efforts have been made by England and France to establish a friendly understanding with these countries, they have only met with insignificant success, perhaps owing to an illiberal diplomacy, and have been aggravated by the circumstance that two French sailing vessels in 1847 had fought with the authorities at Da Nang, where the native fleet was destroyed, with the loss of a large number of their seamen..."¹⁸. Despite maintaining an interest in Siam and Vietnam, the United States' endeavors to seize key territories were hindered by a lack of ample opportunity for its political leaders to execute their plans. Concurrently, France had unequivocally resolved to occupy Vietnam and was actively undertaking decisive measures to meddle in its domestic affairs.

With regards to the French initiatives, during the 1850s, the missionaries persisted in soliciting assistance to rectify the religious landscape in Vietnam. During October 1855, Montigny was located in France and was designated to initiate negotiations for a treaty of amity and commerce, with provisions for safeguarding religious liberties and the pursuits of missionaries in Siam and Vietnam upon their arrival on French soil in Shanghai. Nonetheless, dissimilar views persisted within the French court. Foreign Minister Walewski remained indecisive concerning whether "*the present moment was opportune for seeking to establish closer ties with the Vietnamese government or not*"¹⁹.

In 1856, following the completion of his assignment, Montigny was dispatched by the French government to Hue to demand unfettered trade and the immediate allowance of missionary activity. However, while Montigny was still occupied in Siam, Napoleon III dispatched a warship to Vietnam, leading to a tumultuous turn of events²⁰. On September 16, 1856, the French forces brought the warship Catina to Da Nang²¹, and on September 26, 1856, they bombarded the fortresses along the coast. The result of this incident was: "*All of these events did not cause us to lose any lives... there were even those who wanted us to cause more destruction*"²².

Subsequently, on October 24, 1856, a different French naval vessel arrived in Da Nang and was presented with a missive from the Hue court consenting to provide for the

¹⁸ R. H. Miller, *op.cit*, p.57-65.

¹⁹ E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol. 1, 1969, p.57-60.

²⁰ Nguyen Manh Dung, *op.cit*, p.267.

²¹ E. Vo Duc Hanh, *La place du Catholicisme dans les relations entre la France et le Vietnam de 1851 à 1870*. vol. 2. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969, p.38-41.

²² Truong Ba Can, *Lịch sử phát triển Công Giáo ở Việt Nam* (History of Catholicism in Vietnam), vol. 2, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, p.158.

needs of French ships and permitting the unrestricted movement of French citizens across the peninsula. The court was anticipating the arrival of Montigny²³. Montigny arrived in Vietnam on January 23, 1857, and immediately convened a conference between the French and Vietnamese in Da Nang. From the outset, Montigny insisted that his counterpart possessed authorization from the king himself; otherwise, he would travel to Hue. The court bestowed the mandate to negotiate on the officials in Da Nang, along with a specified deadline. However, the meeting reached a stalemate. Montigny became increasingly impatient and determined, underscoring that he had arrived to propose a treaty since France had already signed treaties with China, Siam, Tonkin, and Japan, but none with Vietnam. Montigny's oration illustrated that his visit was not solely intended for negotiations but also to bring peace to Vietnam. He recounted, “*An official once again informed me that if I sought to engage in battle, they would be willing to fight...I told him that he and his people were ignorant of the horrors of war, and I advised him to pray to God to witness the devastation that would be wrought upon his wretched country. Our forces and means of destruction are formidable enough to wipe the kingdom of Vietnam off the world map on the day we arrive as foes...*”²⁴. Furthermore, Montigny urged the Vietnamese officials to comprehend the formidable might of France, as evidenced in their wars with Russia, Hong Kong, and China. In his view, the Vietnamese side ought to recognize unequivocally that they could not hope to match the French militarily. Thus, the best course of action was to willingly accept the treaty presently, for if they waited, they would be coerced into compliance without any alternative. Montigny reiterated, “If you desire peace, we shall have peace, and if you desire war, we shall fight” (*si vous voulez la paix, faisons - la, si vous voulez la guerre, battons-nous*)²⁵.

Upon receiving confirmation that the king would ratify the Treaty, Montigny proceeded with the negotiations. In February of 1857, both parties commenced deliberations regarding the precise stipulations of the Treaty, which encompassed 28 articles that Montigny had drafted and translated²⁶. During that same month, Montigny terminated all negotiations and issued a warning regarding the employment of force in response to reli-

²³ Nguyen Manh Dung, *op.cit*, p.265.

²⁴ G. Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, t.1, Paris: Éditeur Adrien Maisonneuve, 1955, p.394.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.394; and E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol. 2, 1969, *op.cit*, p.58-59.

²⁶ G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.395-396.

gious oppression. Prior to departing from Da Nang on February 7, 1857, Montigny dispatched a letter of intimidation, asserting that *“if religious persecution persists and executions based solely on the French faith continue, hostile acts will compel the government of the Emperor (France) to undertake more drastic measures when you or another plenipotentiary arrives in Hue with fresh powers and the requisite means to secure a respectable treaty”*²⁷.

According to the documents from France, there were three active groups at that time campaigning for the French government to invade Vietnam: firstly, the French naval officers in the China Sea; secondly, French diplomats in China; and thirdly, the most enthusiastic and passionate group consisting of the priests. The representatives of this group were Bishop Retord, priest Evarit Huc, priest Liboa, and Bishop Pellerin. Since 1848, Bishop Retord had sent a letter to France asking for intervention in order to gain religious freedom, but did not dare to suggest a solution²⁸. In January 1857, Huc presented a report to Napoleon III urgently requesting the government to rely on the 1787 Treaty of Versailles to establish a foreign naval base in Vietnam. Bishop Huc played a significant role in persuading the French government at that time²⁹.

During that period, Father Huc, a French Lazarist priest, had submitted a plan to Napoleon III to establish a trading company in India to exploit resources from Korea, Danang (Vietnam), and Madagascar between 1853 and 1856³⁰. After the French warship's invasion of Danang in 1856, Father Huc continued to press the French government to invade Vietnam. Following his proposal, the French government established a Vietnam Research Commission (*La Commission de la Cochinchine*) in April 1857.

Pellerin, who served as the Archbishop of Vietnam, was also involved in advocating for Catholicism. In March 1857, he returned to Paris from Hongkong³¹. Pellerin also presented a detailed report to Napoleon III, emphasizing that the British were paying close

²⁷ *“Si les persécutions religieuses persistent et les exécutions basées uniquement sur la foi française continuent, des actes hostiles obligeront le gouvernement de l'Empereur (France) à entreprendre des mesures plus drastiques lorsque vous ou un autre plenipotentiary arriverez à Hué avec de nouveaux pouvoirs et les moyens nécessaires pour obtenir un traité respectable”*. (E. Vo Duc Hanh, vol. 2, 1969, *op.cit*, p.67-68).

²⁸ G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.375-376.

²⁹ Cao The Dung, *op.cit*, p.1747.

³⁰ Nguyen Manh Dung, *op.cit*, p.278.

³¹ G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.385.

attention to Danang³². As with Father Huc, Priest Pellerin also assumed a prominent role in reporting to the Vietnam Research Commission. However, it has been suggested that Pellerin went too far and actively participated in France's scheme to invade Vietnam. The purported goal of saving the faith and religious freedom was viewed as a mere pretext or excuse for the French government, rather than a genuine concern for religious beliefs³³. According to Yoshiharu Tsuboi, *"The views and stances taken by Archbishop Pellerin signal a significant departure in the approach of the Paris Missionary Society. Prior to this, the missionaries dispatched to Vietnam had focused solely on preaching the gospel and saving souls, with little regard for political concerns. When faced with persecution, they had endured it with fortitude and martyrdom, without relying on assistance from European powers"*. Despite its recent establishment on April 22, 1857, the committee wasted no time in convening and formulating an invasion plan, holding seven consecutive sessions by May 18, 1857, in accordance with Napoleon III's directive.

During the meetings, the Vietnam Research Commission reached a consensus that occupying the three primary regions of Vietnam (originally Cochinchina) would best serve France's interests in the moral, political, and commercial realms. The committee also proposed a military plan that would depart from France and operate independently from the French fleet in China to capture Danang, Saigon, and Ke Cho (Hanoi). In contrast, the idea of establishing a new company in India was dismissed in favor of preserving the Vietnamese dynasty under French protection³⁴. The plan was subsequently approved by Napoleon III in mid-July 1857³⁵.

During this time, the Hue court executed José Maria Diaz Sanjurjo, the Archbishop of Tonkin, who was of Spanish descent³⁶. The French colonialists exploited the incident, using the religious issue as a pretext for invasion and for the formation of a Franco-Spanish military alliance.

During that period, the Empress of France, Eugénie de Montijo, a prominent figure with considerable influence over Emperor Napoleon III, was a Spanish-born woman. In her youth, Eugénie had encountered Bishop Diaz. Upon learning of Diaz's execution, she

³² *Ibidem*, p.404-405.

³³ Cao The Dung, *op.cit*, p.1748-1749.

³⁴ G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.407.

³⁵ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858 - 1896* (Vietnamese History 1858 – 1896), ed. Pham Quang Trung, Nguyen Ngoc Co, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi 2003, p.30.

³⁶ G. Taboulet, t. 1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.411.

proclaimed, “*We must avenge the deaths of these men for the sake of our faith. We were the first to think of Indochina and we want to annex this land*”³⁷. The notion of a Franco-Spanish military alliance to intervene in Vietnam materialized by the end of 1857. On December 1, 1857, the French government sent a confidential letter to the Spanish regent, soliciting the cooperation of the Madrid court in “avenging Diaz”.

The French decision to initiate an attack against Vietnam cannot be directly attributed to the incident involving Bishop Diaz. However, it is worth noting that the prevalent desire among the French to seek retribution for the heinous killings of clergymen may have had a bearing on this decision³⁸. French historian Taboulet asserted that the Diaz incident “*could not be the first reason, the reason and principle of this had been decided by the French king and ordered in the government council since mid-July 1858*”³⁹. Napoleon III specifically requested the assistance of Spain, hoping that they could contribute “*2000 or at least 1500 soldiers from the garrisons in the Philippines*”⁴⁰. On December 4, 1857, the Spanish ambassador to Paris sent a letter to the Foreign Minister of Spain, stating that “*with the desire to contribute to such a useful cause in every aspect, Spain can provide a complete battalion of 1200 men along with corresponding heavy artillery and 1 or 2 warships*”⁴¹. On the 12th of December in 1857, the Spanish government issued an official response that affirmed the political alliance between the two nations⁴².

The French plan to invade Vietnam was executed urgently. After Admiral Rigault de Genouilly was appointed, just ten days later, on November 25, 1857, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Walewski, issued a directive for Genouilly's flexible combat strategy:

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p.414-415.

³⁸ T. Yoshiharu, Nguyen Dinh Dau (translated) *Nước Đại Nam đối diện với Pháp và Trung Hoa (L'Empire Vietnamien face à la France et à la Chine (1847-1885))*, Tri thuc Publishing House, Ha Noi 2014, p.260-261.

³⁹ G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.416.

⁴⁰ The author Nguyen Xuan Tho quoted from the diplomatic archives in Madrid. (See Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)* (The beginning of the installation of the French colonial system in Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)), Hong Duc Publishing House, 2018, p.48).

⁴¹ “*Dans le désir de contribuer à une cause aussi utile à tous égards, l'Espagne peut fournir un bataillon complet de 1200 hommes avec l'artillerie lourde correspondante et un ou deux navires de guerre*”. (*Ibidem*, p.50).

⁴² Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.33.

*"... Upon reaching the designated location, Admiral Genouilly was instructed to promptly seize complete control over both the bay and the territory of Da Nang. Following the successful occupation of this position, two possible courses of action were to be considered - either the establishment of a protectorate regime within Vietnamese soil, or the conclusion of a trade, friendship, and navigation treaty. It is noteworthy that the ultimate decision rests with Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, with the King expressing satisfaction with either option. In order to ensure the fulfillment of Annamese government commitments, and to take appropriate action in a timely fashion, it was deemed essential to maintain the occupation of Da Nang as a guarantee"*⁴³.

On the evening of August 30th, 1858, a formidable force of the enemy arrived in the vicinity of the Bay of Da Nang or the Son Tra peninsula of Da Nang, with a scale that had never been witnessed before. Initially, there were 12 warships on the first day, with four more being added in the following days, making a total of 16 large and small ships, with 1,000 Spanish troops and an additional 1,500 French troops, all equipped with the latest European weaponry and military equipment. According to the official historical account of the Nguyen Dynasty, *"the French force comprised 12 warships"*⁴⁴.

2.2 Vietnam during the Joint Invasion by the Franco-Spanish Alliance: A Scholarly Exploration

2.2.1 The Vietnamese Armed Forces and Civilian Population in the French Offensive on the Son Tra Peninsula

On the afternoon of August 31st, 1858⁴⁵, the Franco-Spanish coalition established their positions at the coastal entrance to Da Nang in Quang Nam, with the strategic objective of swift and decisive victory. Their plan involved capturing Da Nang as a base of

⁴³ *"Parvenu au lieu désigné, l'amiral Genouilly devait promptement s'emparer de la baie et du territoire de Da Nang. Une fois cette position occupée avec succès, deux options s'offraient à lui : soit établir un régime de protectorat sur le sol vietnamien, soit conclure un traité de commerce, d'amitié et de navigation. Il est notable que la décision finale appartenait à l'amiral Rigault de Genouilly, avec la satisfaction du roi pour l'une ou l'autre option. Afin de garantir l'exécution des engagements du gouvernement annamite et de prendre les mesures appropriées en temps opportun, il était jugé essentiel de maintenir l'occupation de Da Nang comme garantie."* (G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.416).

⁴⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXVIII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1973, p.440.

⁴⁵ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.39.

operations to facilitate the opening of an inland route, the defeat of the Hue royal court's army, and ultimately, a forceful assault on the Hue citadel via the Hai Van Pass. This military campaign aimed to suppress the Nguyen dynasty feudal court's resistance and compel their surrender⁴⁶.

In the early morning of the subsequent day (1st September 1858), an ultimatum was presented, compelling Vietnam to provide an immediate response within a two-hour window. Disregarding the deadline, the coalition commenced a full day of heavy artillery attacks against the royal court's beachfront garrisons. The coalition's military might consisted of 16 warships from France and Spain, in conjunction with 1,500 French soldiers and 1,000 Spanish soldiers⁴⁷. By afternoon on the same day, the royal court's garrison stationed at the Dong fortress was overpowered. The subsequent morning, on September 2nd, 1858, the coalition continued their barrage of artillery fire against the Dien Hai fortress and proceeded to land troops on the Son Tra Peninsula.

The selection of Da Nang as the initial target in the French invasion of Vietnam served the following objectives for the French capitalist interests. Firstly, the port's significant expanse and depth provided convenient access for naval vessels. Regardless of nationality or occupation - be it British or French, sailors or explorers, traders or missionaries - all praised Da Nang as a thriving trading hub and recognized its strategic military and commercial significance, demanding its occupation. Even Alexandre de Rhodes, a clergyman with extensive experience in Vietnam who had visited Hue, Hoi An, and Da Nang, and whose missionary focus did not deter him from providing a comprehensive assessment of Da Nang, concluded that, "*This is a crucial position to seize, as European traders will find abundant profit and ample resources by gaining control over this land*"⁴⁸. Secondly, the region's hinterland comprised two densely populated and resource-rich provinces, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai, enabling the French to employ a "war feeds

⁴⁶ Nguyen The Anh, *Parcours d'un historien du Việt Nam*, ed. Philippe Papin, Les Indes savantes, Paris 2008, p.197.

⁴⁷ Regarding the conflicting figures in the sources, in Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.575. It is said that there were 12 warships. Based on contemporary Western sources, author Nguyen Phan Quang believed that there were 14 warships that fired on Da Nang. (Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)* (Vietnam in the 19th century (1802-1884), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 1999, p.269).

⁴⁸ L. E. Louvet, *La Cochinchine religieuse*, t.2 (1800-1884), Paris, 1885, p.140.

on war" strategy at an early stage. Thirdly, the French colonialists aspired to gain the support of the local Catholic community, which, according to reports from spy priests operating in the region, demonstrated a considerable presence and influence⁴⁹.

Upon learning of the loss of the Son Tra Peninsula, the Hue Dynasty promptly dispatched additional troops to reinforce their defenses. Prior to Nguyen Tri Phuong's⁵⁰ appointment as the President of the Quang Nam military envoy, he had fortified the region's defense system and armed it with 450 iron and copper cannons, along with a substantial stockpile of ammunition. Concurrently, the dynasty had deployed more troops to bolster the region's defenses⁵¹. Although the number of stationed soldiers was significant, conflicting reports regarding troop numbers exist. According to French sources, the Nguyen Dynasty had deployed 10,000 troops to the region. However, other accounts suggest that the dynasty initially stationed 2,000 guards in Da Nang, followed by the deployment of 2,000 soldiers from other provinces to augment the front⁵². However, the military equipment and munitions of the Nguyen Dynasty were relatively primitive and ill-equipped to contend with the formidable cannons of the Franco-Spanish coalition. Additionally, their military strategies and defensive systems were outdated, rendering them vulnerable to attacks from the bay. After being appointed as the commander of the Da Nang-Quang Nam front, "*Nguyen Tri Phuong succeeded in maintaining discipline among the tens of thousands of troops from various provinces and was able to dig trenches to encircle the enemy positions*"⁵³. Nevertheless, instead of launching active assaults against the enemy,

⁴⁹ G. Taboulet, t.1, 1955, *op.cit*, p.150, Pham Xanh, *Tại sao thực dân Pháp chọn Đà Nẵng làm điểm tấn công mở đầu cuộc xâm lược Việt Nam* (Why did the French colonialists choose Danang as the starting point for the invasion of Vietnam), "Journal of Historical Research", 2008, p.9.

⁵⁰ Nguyen Tri Phuong (1800-1873) was a highly esteemed scholar-official of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnam. He held the position of Commander-in-Chief of the dynasty's military and played a crucial role in defending his country against the French during the battles of Da Nang (1858), Gia Dinh (1861), and Hanoi (1873). Following the fall of Hanoi, he was taken captive by the French, yet he remained resolute in his refusal to collaborate and ultimately passed away after going on a hunger strike. Nguyen Tri Phuong's unwavering dedication to his country and patriotism earned him great admiration and esteem. (According to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *Từ điển nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam* (Dictionary of Vietnamese historical figures), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, p.664).

⁵¹ Nguyen Khac Dam, *Nguyễn Tri Phương đánh Pháp* (Nguyen Tri Phuong against the French), Vietnam Historical Science Association, Hanoi, 1998, p.46-48.

⁵² Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.38-39.

⁵³ D. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*. Berkeley: University California Press, 1971, p.27.

he directed his efforts towards constructing fortifications that extended from Hai Chau (along the coast) to Phuc Ninh and Thach Gian, as well as digging trenches to hinder the enemy's advance inland⁵⁴. Instructing the local populace to evacuate their homes and retreat deeper into the region, he aimed to prevent the enemy from capturing any civilians or exploiting their resources for their military campaign.

This approach proved efficacious, as the Franco-Spanish alliance made several attempts to push further into Vietnamese territory, only to be rebuffed by the court's forces, resulting in significant losses in terms of both manpower and armaments. According to Western records, the coalition ventured to the river's mouth only twice during this period, on 6-10-1858 and 21/22-12-1858, for reconnaissance missions. However, historical records of the Nguyen Dynasty indicate that from the moment the enemy commenced its assault on Da Nang until December 1859, the Vietnamese military and civilian populations organized a total of 11 major and minor battles, including:

During the early stages of the Franco-Spanish coalition's invasion of Vietnam, a battle occurred between the court forces and the invaders in the My Thi - Cam Le region from approximately 1-10 to 5-11-1858. This particular battle took place before Nguyen Tri Phuong assumed his position in Danang. The coalition attacked the Tho Son fortress in My Thi commune and the earthwork in Cam Le, resulting in the court forces' commander being struck by enemy fire. Due to the soldiers' lack of experience and coordination with other forts, they were forced to withdraw⁵⁵.

Subsequent to the military setback at Cam Le, the dynasty swiftly undertook measures to augment the defensive capacity of Da Nang. The deployment of laborers to engage in the construction of various infrastructure projects, including *“the weaving of bamboo baskets, the collection of wood materials, and the depositing of soil into the Vinh Dien river, facilitated the redirection of water flow towards Dai Chiem beach. This process ultimately caused a reduction in water depth, thereby hindering the advancement of Western naval vessels. Consequently, the defending army was able to concentrate their efforts on ground-based activities”*⁵⁶. The defensive efforts undertaken by the Nguyen

⁵⁴ Nguyen Phan Quang, 1999, *op.cit*, p.270 and Luu Trang, *Phố cảng Đà Nẵng từ 1802 – 1860* (Da Nang Port Street from 1802 to 1860), Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.65.

⁵⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.575.

⁵⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXVIII, 1973, *op.cit*, p.455.

dynasty during this period were not confined to Da Nang. Indeed, a coordinated defense was organized on an unprecedented scale in the capital city and the Thua Thien prefecture. Iron chains and wires were employed to obstruct the Thuan An and Tu Hien seaports, while earthworks were constructed in Quy Lai, Thuan Hoa, and Cap Chau, where a large-scale gun was positioned. Furthermore, a new military unit known as the Chien Tam army, which was essentially a suicide army, was established in Thua Thien prefecture. The size of this unit remains unclear, but it was established in October 1858 as a new component of the Nguyen army. During this period, a military detachment (led by a commanding officer) was constructing defensive earthworks in Cam Le. The sound of gunfire in Tra Son caused widespread panic, resulting in the disintegration of the troops as they fled. In response to this news, King Tu Duc issued an immediate order for the execution of the aforementioned officer, aiming to demonstrate the severity of the situation to the entire populace. While this event was of relatively minor significance, it is notable that members of the royal family displayed a strong fighting spirit, with several princes and 75 others requesting to join the army in its fight against the French⁵⁷. Towards the end of the 9th month in the lunar calendar (October 1858), Nguyen Tri Phuong, the Southern Envoy General, was appointed as the President of the Quang Nam Expeditionary Forces, signifying a significant turning point in the conflict. The assumption of Nguyen Tri Phuong as the President marked the commencement of a new phase in the ongoing campaign. From November 1858 onwards, notable victories were achieved by the Vietnamese forces, showcasing a flexible and effective evolution of tactics in countering the French troops. The military strategies employed demonstrated a diverse range of approaches, resulting in tangible success⁵⁸.

The initial engagement at Nai Hien River in November 1858 was conducted as a form of guerrilla warfare, in response to the Franco-Spanish coalition's tactic of reversing the flow of the Han River and the subsequent alteration of the Nai Hien River. The imperial forces adopted a strategy of division to confront their adversaries, which ultimately

⁵⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VIII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.455-456.

⁵⁸ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.46.

proved successful in securing victory⁵⁹. In relation to this particular engagement, the historical records of the Nguyen Dynasty provide a succinct account: “*The Western Fleet penetrated the Han River and the Nai Hien River (Quang Nam), while the forces of the imperial court strategically deployed their troops, conducting successful surprise attacks*”⁶⁰. Subsequently, the successful application of guerrilla warfare tactics was demonstrated in the aforementioned battle. Following this event, the Nguyen dynasty intensified their military presence in various regions, including Da Nang (Hoa Vinh and Thi An), Hai Van Quan, Thuan An, and Tu Hien, in addition to providing officials and scholars with narrow-sleeved jackets to protect them from the elements. In recognition of the unwavering support provided by the people of Quang Nam to the military effort, the province was granted a tax exemption. Apart from administering penalties to the officials involved in the defeat at Cam Le, the imperial court intensified its command structure in Quang Nam province. Concurrently, directives were issued to all provinces and cities in the North and South to construct fortresses and guard posts at strategic points, while deploying artillery and firearms to strengthen defensive positions. These measures were implemented to enhance the preparedness and resilience of the regional defenses⁶¹.

In a similar fashion to the first engagement, the second Battle of Nai Hien River (November 1958) employed comparable tactics. Led by Nguyen Tri Phuong, the imperial forces stationed on either side of the river utilized ranged attacks to eliminate the opposing fleet of 8 vessels, effectively thwarting their advancement⁶². The Nguyen dynasty historian recorded this battle as follows: “*The Western naval fleet (consisting of 8 vessels) advanced into the Nai Hien River. Nguyen Tri Phuong dispatched his commanders to lead separate forces to attack newly established enemy outposts, successfully damaging the enemy's ships (some with torn and tattered sails, others with breaches and water ingress). The king praised and rewarded them for their actions*”⁶³.

⁵⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.577.

⁶⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXVIII, 1973, *op.cit*, p.456.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p.457.

⁶² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.579-580.

⁶³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXVIII, 1973, *op.cit*, p.456.

Following the aforementioned battle, King Tu Duc issued a variety of rewards to the Quang Nam troops in recognition of their service, including swords, ginseng, silk, and fabrics. In early November of the lunar calendar, King Tu Duc “*Bestowed upon Nguyen Tri Phuong a superior sword that had been utilized by himself, as well as 5 roots of ginseng and dispatched physicians for medical treatment and to provide comfort and encouragement*”⁶⁴.

The Battle of Nam Tho (December 1858) saw the imperial army, consisting of 200 soldiers, successfully repel a force of 300 enemy troops on the Nam Tho coastline. Additionally, they managed to capture a sampan boat and eliminate 7 enemy combatants in the process⁶⁵.

The initial engagement at Hoa Khue - Nai Hien (December 1858) involved two imperial garrisons that were subjected to an unexpected attack by the Franco-Spanish coalition, resulting in 30 fatalities and 65 injuries among the defending forces. Subsequently, Nguyen Tri Phuong implemented measures to establish a network of bunkers on either side of the river, enabling guard soldiers to provide mutual support between the garrisons in the event of future emergency situations⁶⁶.

The second confrontation at Hoa Khue - Nai Hien (December 1858) ensued after the imperial army detected the movement of a hostile contingent numbering approximately 300-400 soldiers between the two positions. Upon detecting this maneuver, the imperial forces initiated an attack and opened fire. As a result, the enemy was compelled to withdraw in the face of the imperial assault.

The Hoa Khue - Thac Gian battle (December 1858) witnessed a significant deployment of the enemy forces, with around 700 soldiers mobilized to launch an attack on the imperial army. The imperial army, under the direct leadership of Phan Khac Than⁶⁷ and

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p.460.

⁶⁵ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.48.

⁶⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.582.

⁶⁷ Phan Khac Than (1798-1868), was born in Quang Ngai. He was a prominent official of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnamese history. (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol 2. Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.582).

Nguyen Duy⁶⁸, put up a fierce resistance. The confrontation was intense and resulted in heavy losses on both sides, with the enemy suffering 45 fatalities, while the imperial army lost 22 soldiers with a further 10 soldiers sustaining injuries⁶⁹.

In January 1859, during the Battle of Thac Gian - Nai Hien, Nguyen Tri Phuong and Pham The Hien⁷⁰ constructed the Lien Tri bunker. The Franco-Spanish coalition forces divided into two groups to attack the position located between Thac Gian and Nai Hien. The imperial army employed a deceitful strategy and launched an unexpected attack when the enemy arrived. As a result, the coalition forces were compelled to withdraw⁷¹.

The Battle of An Hai in January 1859 involved a Franco-Spanish coalition force consisting of 400 individuals who attempted to attack the imperial army from three different directions originating from the An Hai garrison. However, they were ultimately ambushed and obstructed by the royal army, resulting in their eventual retreat⁷².

In the Battle of Dien Hai in January 1859, Nguyen Tri Phuong oversaw the construction of a fortified barrier extending from the coastal areas to the communes of Phuc Ninh and Thac Gian. The barrier was complemented by deep trenches, concealed stakes, and strategically positioned disguised soldiers, all the way to the Dien Hai fortress. When the Franco-Spanish coalition approached from three directions, the hidden imperial soldiers simultaneously launched a barrage of fire from within the barrier. As a result, some of the enemy soldiers fell into the trenches, ultimately leading to their forced retreat⁷³.

⁶⁸ Nguyen Duy (1809-1861), born in Thua Thien Hue, was a distinguished military leader of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnam. He also happened to be the younger brother of the renowned general Nguyen Tri Phuong. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.509).

⁶⁹ Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol 2, *op.cit*, p.607-608).

⁷⁰ Pham The Hien (1803-1861) was a revered figure during the reign of Minh Mang, and he met his demise in the battle when the French attacked the fortified stronghold of Chi Hoa in 1861 (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.579).

⁷¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.588.

⁷² Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ năm 1858 đến cuối thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to the end of the 19th century), vol.3, part 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1979, p.62.

⁷³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.591.

The Battle of Phuc Ninh, which lasted for two days in February 1859⁷⁴, saw the enemy deploying their warships directly to the shore, only to be swiftly repulsed by the imperial army, resulting in the loss of three ships. On the following day, the enemy besieged the Trung, Ha, and Phuc Ninh forts. While they were able to capture the Trung and Ha forts, the Phuc Ninh fort remained under siege. However, reinforcements from the imperial army arrived from the outside, compelling the enemy to withdraw. The battle was marked by intense fighting, resulting in significant casualties for both sides⁷⁵. After a protracted conflict lasting 5 months, the enemy's progress had come to a near-standstill. Compounding their challenges was the adverse climate, which contributed to the illness and mortality of their troops. The scarcity of medical resources and difficulty in procuring sustenance further exacerbated their predicament. In his report dated January 4, 1859, Regault de Genouilly expressed that “their forces in Danang were on the brink of exhaustion. He stated that all measures to improve the situation for the army and navy had been exhausted and proved ineffective”⁷⁶.

Following a protracted period of five months stationed at the Danang front, the Hue imperial forces successfully constrained the Franco-Spanish coalition to the An Hai and Dien Hai strongholds. Nonetheless, they encountered significant obstacles, such as inclement weather and disease outbreaks, which resulted in notable losses. On January 29, 1858, General Genouilly submitted a written report to the French Government regarding the situation: “... *Cholera is presently rampant, exacting a considerable death toll. The government's comprehension of the country's characteristics is fundamentally flawed, as it fails to account for its limited resources, robust governance, substantial military presence, and the fact that the people's militia comprises the entire population. One need only observe the destitution of the clergy to ascertain that Danang is no more prosperous than Hong Kong. My prolonged sojourn in this climate has rendered me exceedingly fatigued, and the arduous nature of our undertakings necessitates that we must rely on our own*

⁷⁴ Based on the accounts documented in the official historical record of *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, the aforementioned conflict transpired not before February 3rd, 1859. Hence, it can be inferred that the event took place subsequent to General de Genouilly's transfer of his military contingent from Da Nang to Gia Dinh on February 2nd, 1859, whereupon a fraction of his forces was entrusted to Rear Admiral Fourichon.

⁷⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.591

⁷⁶ Quoted by Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.270.

ingenuity at every turn. The pledged supplies from Manila have yet to arrive, and all Philippine seamen have since departed”⁷⁷.

Progression was arduous, culminating in the necessity for the adversary's commander, Regault de Genouilly, to make a judgement call in retaining a modest contingent (comprising a mere third of the troops) at Danang to impede the Hue imperial army's advances. This strategic move enabled the remaining troops to seize the opportunity afforded by the northeast monsoon season and launch an assault on Gia Dinh in January 1859. Despite the Hue imperial army's valiant efforts in fending off the opposition, the Franco-Spanish coalition suffered a notable setback with their initial major defeat on the Quang Nam-Danang battlefield⁷⁸.

The proposed departure of the Franco-Spanish military alliance from Da Nang with the intent to launch an attack on Gia Dinh was incorporated into the strategic plans of King Tu Duc and the Nguyen court as a preventive measure. Nonetheless, King Tu Duc exhibited a disposition towards prioritizing the defense of the capital city. As documented in the annals of the Nguyen court, *“The king expressed his concerns, stating that the Can Gio coast was a pivotal location and could not be undervalued in light of the Western invaders. He incessantly fretted over the matter and implored that any delay in action would only lead to further squandered time. All the officials in concurrence acknowledged the gravity of the situation and agreed to explore viable strategies to repel the foreign intruders”*⁷⁹.

In under a month, the combined Franco-Spanish military coalition dispatched a majority of their armed forces to the southern region, thereby commencing their assault on

⁷⁷ *“Le choléra sévit actuellement de manière endémique, faisant un nombre considérable de victimes. La compréhension du gouvernement des caractéristiques du pays est fondamentalement erronée, car elle ne tient pas compte de ses ressources limitées, de sa gouvernance solide, de sa présence militaire substantielle et du fait que la milice populaire comprend l'ensemble de la population. Il suffit d'observer la misère du clergé pour constater que Danang n'est pas plus prospère que Hong Kong. Mon séjour prolongé dans ce climat m'a rendu extrêmement fatigué, et la nature ardue de nos entreprises nécessite que nous devions compter sur notre propre ingéniosité à chaque tournant. Les fournitures promises de Manille n'ont pas encore été livrées, et tous les marins philippins sont depuis partis.”* (G. Taboulet, t.2, 1956, *op.cit.*, p.439-440).

⁷⁸ H. de Ponchalon, *Indochina - Trips and battles (1858 - 1860)*, “Alfred Mame and Fils Publishing House” (M DCCC XCVI) 1896, p.132-137.

⁷⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXVIII, 1973, *op.cit.*, p.472.

Gia Dinh. As a consequence, the Vietnamese resistance movement escalated to a more severe and consequential phase.

Vietnamese Military and People in the Battle of Gia Dinh (from February 1859 to May 1859)

On February 2, 1859, a coalition comprising 14 vessels (comprising 9 French warships, 1 Spanish warship, and 4 merchant ships) and a total of 2,176 troops led by Regault de Genouilly, made an advancement into Gia Dinh⁸⁰.

The present strategy involved the invasion and subsequent occupation of Gia Dinh, which differed significantly from the preceding engagement at Da Nang. The French forces aimed to gain control over Saigon and Cochinchina to sever the rice supply line of the Hue court, which, as reported by local clergymen, represented a substantial reserve for the court. The French expeditionary forces sought to forestall any aid from the Hue court, although they soon realized that the court was more formidable than reported by French priests. The fall of Saigon would facilitate an offensive along the Mekong River towards Cambodia, which had long been a target of their expansionist ambitions⁸¹. Furthermore, the French bourgeoisie were prompted to act with urgency due to British efforts to secure Saigon following their successful acquisitions of Singapore and Hong Kong. The British sought to connect the two vital seaports and establish an advantageous maritime transportation corridor.

By February 9, 1859, the French fleet had assembled entirely in Vung Tau, with six additional transport vessels carrying supplies and troops. The next day, they initiated an artillery barrage to decimate the Phuc Thang, Luong Thien, Phuc My, and Danh Nghia fortifications belonging to the provinces of Gia Dinh and Bien Hoa. Subsequently, on February 11, 1859, French warships sailed up the Can Gio River⁸², bombarding and obliterating the stations of royal troops positioned along both banks of the river. The French forces made sluggish progress as they encountered stiff opposition from the royal troops

⁸⁰ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.54. [The city of Gia Dinh (known as Saigon by the French) was built in the European Vauban style by French engineers during the time of Nguyen Anh. Gia Dinh had a population of up to 100,000 people within the city walls, according to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.38].

⁸¹ L. Faque, *L'Indo - Chine française, Cochinchine - Cambodge - Annam - Tonkin*, Félix Alcan, Éditeur, Paris, 1910, p.117, Nguyen Van Que, *Histoire des pays de l'Union Indochinoise* (Việt Nam – Cambodge – Laos, Imprimerie Nguyen Khac, Saigon, 1932, p.93-96.

⁸² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol. XXIX, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, p.9-11.

stationed on both banks, combined with numerous obstacles constructed by the Vietnamese populace to impede the enemy ships. Consequently, it took six days to reach near Gia Dinh (or Saigon)⁸³ from the Can Gio River. On February 16, 1859, the enemy landed and secured two forts providing direct protection to Gia Dinh, then allowed the ships to cross the Ben Nghe River and dock in front of the fortress. The following day, February 17, 1859, the Franco-Spanish coalition concentrated their firepower on the fortress, with troops storming it at noon to take control. The enemy concentrated their artillery to assault positions occupied by the royal army with superior firepower, employing explosives to breach the city walls and ladders for troops to scale them. Despite the cannons on the walls firing at the enemy ships, they proved ineffective⁸⁴. The battle was brutal, with soldiers from both sides engaging in close combat, contesting every defensive position.

In anticipation of the enemy's fierce artillery assault, which gave them an advantage, Vo Duy Ninh⁸⁵, the commanding officer responsible for the city's defense, ordered a retreat, leaving behind various weapons and provisions within the city⁸⁶. His decision to withdraw and flee, coupled with his subsequent suicide to evade accountability before the court, further stoked popular anger towards the Hue court⁸⁷. At the time of the attack on Gia Dinh, the city was garrisoned by 1,000 soldiers, fully armed, and the court had stockpiled enough provisions to sustain a force of ten thousand soldiers for a year. This underscores the Hue court's prescience in anticipating the French attack on Gia Dinh and taking steps to prepare for it, including the mobilization of personnel, weapons, and supplies.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p.11.

⁸⁴ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, 1999, *op.cit*, p.271.

⁸⁵ Vo Duy Ninh was born in 1804 in Dai An village, Hanh Phong commune (now Hanh Thuan commune, Nghia Hanh district), Quang Ngai province. He was a prominent martial arts official of the Nguyen Dynasty known for his uncompromising stance against the French invasion of Gia Dinh, Vietnam. (according to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.34).

⁸⁶ Following their retreat from the fortress, the court forces abandoned an estimated 200 cannons made of bronze and iron, 9 warships in various stages of construction or repair, and a considerable amount of provisions. The collective worth of these items was estimated to be around 20 million coins during that period. (According to Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam (Modern Vietnam History)*, vol 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1959, p.73-74).

⁸⁷ Tran Van Giau, *Địa chí văn hóa Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh (Cultural Geography of Ho Chi Minh City)*, vol 1, Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh, 1998, p.249.

As a result of France's presumed intentions, the Nguyen court deployed roughly 1,500 troops from Vinh Long and Dinh Tuong and others from Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai to reinforce Gia Dinh. However, these reinforcements arrived too late as the joint Franco-Spanish forces had already occupied the city. Despite this loss, the Nguyen court persisted in its military efforts by mobilizing an additional 1,500 soldiers composed of 500 troops from Binh Dinh, Binh Thuan, and Khanh Hoa, and by recruiting civilian militia to defend Bien Hoa. The provinces of An Giang, Ha Tien, and Dinh Tuong were also directed to prepare their armies and organize civilian militia to protect vulnerable positions and prepare for potential enemy attacks⁸⁸.

Confronted with the expanding enemy invasion, the Nguyen dynasty issued orders for the entire populace of the Cochinchina to mobilize soldiers, undergo combat training, and reinforce vulnerable areas in Hue and the Tonkin to anticipate the enemy's arrival⁸⁹. In response, the people and soldiers of the Cochinchina launched a counter-attack against the Franco-Spanish coalition in Gia Dinh; however, their efforts were in vain, and some of their outposts were destroyed by the enemy. Nevertheless, the valiant sacrifices of the Cochinchina soldiers and people during this time exemplified their indomitable spirit, refusing to succumb to the foreign invaders of Vietnam⁹⁰.

Despite the successful capture of Gia Dinh, General Genouilly was unable to maintain control over the fortress due to inadequate troop numbers. On March 8th, he resorted to utilizing explosives to demolish the large fortress and was only able to maintain a small garrison of roughly two platoons. The remaining French troops were compelled to retreat to anchored warships in the river to avoid potential attacks from Vietnamese forces on both banks. Following the demolition, only a handful of French troops remained in Gia Dinh, while the majority quickly withdrew to reinforce French troops who were still fac-

⁸⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.594-595.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p.601.

⁹⁰ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), Youth Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2001, p.122.

ing a difficult situation in Danang. The French were struggling with limited troop numbers, lack of supplies, and rampant diseases, making them vulnerable to annihilation at the hands of Vietnamese forces⁹¹.

Following the arrival of Regault de Genouilly and his troops in Da Nang, hostilities continued to persist on the Gia Dinh battlefield. Of particular interest was the conflict that transpired at Phu Tho fort (Gia Dinh) from May 2-5, 1859. This fortification, recently renovated, comprised three strategic positions with fortified trenches and entrenchments enveloping the entire area. On the aforementioned dates, the opposing forces initiated an assault on Phu Tho fort. The external defenders, composed of Gia Dinh troops and fort garrisons, hastily withdrew as a result of the superior fire support of the adversary. Subsequently, the French forces concentrated their attack on the left fortification and subsequently directed their efforts towards the right bastion after its capitulation. The complete defeat of both positions precipitated the French army to amass their entire complement of military forces towards the central position. However, the French were met with vigorous resistance from Nguyen dynasty officials and soldiers, as evidenced in historical accounts. In particular, *“The local forces engaged in fierce combat with the enemy, successfully inflicting numerous casualties through sword strikes and gunfire. Even the imperial court's soldiers and officers suffered injuries and fatalities. The commanding officers led their troops in pursuit, attacking the Western forces, burning their fortified outposts, and subsequently retreating”*⁹².

Vietnamese Military and People in the Danang Front (from April 1859 to November 1859)

Upon his arrival in Danang on April 15, 1859, Regault de Genouilly sought to enhance the fighting spirit of his troops. To achieve this objective, he ordered a full-scale attack at the Thach Than battlefield for three consecutive days from April 22 to 24, 1859. The enemy forces had meticulously planned this conflict, but the royal army responded with valor, forcing the adversary to retreat on three separate occasions. According to historical records from the Nguyen dynasty, the royal army's fighting spirit resonated with

⁹¹ According to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.59: Genouilly decided to leave only 2 companies in Gia Dinh on a warship commanded by Lieutenant Jean Bernard Jaurequiberry, while all 3,000 soldiers (including 1,000 Spanish soldiers) had to quickly withdraw to Da Nang.

⁹² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.603-604.

the people and bolstered morale throughout the region⁹³. Despite the victory not being decisive, it hindered the Franco-Spanish coalition from swiftly seizing control of Danang. Following the conflict, the king rewarded those who had contributed to the fight. While there is no record of the number of casualties among the French troops, it is known that during the three-day battle, the royal army sustained eight fatalities and 23 wounded soldiers⁹⁴.

Frustrated by the lack of progress following his return from Gia Dinh, Regault de Genouilly made the decision on May 8, 1859 to escalate hostilities. He ordered his troops to advance and initiate attacks on the forts of Dien Hai, Phuc Ninh, and Thach Gian⁹⁵, subsequently pushing deeper into the interior of the region. This offensive strategy was intended to compel the royal soldiers to retreat and assume a defensive posture. According to historical records from the Nguyen dynasty, “*The French Western Fleet (consisting of 9 steamships and more than 20 sampan boats) approached the coast in front of the forts of Phuc Ninh and Thach Gian, dividing the troops into 3-5 units surrounding the forts and firing down like rain...The forts of Hai Chau upper, Hai Chau lower, Phuc Ninh stronghold, and Thach Gian were all broken through, and the enemy soldiers fled in defeat. Nguyen Tri Phuong's troops retreated to Nai Hien and Lien Tri to defend. Many soldiers were injured or killed, including a significant number of Western troops*”⁹⁶.

In this engagement, both the Vietnamese court and the Franco-Spanish coalition forces incurred substantial losses and were compelled to retreat to their previous positions. As documented in the Vietnamese History 1858-1896, edited by Vu Huy Phuc, the Franco-Spanish forces suffered a considerable setback, with a reported loss of up to 100 soldiers⁹⁷. In addition, the French military encountered numerous challenges during this period. Specifically, during April of 1859, France found itself engaged in a military conflict with Austria in Italy, which necessitated the concentration of its military resources on the European front and impeded support for its troops in Vietnam. Furthermore, tensions between France and England were mounting, and the possibility of an outbreak of

⁹³ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.602.

⁹⁴ Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Times Publishing House, 2010, p.125.

⁹⁵ These are important fortifications in Da Nang, Vietnam, that contributed to the defeat of the French colonial attack on Da Nang in 1858-1860.

⁹⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.604.

⁹⁷ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.62.

war between the two nations was imminent⁹⁸. The battlefield in Danang proved to be an arduous and distressing experience for the Franco-Spanish troops. The soldiers were confronted with a protracted struggle in unfavorable tropical climate, resulting in numerous fatalities and many soldiers succumbing to debilitating diseases, rendering them unfit for combat. Regault de Genouilly conveyed in his report to higher authorities that “*the conflict with this nation is indisputably more grueling than the war with the Chinese Empire*”⁹⁹. After the military engagement that occurred from May 8 to early June 1859, approximately 200 Franco-Spanish soldiers succumbed to the plague. Concurrently, due to a lack of supplies, numerous guns and ammunition were damaged, and the expeditionary forces of the French and Spanish were deficient in war equipment. These circumstances significantly diminished the combat effectiveness of the joint forces, prompting Regault de Genouilly to contemplate the option of halting the war in order to request additional troops and petition the French government for a replacement in Vietnam. In response, the French government instructed Genouilly to negotiate peace with the Hue court, as they were unable to provide the requested reinforcements. To increase pressure on the Hue court, Genouilly ordered a bombardment of forts, boats, and sailboats of Nguyen dynasty officials along the coastline of the provinces of Binh Dinh, Quang Tri, and Quang Binh¹⁰⁰. The Nguyen dynasty king recognized that the enemy's actions were designed to leverage their strength in peace negotiations¹⁰¹. On June 20, 1859, Genouilly formally proposed a ceasefire with the Nguyen dynasty court. However, the Nguyen dynasty king neither responded to the proposal nor initiated significant retaliatory activities from May to September 1859. The court's indecisive approach, unwilling to fight resolutely or negotiate firmly, resulted in the failure of the peace negotiations¹⁰².

Following the initial failed attempt at a truce in early July 1859, Regault de Genouilly persisted in sending envoys to propose a cessation of hostilities to the royal

⁹⁸ Vu Duong Ninh (editor), *Lịch sử quan hệ quốc tế* (History of international relations)..., *op.cit*, p.112.

⁹⁹ “*Le conflit avec cette nation est indéniablement plus éprouvant que la guerre avec l'Empire chinois*”. (Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)*..., 1999, *op.cit*, p.272).

¹⁰⁰ The coastal provinces of Central Vietnam.

¹⁰¹ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.108.

¹⁰² Pham Khac Hoe, *Kể chuyện vua quan nhà Nguyễn* (Storytelling of the Nguyen kings and mandarins), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1986, p.72.

court. Despite prolonged deliberations within the court¹⁰³, a mutually agreeable resolution was not reached, resulting in a failure to ratify any binding accord or document. As such, the French army resorted to renewing military action after a period of protracted efforts aimed at promoting negotiation, while concurrently facilitating much-needed respite for its soldiers.

On September 21, 1859, before relinquishing his responsibility to return to France, Regault de Genouilly ordered his troops to continue attacking the royal army on the Da Nang front. The Franco-Spanish force consisted of two branches: infantry and navy. The enemy infantry was deployed into four directions, divided into three directions to attack and some were kept as reserves to attack the fortresses of the royal army in Phuc Tri and Lien Tri areas. The navy was also organized into two directions of attack: the main direction including warships firing along the Na River towards the fortresses of the royal army along the banks of the Da Nang River, while another direction concentrated on shelling the defensive positions from Da Nang to Hue¹⁰⁴.

Under the leadership of Nguyen Tri Phuong, the imperial army boasted 10 war elephants, along with artillery and gunners. The battle waged on fiercely for two days, with the French army successfully securing crucial positions held by the imperial army. However, after pillaging and destroying the necessary equipment, they opted to withdraw rather than occupy the Lien Tri and Phuc Tri trenches. Both sides incurred significant losses. According to records from the Nguyen Dynasty, following the attacks on Lien Tri and Nai Hien, “*Western soldiers killed and burned homes indiscriminately, resulting in 52 fatalities, 103 injuries, and the destruction of 97 homes, ultimately leading to the death of 10 people and injuring two others*”¹⁰⁵. Despite the Franco-Spanish coalition emerging victorious, they were forced to retreat to their prior military base, with the situation on

¹⁰³ During this period, the Nguyen dynasty held three distinct positions. One faction advocated for a defensive stance, citing it as the foremost priority. Another faction espoused a hybrid approach that encompassed both defensive and offensive tactics, while a third group emphasized the pursuit of peace. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.611).

¹⁰⁴ Nguyen Dinh Tu, *French colonialism in Cochinchina*, General Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh, 2016, p.164.

¹⁰⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.629.

the battlefield remaining in a state of flux, as the colonial powers' advantage in negotiations with the Nguyen Dynasty remained unclear.

On October 19, 1859, Admiral Page¹⁰⁶ assumed command of the allied forces in Da Nang¹⁰⁷, replacing Regault de Genouilly, who was summoned back to Paris. Upon arriving, Page boldly applied Genouilly's old plan to launch a strong attack on the north of Danang Bay, to control the Hai Van Pass¹⁰⁸, and then to attack directly into the Hue Imperial City. On November 18, 1859, the coalition deployed over 9 warships to launch attacks on defensive positions of the court along the Danang-Hue line via the Hai Van Pass, including Dinh Hai Fortress and Chan Sang outpost.

The French troops concentrated their efforts on artillery fire to drive the imperial soldiers up the Hai Van Pass. The imperial forces fiercely resisted by retaliating with cannons, utilizing rock traps, and launching iron bombs down onto the French troops from the pass, resulting in the deaths and injuries of up to 300 French soldiers. Failing in their attempt to attack Hue Imperial City, Page ultimately decided to withdraw his troops gradually to Gia Dinh, as per the French government's orders to withdraw from Da Nang and hold Saigon while awaiting the Nguyen dynasty's proposal for peace. On November 21, 1859, Page departed from Da Nang. Subsequently, the enemy troops stationed at outposts such as An Hai, Dien Hai, Tra Son, Chan Sang, and Dinh Hai were besieged and ambushed by the imperial forces, causing them to suffer losses¹⁰⁹. Faced with such a situa-

¹⁰⁶ Théogène François Page (1807-1867) was a French general who served as the Commander of the Expeditionary Force stationed in Danang, Vietnam. He held this position from March 1860 to February 1861. (According to Duong Kinh Quoc, *Việt Nam – Những sự kiện lịch sử 1858 - 1918* (Vietnam historical events (1858-1918), Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1999, p.146).

¹⁰⁷ According to Truong Ba Can, Admiral Page took up this position on November 1, 1859. (Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)* (France's diplomatic activities to strengthen its base in Cochinchina (1862-1874)), World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, p.35).

¹⁰⁸ Hai Van Pass, also known as Ai Van Pass (because there used to be a gate on the pass) or Cloud Pass (because the pass is often covered in clouds), is 500 meters high (above sea level), 20 kilometers long, and cuts through the Bach Ma Mountain Range (part of the Truong Son Range that runs along the coast) between Thua Thien Hue province (to the north) and Da Nang city (to the south), Vietnam. (According to Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.184).

¹⁰⁹ Luu Anh Ro, *Đà Nẵng buổi đầu đánh Pháp (1858 – 1860)* (Da Nang first fought the French (1858 - 1860)), Da Nang Publishing House, 2019, p.207.

tion, the Franco-Spanish joint forces refrained from launching any more attacks. Moreover, from that point on, the enemy troops gradually retreated, culminating in the complete withdrawal of the entire French force and warships from Da Nang to Gia Dinh on March 23, 1860, after 19 months of occupation without any tangible outcomes¹¹⁰.

According to French historian G. Taboulet's evaluation of this event, he states: "*The occupation of Danang was not enough to shake the determined fighting spirit of the Hue court, nor did it undermine its foundations. The Danang campaign ended in a political failure rather than a military one, although it was quite painful*"¹¹¹.

2.2.2 The Resistance of the Vietnamese Military and People on the Gia Dinh Front (from late 1860 to early 1861) and the Expansion of French Occupation in the Three Eastern Provinces of Cochinchina

Returning to Gia Dinh, according to the French government's policy, Page actively prepared necessary conditions to seize and expand territory when the opportunity arises, while also proactively proposing peace terms with the Hue court. With additional troops withdrawn from Danang, the French army reinforced their positions and expanded their occupation around Gia Dinh.

Around mid-December 1859, Page continued to transfer a new peace treaty to the Gia Dinh officials (Ton That Cap¹¹²) with 11 articles¹¹³. France demanded peace and friendship, not to violate the bodies and properties of Catholics as long as they do not violate the law, return foreign priests when arrested, allow French priests to preach in Catholic areas, trade across all seaports, establish consular relations with Spain, and after both sides sign, French troops will withdraw from the coast¹¹⁴. The supreme commander

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p.213.

¹¹¹ G. Taboulet, t.2, 1956, *op.cit*, p.499.

¹¹² Ton That Cap or Ton That Hiep (1809-1862), was a high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnamese history. (See Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)*..., *op.cit*, p.272).

¹¹³ According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, p.99-100, among the 11 articles, particular attention should be given to the sixth provision, which pertains to the discipline of the Catholic population for their transgressions. It is evident that France recognized the legitimacy of disciplining Catholics for contravening French laws, but censured any actions that might encroach upon the liberties of law-abiding religious adherents.

¹¹⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.648-649.

of the Gia Dinh troops, Ton That Cap, acceded to eight points but refrained from deciding on three others, namely the proselytism of Western priests, the establishment of trading posts, and the conclusion of a peace treaty with Spain, opting instead to await directives from the Hue court. After protracted negotiations, both parties endorsed a ceasefire agreement on January 8, 1860. Nonetheless, at this juncture, King Tu Duc withheld his assent to the peace treaty, and directed the imperial court officials in Gia Dinh to expel the enemy promptly, fortify defenses, armaments, and remain vigilant against potential threats. To brace for possible hostilities, the troops in Cochinchina and the Southern region of Central Vietnam were placed on alert and underwent training¹¹⁵. At the time of the peace conference, the Nguyen army in Gia Dinh was not engaged in any significant strategic battles, and the situation remained stagnant. This lack of action on the part of the Nguyen dynasty could have contributed to the failure of the peace conference. They did not accurately assess the international situation or the strength of the French army, which was divided among many battlefields, especially in the North China front. However, the primary reason for the failure of the peace negotiations was the stubborn attitude of the Hue court, which refused to take advantage of the opportunity to consolidate its forces and defeat the French later. Instead, the court refused to accept the favorable terms offered by France and rejected any compromise. Furthermore, most of the French army on the Gia Dinh front was being relocated to the North China front at the time. On February 3, 1860, Page left Saigon for Hong Kong, and command was handed over to Jean Bernard Jauréguiberry¹¹⁶¹¹⁷. This relocation of forces left France in an extremely difficult situation, lacking the resources to expand its territory and gain an advantage on the battlefield. This situation forced France to increase pressure on the Nguyen dynasty in the negotiations, eventually forcing them to accept the conditions set by France.

During the specified period in Gia Dinh, the opposing forces numbered less than 1,000¹¹⁸. Despite this, the defensive line spanning about 10 kilometers was established.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ Jean Bernard Jauréguiberry (1815 - 1887) was a naval officer, vice admiral, and French politician. Jauréguiberry passed away in the capital city of Paris in October 1887 and was laid to rest by his family at the Montparnasse Cemetery. (H. Dubief, "Jean-Bernard Jauréguiberry", in André Encrevé (dir.), *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine*. 5 Les Protestants, Paris, Beauchesne, 1993, p.264-265).

¹¹⁷ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.72.

¹¹⁸ At this time, the majority of the Spanish troops, commanded by Ruiz de Lanzarote, had withdrawn to Manila, leaving only a few hundred soldiers remaining in Gia Dinh. (See Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *Lịch sử*

Nonetheless, the French military maintained control over certain river sections, such as the Nha Be River (stretching from Saigon to the sea), the Saigon River (from Go Vap), and a portion of the Thi Nghe Canal, due to their superior naval force. Despite suffering from a shortage of troops after sending a large number of soldiers to China, the French army still conducted some offensives during this time, resulting in sporadic skirmishes between soldiers from both sides¹¹⁹. At this point in time, the Gia Dinh court's military machinery remained unaware of the French army's situation and plans. As a result, they continued to persist in their strategy of both besieging and negotiating, without actively attacking the French soldiers.

Realizing that the situation in Gia Dinh was not progressing, in August 1860, King Tu Duc decided to change the command structure of the battlefield and appointed “*Nguyen Tri Phuong as the President of the Military Affairs of the First Rank at the Gia Dinh Army, Ton That Cap as the Deputy*”¹²⁰. Upon assuming his duties in Gia Dinh, Nguyen Tri Phuong divided his soldiers into three groups: the main force was stationed at Phu Tho fortress, and two other groups were placed on the two wings of Tan An and Bien Hoa; he also strengthened and established a new system of fortresses and defensive positions, urgently stockpiling troops, supplies, especially large guns¹²¹. In particular, in Gia Dinh, Nguyen Tri Phuong focused on strengthening the Ky Hoa fortress, a stronghold that had been urgently built after losing the Gia Dinh fortress to block the enemy's advance into the interior. The fortress was built from August 1860 to February 1861 and was the largest military base in Vietnam at that time, the most important defensive point in the court army's defense line¹²².

Việt Nam từ 1858 – 1896 (History of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896), ed. Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Manh Dung and Le Thi Thu Hang, vol 6, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2017, p.113).

¹¹⁹ Tran Van Giau, *Việt Nam cách mạng cận sử và Tổng tập* (Vietnam's Near-Historical Revolution and General Volume), vol 1, People's Army Publishing House, 2006, p.132.

¹²⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu*, (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), Translation by National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1998, p.390.

¹²¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.667.

¹²² Based on French records, the Ky Hoa Fortress was estimated to be approximately 3000 meters in length and 1000 meters in width. The fortress had a wall that was 3.5 meters high and 2 meters thick, composed of clay and ong stone. Additionally, it had numerous loopholes, a deep moat on the outside, and was secured with stakes and bamboo fences. Adjacent to it was the subsidiary fort, known as Thuan Kieu, which served

Following the creation of an alliance with European and American nations, which aimed to use force to compel the Qing dynasty (China) to sign the Beijing Treaty on October 25th, 1860¹²³, France directed its complete navy in the Far East towards Gia Dinh to facilitate the annexation of Cochinchina. This was done with the intention of expanding French control into Cambodia, Laos, and Hua Nam (China), when feasible. However, between October and the end of 1860, the French military did not engage in any significant military action. On October 18th, a French unit advanced via boat to attack the Phu Nhuan post, but was immediately counterattacked by imperial troops, resulting in six French casualties, leading to a retreat. On December 1st, 1860, another French detachment attacked the Chi Hoa post and suffered significant losses, with 132 French soldiers killed; the opposing force lost 12 individuals¹²⁴.

The Western countries' war against the Qing dynasty has ended. Vice Admiral Léonard Charner¹²⁵, Commander-in-Chief of the entire French navy in the Far East (from February 1860), was appointed as the special plenipotentiary commander-in-chief in Cochinchina from February 6, 1861 to November 29, 1861, and was given full authority

as a warehouse for storing weapons and food, as well as a checkpoint on the road to Hoc Mon. The majority of the Gia Dinh court's military forces were concentrated within the fortress, which included approximately 20,000 regular soldiers, 10,000 courageous militiamen, and 150 large-caliber cannons. (According to Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.274; and Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.75).

¹²³ At the beginning of 1860, 18,000 British troops and 7,000 French troops deployed warships to bombard the ports of Tianjin and Dagu before advancing their forces straight to Beijing. The emperor fled from the capital, and the imperial court was forced to sign the Beijing Treaty, which opened the port of Tianjin, expanded concessions for Britain and France, and provided indemnity for war expenses. (Vu Duong Ninh, *Nhìn lại quan hệ Pháp – Việt Nam – Trung Quốc qua các bản hiệp ước cuối thế kỷ XIX* (Examining the Relations Between France, Vietnam, and China through the Late 19th Century Treaties), *The Journal of Historical Research*, Issue 8, 2018, p.3-4. (1-13).

¹²⁴ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.76.

¹²⁵ Léonard Victor Joseph Charner (1797-1869) was a French Navy Admiral. During the French Second Republic on 13 May 1849 Charner was elected representative of Côtes-du-Nord in the Legislative Assembly. He sat with the right and supported the policy of President Louis Napoleon. He was a member of the Naval Investigation Commission and was often involved in discussions on technical matters. He was also a member of the Côtes-du-Nord General Council. (*Dictionnaire des Parlementaires français (1789–1889)*, “Charner, Léonard Victor Joseph”, in Edgar Bourlouton (ed.) R. Adolphe; C. Gaston (1889–1891), Paris, 2018, p.67.

by the French government to declare war and sign a peace treaty with Vietnam. On February 7, 1861, Léonard Charner arrived in Saigon¹²⁶. At this time, the invading army of Léonard Charner was present on the Ben Nghe River (Saigon) with over 5,000 people, with 474 large guns and 148 different types of ships (55 steamships, 13 sailboats, 80 merchant ships).

With overwhelming superiority, the French army decided to attack and capture the fortresses of the Nguyen Dynasty. On February 17, the enemy sent a warship up the Saigon River to survey the terrain. On February 19, the enemy fired cannons at the dynasty's defensive positions, allowing their ships to penetrate the Thi Nghe Canal (in front of the Chi Hoa Fortress) and destroy the defensive points. In the early morning of February 24, 1861, the French enemy began to open fire on the Chi Hoa Fortress. After firing cannons at the dynasty's defensive line, the enemy sent a large force of soldiers to attack the fortress and carry out a coordinated operation between infantry and artillery to prevent counterattacks by the dynasty's troops from the Chi Hoa Fortress. They advanced very slowly, partly because of the strong firepower of the defenders inside the fortress, and partly because of the dense moat system protecting the outside of the fortress. The battle was quite fierce for two days; the dynasty's soldiers fought bravely but as the battle dragged on, they became exhausted before the strength of Western weapons. Finally, on February 25, 1861, the enemy army crossed the fortress and entered the center of the Chi Hoa Fortress but also encountered fierce resistance. Both sides suffered heavy losses.

Faced with that situation, Nguyen Tri Phuong had to order the abandonment of the Chi Hoa Fortress and retreat to the Thuan Kieu Fortress behind to defend it. On February 28, the victorious enemy attacked Thuan Kieu with a vanguard force but achieved no results. On February 29, when a large number of infantry and cavalry were gathered, the enemy continued the battle and soon captured Thuan Kieu Fortress, forcing the dynasty's troops to retreat to Bien Hoa. In addition, while waiting for the trial, the officials of Gia Dinh had to collect scattered soldiers to defend various places¹²⁷. The Hue Dynasty also paid attention to the general defense situation in the whole area and tried to mobilize the people and those who were willing to participate in the defense effort. They also called

¹²⁶ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)...*, op.cit, p.35.

¹²⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, op.cit, p.185.

for the recommendation of talented individuals who could fight against the enemy across the country. In a royal decree of king Tu Duc, there were sentences such as: “... *Therefore, encourage those who have the will to fight the enemy, urge district officials, and manage the collection of food, successively pacify the small enemy forces ... Anyone who is brave and resourceful, regardless of their status, will be specially assigned and entrusted with troops. We should not suppress the talents of those who go out to fill the ranks of servants for Western forces*”¹²⁸.

*The Defeat of the Vietnamese Military and People at Dinh Tuong*¹²⁹ (from March 17th to April 15th, 1861)

France chose Dinh Tuong as the initial target of attack because it was a wealthy province and had a strategic position in the waterway transportation system. Additionally, they wanted to cut off the rice transportation route from this region to Hue¹³⁰. The strategic design of the French military involved a coordinated assault on Dinh Tuong, executed from two distinct fronts. The terrestrial troops and minor naval vessels were tasked with descending from Gia Dinh to Sa Uc (also known as Tan An) harbor, situated along the Baodinh River, to ultimately arrive at My Tho, the provincial capital of Dinh Tuong¹³¹. Meanwhile, the naval forces would navigate the Tieu estuary and proceed upstream along the Tien Giang River, with the explicit objective of launching an offensive against My Tho. Following a thorough reconnaissance mission, the adversary resolved to advance towards My Tho by means of the Baodinh River on March 17, 1861, despite anticipating arduous opposition along this route¹³². Spanning a distance of approximately 25 miles,

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.185-186.

¹²⁹ Dinh Tuong was one of the three former provinces in the Eastern part of Cochinchina, Vietnam and one of the six initial provinces in Cochinchina during the independent Nguyen Dynasty. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* in *Tổng tập dư địa chí Việt Nam* (Extra Gazetteer of Vietnam), Thanh Niên Publishing House, 2012, Vol 28, p.85).

¹³⁰ Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ năm 1858 đến cuối thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to the end of the 19th century), vol.3, part 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1979, p.47.

¹³¹ Pham Van Son, *Việt Nam cách mạng sử* (History of the Vietnamese revolution), Saigon: Khai Tri Publishing House, 1963, p.131.

¹³² My Tho city held dominion over all the watercourses that converged into the Tien River, rendering it a vital and strategic stronghold. Additionally, My Tho served as a key hub for rice trade and wheat storage, thus accentuating its significance as an agricultural center. (According to L. Pallu, *Histoire de L'Expédition de Cochinchine en 1861* (History of the Cochinchina expedition 1861), Hachette publishing house, France, 1864, p.155).

the French contingent undertook an arduous journey spanning two weeks, characterized by the traversal of 9 river-based obstacles and the assault of 6 fortified bastions strategically positioned along the path towards My Tho. Despite incurring substantial casualties, the French forces successfully penetrated the Dinh Tuong province¹³³.

The court troops ordered the burning of the palace's treasury and then retreated to Cai Be or dispersed to various locations, ceasing further resistance. The French army leisurely entered the city, reaping numerous valuable spoils of war. They were delighted *“because the city was constructed in the style of Vauban, with deep moats surrounding it, and within the city, there were many large fortifications for defense. If attacked, it would surely result in significant losses”*¹³⁴. On April 2, 1861, the court troops withdrew from My Tho. Although the French had captured My Tho, they also had to admit: *“There has been no expedition in Cochinchina that has been as exhausting and deadly as this expedition... Our soldiers encountered many large bastions, obstacles, and various obstacles laid out by the enemy on the way. It was a constant day and night battle, fighting against the people and objects of a mysterious and unfamiliar region. Many soldiers who participated in this expedition died, either from exhaustion or from the plague... On the boat Ranh River, out of 12 people, 5 died of the plague in 1 day”*¹³⁵.

The Dinh Tuong campaign by the French army lasted for 25 days and nights. It was a fierce and intense battle, fought inch by inch, demonstrating the courageous determination of the Vietnamese people. In this battle, the French army also suffered heavy losses, with many soldiers losing their lives¹³⁶. After Dinh Tuong fell into French hands, the court officials in Hue began blaming each other, and discussions about culpability arose within the court. Instead of focusing on reclaiming the lost provinces and cities, Emperor Tu Duc turned his attention to reconciliation talks¹³⁷.

¹³³ Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.493.

¹³⁴ A. Thomazi, *La conquête de l'Indochine*, Payot, Paris, 1934, p.127.

¹³⁵ Tran Van Giau, *Việt Nam cách mạng cận sử và Tổng tập...*, *op.cit*, p.94.

¹³⁶ On the afternoon of April 10, 1861, there was a casualty involving Navy Captain Bourdais and five sailors who lost their lives. (According to Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.279).

¹³⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.253.

For several months, the negotiations between the representative of the court, King's special envoy Nguyen Ba Nghi¹³⁸, and Vice Admiral Charner had remained inconclusive. The conditions set forth by Charner since the end of March 1861¹³⁹ included firstly, the freedom to practice Catholicism; secondly, the relinquishment of Gia Dinh province, My Tho province, and the area of Thu Dau Mot to France; and thirdly, granting full authority to Spain to participate in the negotiations. These conditions provoked intense debate within the Secret Council¹⁴⁰. By July 1861, negotiations between Nguyen Ba Nghi and Charner had resulted in an agreement consisting of 14 articles¹⁴¹. This provided the basis for the later conclusion of the Treaty of Saigon on June 5, 1862.

The French army captured Bien Hoa¹⁴² and Vinh Long¹⁴³ (from December 1861 to March 1862).

Nguyen Ba Nghi's defeatist attitude has made the Vietnamese people resentful¹⁴⁴. They became excited and encouraged the imperial army to fight back and push back some of France's invasion campaigns in the Cochinchina. As for France, in early August 1861,

¹³⁸ Nguyen Ba Nghi (1807-1870) was a prominent figure in the Nguyen dynasty's political establishment in Vietnamese history. He gained notoriety when he was tasked with succeeding General Nguyen Tri Phuong in the southern region in order to stave off French colonialism. However, he eventually espoused a pacifist stance, asserting that "peace" was the only viable solution in the present circumstances. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit.*, p.210-213).

¹³⁹ L. Pallu, *op.cit.*, p.141-142.

¹⁴⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit.*, p.220.

¹⁴¹ Pham Van Son, *op.cit.*, 1963, p.132.

¹⁴² The province of Bien Hoa was established in the 13th year of Minh Mạng's reign (1832) and was one of the six provinces of Cochinchina. (Dinh Xuan Vinh, *Sổ tay địa danh Việt Nam* (Vietnam Geographic Handbook), Lao Động Publishing House, 1996, p.42).

¹⁴³ In 1832, King Minh Mang established administrative units and changed districts into provinces. Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam) had six provinces, and Vinh Thanh district was transformed into Vinh Long province. (Vinh Long: <https://vinhlong.gov.vn/gioi-thieu/lich-su-van-hoa#:~:text=N%C4%83m%201832%2C%20vua%20Minh%20M%E1%BA%A1ng,Thanh%20th%C3%A0nh%20t%E1%BB%89nh%20V%C4%A9nh%20Long>. (accessed on November 27, 2022).

¹⁴⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit.*, p.221.

Bonard¹⁴⁵ was sent to replace Charner (who was too tired and had to return home)¹⁴⁶. Upon arriving in Vietnam, Bonard immediately handed over to Nguyen Ba Nghi the peace proposal that Charner had drafted, and at the same time, to exert pressure on the court, Bonard launched a military campaign to occupy Bien Hoa and Vinh Long.

After losing Gia Dinh, the royal army was gathered and stationed in Bien Hoa with about 3,000 soldiers under the command of Nguyen Ba Nghi, a court official from Hue. On the Dong Nai River leading to Bien Hoa province, there were 10 dams (9 made of wood and 1 made of stone) blocking the river, with battlements and forts on the banks. On December 13, 1861, the Franco-Spanish coalition, including naval infantry, attacked Bien Hoa. The royal army tried to resist but eventually had to retreat. On December 16, France took control of Bien Hoa province¹⁴⁷. Nguyen Ba Nghi fled to Binh Thuan while the French army confidently continued down the Dong Nai River and took over the remaining Ba Ria fortress on January 7, 1862, along with countless spoils of war. The French then launched attacks and captured the provinces of Dinh Tuong and Vinh Long, as well as conducted reconnaissance in other areas. In fact, a week after the fall of Dinh Tuong on April 20, 1861, the French had already sent steamboats up the Vinh Long River for reconnaissance, but the court remained static. After thorough investigation, on March 20, 1862, the French combined their naval and infantry forces and began to attack Vinh Long. On the morning of March 23, the French took over Vinh Long, capturing 68 artillery pieces. By the end of March 1862, the first four southern provinces had fallen into French hands¹⁴⁸.

Despite the setbacks suffered by the royal army, the people of the southern region of Vietnam, irrespective of their social or economic status, came together in a unified effort to resist the French invaders, delivering significant blows and rendering them pas-

¹⁴⁵ Louis Adolphe Bonard (1805 - 1867) was the Governor-General of French Guiana from 1853 to 1855 and was involved in the Treaty of Nham Tuat (1862), which transferred three provinces of Cochinchina to French territory. He played a significant role in diplomatic affairs, trade, commerce, and religion. In Vietnamese history, he is referred to as Phó Na (蒲那). (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), 1998, p.5).

¹⁴⁶ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.278-279).

¹⁴⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.256.

¹⁴⁸ Pham Van Son, *op.cit*, p.111.

sive and bewildered. This collective response was a spontaneous expression of the people's will. In this context, the scholar Tran Van Giau has offered his thoughts, as follows: *"During the initial capture of Vinh Long, the volunteer forces were highly active across the region, compelling the French troops to expand their reach from Ba Ria to Vinh Long. However, the invaders encountered significant losses and were subjected to attacks from all sides whenever they emerged. As such, the situation was characterized by a great degree of instability and uncertainty"*¹⁴⁹. A. Thomazi wrote in *La conquête de L'Indochine*: *"The French began to realize the need to conquer the provinces they had already conquered. But unexpectedly, Tu Duc requested peace talks"*¹⁵⁰, *"indirectly helping France to slaughter the volunteer army and betray the interests of the people and the homeland"*¹⁵¹. It is evident that the Nguyen Dynasty possessed limited knowledge regarding their adversary.

Treaty of Nham Tuat, signed on June 5, 1862.

Following the Hue court's solicitation for peace negotiations¹⁵², the French military received this news with great elation, as it presented an unforeseen avenue to extricate themselves from their arduous predicament. On May 5, 1862, General Bonard proposed three conditions for reconciliation with King Tu Duc: firstly, dispatch a plenipotentiary to confer with the French expeditionary force command located in Saigon; secondly, remit war reparations to both France and Spain; thirdly, remit 100,000 taels of silver as an upfront guarantee¹⁵³.

The French perceived the opportunity for peace talks as unexpected¹⁵⁴ because they arose in a challenging context, wherein France had encountered significant difficulties.

¹⁴⁹ Tran Van Giau, *Việt Nam cách mạng cận sử và Tổng tập...*, *op.cit*, p.99.

¹⁵⁰ A. Thomazi, *op.cit*, p.120.

¹⁵¹ Tran Van Giau, *Việt Nam cách mạng cận sử và Tổng tập...*, *op.cit*, p.100.

¹⁵² In April 1862, France sent Lieutenant Colonel Simon to Thuan An by boat to deliver a letter requesting that Dai Nam send a representative to negotiate. King Tu Duc convened a meeting of high-ranking officials to discuss a peace agreement, and he told them, *"Temporarily humble ourselves, temporarily bear the cost, if we can save the people and not lose our land, that would be best"*. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.768).

¹⁵³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.767-768.

¹⁵⁴ Director of the Department of Internal Affairs, Paulin Vial, also wrote: "Lieutenant Colonel Simon returned from the North and reported to Admiral Bonard that the Annamese wanted to negotiate... This was good news during a time of great anxiety... People were surprised at how easily the Annamese agreed to

After four years of warfare, they had sustained numerous losses and merely secured four provinces. From the day of the occupation of Gia Dinh until in 1864, they had incurred the loss of 2,000 soldiers, a figure equivalent to the number of troops they deployed to attack Da Nang in August 1858. The Vietnamese populace's resistance was mounting, which led to the French becoming entangled. Moreover, in Europe, the French government lacked unity on continuing the Vietnam War while concurrently engaging in the Mexican invasion¹⁵⁵.

The negotiators representing the Hue court were Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep¹⁵⁶. The negotiations took place from May 28, 1862, to June 5, 1862¹⁵⁷, and a document was signed by both parties according to the agreement. The ratification of the treaty by the courts of the three nations would take place within a year.

The June 5, 1862 treaty was called the “Treaty of Peace and Friendship”. It consisted of 12 articles, some of which were quite onerous, such as Hue court ceding to

negotiate, given that they had previously rejected our attempts at peace talks with so much anger and frustration, and suddenly they were demanding a treaty that seemed expensive to them". (According to P. Vial, *Les premières années de la Cochinchine*, t.1, Paris, 1874, p.150, p.156).

¹⁵⁵ France sent about 20,000 to 30,000 troops to reinforce the Mexican battlefield (According to Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)*..., *op.cit*, p.75).

¹⁵⁶ Two high-ranking mandarins, Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep, requested to go to Saigon to negotiate with the French, and the king approved. Before the delegation set out, King Tu Duc poured wine for them and urged them: “*Land cannot be given up, and Catholicism cannot be allowed to spread freely*”. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.770).

Upon learning that the envoy Phan Thanh Gian exceeded his authority by signing the draft of the treaty ceding three provinces of the Eastern of Cochinchina, King Tu Duc expressed his disappointment and said, “*I pity the people of the court, what crime have they committed?*”. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.771).

Phan Thanh Gian (1796-1867) was a high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty in the history of Vietnam, who negotiated and approved the cession of three provinces in Cochinchina to the French colonizers. Phan Thanh Gian was highly respected by many due to his firmness, straightforwardness, filial piety, and integrity. (Pham Van Son (translated), *Tập san sử địa, đặc khảo về Phan Thanh Giản* (Journal of history and geography - special examination of Phan Thanh Gian), Khai Tri Bookstore, 1967, p.92).

Lam Duy Hiep (1806-1863) was a high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty in the history of Vietnam. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.478).

¹⁵⁷ Young Humanities Group, *Hỏi đáp lịch sử Việt Nam* (Vietnam History Question and Answer), vol. 4, Youth Publishing House, 2007, p.60.

France three provinces of Cochinchina (Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, Bien Hoa) and Con Lon Island, compensating France for war expenses with 20 million francs (equivalent to 2,880,000 taels of silver); opening the ports of Da Nang, Ba Lat, and Quang Yen to free trade with France and Spain. France would return Vinh Long only when Hue court ceased all anti-French movements in the three provinces of Cochinchina¹⁵⁸.

Upon the immediate signing of the treaty, French colonizers disseminated the news through maritime channels, while the Hue court expeditiously dispatched Phan Thanh Gian to the South, commanding loyalists in diverse locales to relinquish their weapons and furnish France with ammunition in the hope of securing compliance. The Nguyen dynasty's chroniclers recorded the treaty's ratification as a transgression perpetrated by Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep's emissary mission: *"Those two officials went to Gia Dinh and ceded the land of three provinces of Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, and Bien Hoa to the West, receiving a sum of money as compensation for war expenses up to 400,000 dong (estimated to be equivalent to 280,000 taels of silver), establishing mission houses, opening commercial streets, including 12 articles written as a treaty"*¹⁵⁹.

From the period of 5-6-1862 to 1865, the Hue dynasty did not formally endorse the Nham Tuat Treaty, yet certain provisions were still implemented, such as facilitating religious dissemination, publicly dissuading resistance against the French, and paying war fees. Nevertheless, it was only after the court's resolution in February 1865 that the Hue dynasty unequivocally acknowledged and complied with the Nham Tuat Treaty. Additionally, some proposed ideas were found to be lacking in substance and reflected a passive acceptance of defeat, inadvertently creating favorable conditions for the enemy to consolidate its control and intensify its colonial aspirations for the Western provinces. This predicament led King Tu Duc to consider exchanging the three Western provinces of Vinh Long, An Giang, and Ha Tien for three Eastern provinces currently under French occupation in early November 1865¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit.*, p.298-304.

¹⁵⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.770.

¹⁶⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXX, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.273-274.

2.3 Attitudes and policies of the Vietnamese Feudal Dynasty towards French Colonial aggression.

For over two decades, Vietnam's erroneous foreign policies have depleted its resources and human capital, while simultaneously exacerbating tensions with neighboring nations and fueling apprehensions of Western colonialism. Taking advantage of the population's suffering, Western clergymen, especially those hailing from France and Spain, have spared no effort in attempting to convert the Vietnamese people to Christianity. Utilizing a wide range of tactics, from propaganda to emotional appeals, these clergymen have sown seeds of division within Vietnamese society, and have been known to either directly organize or lend support to rebellions against the monarchy, ultimately leaving Vietnam's social and political fabric vulnerable to external aggression¹⁶¹.

Throughout many regions of Vietnam, especially from the Gianh River basin and northward, the Christian forces, particularly in areas controlled by former French missionaries, were actively engaged in activities aimed at sowing deep divisions among the people. The primary objective of the French missionaries was to combine spreading the faith with building a Catholic state in Vietnam while forming internal factions as a basis for future armed invasions¹⁶². In response to the actions of the French missionaries, the Nguyen dynasty implemented policies that were detrimental to Vietnam's economy and politics. These policies included closing off the country, severing relations with Western countries, and strongly prohibiting and persecuting Christianity.

In addition to the activities of the French priests, French colonizers introduced warships to Vietnam, which escalated military tensions. The French made demands on the Nguyen court, including the release of imprisoned priests and the opening of trade. The French sent warships to Da Nang in 1822 and 1825, and in 1845, French warships entered the port twice. In 1847, they even attacked the court's ships, and French captains and priests entered the palace, making threats¹⁶³. In 1848, the French bourgeois revolution erupted, leading to the establishment of the second French empire in 1852. Although the French invasion plan had yet to be executed, preparations for it were intensified.

¹⁶¹ Nguyen The Long, *Bang giao Đại Việt Triều Nguyễn* (State of Dai Viet - Nguyen Dynasty), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005, p.31-32.

¹⁶² C. Gosselin, *L'Empire d' Annam*, Perrin, Paris, 1904, p.150.

¹⁶³ Nguyen Luong Bich, *Lược sử ngoại giao Việt Nam các thời trước* (A brief history of Vietnam's diplomacy in previous times), People's Army Publishing House, 1996, p.123.

It can be observed that the attitude of the imperial court, under the leadership of Emperor Tu Duc, towards the French invasion of Vietnam underwent significant changes over time¹⁶⁴. Emperor Tu Duc's 35-year reign (1848-1883) can be divided into two distinct periods, each characterized by a different approach.

During the initial period, which encompassed Tu Duc's ascension to the throne until the late 1850s, he demonstrated a resolute and unwavering stance against the French presence in Vietnam. This unwavering attitude was exemplified notably during the battle in Danang, where he displayed strong resistance against the French forces. Tu Duc's determination to defend Vietnamese sovereignty was evident during this phase.

In contrast, the second period, spanning from the French occupation of Gia Dinh in 1859 until the end of Tu Duc's reign, witnessed a shift in the court's attitude towards the French invasion. The imperial court's response became increasingly muddled and conciliatory as they attempted to navigate the complexities of negotiations and compromise. Despite initial efforts to maneuver diplomatically, the court gradually found itself trapped in a cycle of concessions and eventual failures¹⁶⁵.

At the Danang front, in the face of a powerful attack by the Franco-Spanish coalition, the Nguyen Dynasty's imperial court reinforced its forces to vigorously defend Danang and resist the French. The imperial court in Hue also regularly convened meetings to discuss strategies for dealing with the French: “*The king sat in the Van Minh Palace, summoning the high-ranking officials to sit down, offering them tea, and inquiring about the military situation in the Western region*”¹⁶⁶.

Emperor Tu Duc specifically instructed those who possessed talent to contribute their ideas in fighting against the French, regardless of whether they were junior generals or soldiers. “*The king directed that all officials in Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa, and Quang Nam regions should utilize their talents, devise new strategies, and fight resolutely, sincerely seeking advice and following instructions. If any junior generals or soldiers have strate-*

¹⁶⁴ A. B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: the Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988, p.115.

¹⁶⁵ N. Cooke, *The Composition of the Nineteenth-Century Political Elite of Pre-Colonial Nguyen Vietnam (1802-1883)*, “Modern Asian Studies”, 1995, vol. 29, No 4, p.741-764.

¹⁶⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.586.

gies to defeat the enemy, they are allowed to express themselves to the Supreme Commander. Generals will be rewarded with titles and honors for their contributions, while soldiers will be promoted regardless of their rank. From the guards and beyond, those who have made contributions will be rewarded with silver, money, and certificates based on the extent of their achievements. As for any ordinary messengers or those who are incompetent or make mistakes, they will be held accountable and punished before being reassigned. Furthermore, those who retreat timidly from the battlefield will be punished first to uphold the authority of the appointed commander-in-chief and strictly enforce military regulations”¹⁶⁷

Under Emperor Tu Duc's leadership, the imperial court demonstrated a proactive approach in defending Danang, convening meetings to seek strategic input from talented individuals, and fostering a disciplined and accountable military system to combat the French invasion.

The Nguyen Dynasty regularly took care of soldiers and generals in the battlefield, which boosted the fighting spirit of both the commanders and the troops. *“The king considers the hardships faced by the generals and soldiers in the battlefield, enduring difficulties while being subjected to sudden punishments, and now deducting from their already meager provisions, they cannot help but go hungry while performing their duties. Henceforth, it is established that any staff members who are subjected to sudden punishments must be treated fairly, receiving their full salaries. After the military operations are completed, their punishments will be implemented through salary deductions, making it a customary practice. Furthermore, provisions for those who are demoted or suspended will be given according to the provisions received by soldiers deployed in the field. As for those who are removed from their positions and work diligently to redeem themselves, they will be provided with monthly allowances for money and rice”¹⁶⁸*

Regarding the talented general Nguyen Tri Phuong, a special treatment was granted: *“Nguyen Tri Phuong is granted a royal sword, 5 ginseng roots, and medical personnel are sent to provide treatment and offer encouragement and comfort”¹⁶⁹.*

Additionally, the imperial court distributed winter clothing to the generals and soldiers when the cold season arrived. Emperor Tu Duc explicitly stated, *“Those who display*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p.599.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p.574.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p.581.

*courage and determination in resisting the French invaders will be rewarded, while those who are cowardly will be severely punished as an example. Those leaders who panic and flee upon hearing distant gunshots, causing the soldiers to scatter, shall be beheaded to make it known to everyone*¹⁷⁰.

From the beginning of the war, Emperor Tu Duc issued instructions for officials to report on the brave individuals who fought against the enemy in order to praise and reward them, as well as to punish the cowards. *“Starting from the guards and below, evaluating their performance, whether it is commendable, mediocre, courageous, or cowardly, punishments and rewards shall be administered”*¹⁷¹.

The Nguyen Dynasty, under Emperor Tu Duc's rule, demonstrated a commitment to the welfare of soldiers and commanders, providing incentives for bravery, but also imposing strict punishments for cowardice, creating a culture of courage and dedication in the face of the French invasion.

During the Nguyen Dynasty, led by Emperor Tu Duc, alongside appropriate rewards and punishments for the generals, there was also a focus on the welfare of the people to effectively generate support for the war effort. Emperor Tu Duc also issued instructions for local forces to undergo rigorous training to join the court in driving out the French invaders: *“Furthermore, instruct the localities of the North and South to train soldiers who excel in martial arts and possess courage, so that they will not retreat when facing the enemy. Those who are dishonest and lazy shall be punished accordingly, while those who have made significant contributions shall be rewarded with monetary compensation...”*¹⁷². During this period, nurturing the strength of the people and relying on their support in the fight became one of the factors leading to victory in the battle of Danang.

In the early stages, the Nguyen Dynasty relied on the powerful and enthusiastic forces of the people in the Quang Nam-Danang region to fight against the French: *“The provincial authorities of Quang Nam requested to hire locals to weave bamboo traps, provide wood materials, and fill the rivers with soil, causing the flow of water to divert towards the coast. This caused the low-lying areas to dry up and made it difficult for Western ships to advance. The military forces were able to transfer their defensive*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p.576.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p.570.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p.599.

strength from the land. The King approved this strategy”¹⁷³. The strategy of using fishing nets to encircle the enemy should be regarded as highly creative, as it mobilized the people and restricted the French warships from approaching the shore to fire their guns.

From the beginning of the war, the Nguyen Dynasty issued orders for the people to implement the scorched-earth policy, which aimed to disrupt the supply of food and provisions and prevent the enemy from exploiting internal unrest. King Tu Duc gave the directive: “*Order the military forces to be vigilant towards the people following the Christian faith in Tra Son upon their return. It is suspected that they have returned to gather followers to incite internal unrest for the French*”¹⁷⁴. This group was previously promised by Bishop Pellerin to rise up as an internal threat before the French attacked. However, when the French did attack, there was no noticeable effect. All the people of Danang, including the Christians, actively participated in guerrilla warfare, implemented the scorched-earth policy strategy, and united in their resistance against the French. The combination of national unity and determination to fight against the enemy contributed to the victory on the Danang front, forcing the French colonizers to repeatedly change their tactics but ultimately failing in their aim of quick and decisive victory.

In early July 1859, the French again requested a ceasefire. King Tu Duc “*thought that both sides had won and lost battles in the war, and now that they were tired of it, negotiating a ceasefire was a good idea. He sent Nguyen Tri Phuong to handle the negotiations and wait for further orders...*”¹⁷⁵. In fact, the court had already begun discussing the issue of war and peace before this point. After Genouilly sent his first letter requesting a ceasefire and saw that the French were still occupying Gia Dinh, King Tu Duc expressed an incorrect view of the nature of the invasion: “*In May, the Western army occupied Bao Huu Binh in Gia Dinh. The king told the Secret Council that he used to think that the Westerners came to Gia Dinh, satisfied their desires, and then retreated. He did not expect that they would try to hold on...*”¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p.576.

¹⁷⁴ Quốc sử quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Châu bản triều Tự Đức (1848-1883)* (Vermilion Records of the reign of King Tu Duc (1848 – 1883)), Edited by Vũ Thanh Hằng, Trà Ngọc Anh, and Tạ Quang Phát, Literary Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003, p.68.

¹⁷⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.49.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p.36.

In reality, when the Franco-Spanish coalition occupied Danang and Saigon, there were various factions within the imperial court that opposed each other. The first tendency was represented by Truong Dang Que¹⁷⁷, Phan Thanh Gian, and others, collectively known as the Secret Council. They believed that “*War is not as effective as peace, but first and foremost, we must defend ourselves to facilitate future negotiations. At this moment, we need to maintain a defensive posture. Later, we can transition to offensive attacks or engage in negotiations and diplomacy*”¹⁷⁸. In essence, their approach was to defend in order to negotiate. The majority of high-ranking officials in the imperial court agreed with this viewpoint and also believed that “it was necessary to continue the fight and wait for the enemy to become tired before engaging in negotiations”¹⁷⁹. Emperor Tu Duc approved of this line of thinking¹⁸⁰.

The second tendency was represented by a minority of high-ranking officials such as To Tran¹⁸¹ and Nguyen Tu Gian¹⁸², who advocated for an aggressive and offensive approach¹⁸³. Although this group constituted a small faction within the court, they gained the support of the majority of provincial governors and the entire scholar community, as well as the general population.

¹⁷⁷ Truong Dang Que (1793-1865) was a renowned scholar who served under four Vietnamese dynasties: Gia Long, Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, and Tu Duc. During that time, esteemed scholars like Nguyen Tri Phuong acknowledged that Truong Dang Que possessed a level of sophistication unmatched by others. After his passing, Emperor Tu Duc and the imperial court deeply mourned his loss. Princes, princesses, and intellectuals from both inside and outside the court composed poems and couplets to express their respect. Such was the admiration Truong Dang Que evoked in people. (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol. 1, Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.459, p.464).

¹⁷⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.102.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p.103.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p.103-104.

¹⁸¹ To Tran (1791-?) was a Vietnamese historian during the Nguyen Dynasty. “He was known for his integrity, moral character, and strictness. He was highly respected and revered by the people of his time”. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol.1, 2006, *op.cit*, p.556-557)

¹⁸² Nguyen Tu Gian (1823-1890) was a scholar and prominent official who held significant positions for nearly 40 years, serving seven kings of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnam. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol.1, 2006, *op.cit*, p.573)

¹⁸³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.85.

The third tendency, represented by Doan Tho¹⁸⁴ and the extreme-right faction, advocated for purely peaceful negotiations¹⁸⁵.

When the French troops withdrew from Danang and concentrated their main forces in Saigon, the faction advocating for a “defensive stance for negotiations” believed they had the upper hand, and their position within the court was strengthened. They believed that sooner or later, the enemy would give up. This mindset led Nguyen Tri Phuong, despite having thousands of soldiers, hundreds of cannons, and formidable fortifications, to hesitate and refrain from liberating Danang. At that time, only a small group of troops remained to defend the city, while the majority had retreated to Saigon or crossed into China.

In early August 1859, the French again requested a ceasefire, but King Tu Duc asked the Secret Council for their opinion: *“The king asked the Secret Council. Now they are asking for land, but we must not agree. The rules for trade have been established since the founding of our country. The rules for religion were also banned during the Tran and Le dynasties. Recently, because our ban is so strict, they have asked for leniency so that the soldiers and people can rest. But in it, we have made many treaties, and the religious followers are still not free”*¹⁸⁶. This is why Nguyen Tri Phuong's negotiations for a ceasefire continued without reaching any written agreement. In the Saigon region, a similar line of reasoning led to a state of not to throw one's troops into battle.

In the subsequent period, from the French occupation of Gia Dinh (1859) to the signing of the 1862 Treaty, there was a hesitant and conciliatory attitude that aimed to maneuver but ended up getting increasingly trapped in compromise and failure. In March 1860, the court continued to discuss 11 treaties. Essentially, the court officials and King Tu Duc agreed on 9 treaties, with only two being staunchly disagreed upon: allowing religious leaders to travel and preach and establishing trading towns. If these two treaties were not agreed upon, *“we would have to fight and hold on”*¹⁸⁷. In April 1860, the court

¹⁸⁴ Doan Tho (?-1871) was a martial arts official under the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnamese history. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol.1, 2006, *op.cit*, p.582).

¹⁸⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.40.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p.69.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p.108.

still deliberated on the issues of war and peace without reaching a definitive decision. Eventually, King Tu Duc suggested to “*temporarily set aside*”¹⁸⁸ the matter.

Despite the severely diminished size of the French army, with some records indicating a count of fewer than 1,000 troops, their lack of direction from the court prevented them from either initiating or concluding hostilities. As a result, nearly 1,000 French soldiers traversed along the rivers, trading with the local populace to sustain their forces and to buy the loyalty of certain Vietnamese individuals. This maneuver also provided them with an opportunity to gain insights into Vietnam's internal affairs, recruit mercenaries, and establish a more favorable environment for their subsequent invasion. The French army's defensive tactics and dearth of active assaults meant that, from August 1860 to February 1861 (i.e., approximately 6-7 months), Nguyen Tri Phuong and other court officials expended significant efforts to construct and reinforce the Great Citadel's defense line, but no significant engagements took place. Aside from two events when the French forces attacked Phu Nhuan (October 18, 1860) and Chi Hoa (December 1, 1860), but were repelled by the Vietnamese army, the latter employed guerrilla strategies to harass the adversary. Consequently, the meager French and Spanish garrisons remained steadfast against the Vietnamese army's weaponry while awaiting reinforcements from China. Therefore, it is apparent that while the French colonial army was at a disadvantage, the Vietnamese army refrained from aggressively advancing against the enemy due to flaws in the court's policies and opted to maintain a defensive posture¹⁸⁹. Due to the aforementioned errors in policy, the French army was able to prolong its presence in Vietnam and expand its control over the region until reinforcements arrived.

Consequently, after gaining significant advantages in the war, the French navy landed in Saigon on February 7, 1861. The French government intended to consolidate its power in southern Vietnam, establish dominance over the Mekong Delta, expand its influence into Cambodia, and explore the route from Khmer to Laos in order to penetrate the southwestern Chinese market. Despite suffering losses and being forced to cede key positions, such as the Chi Hoa Citadel, the Vietnamese court continued to manage its military affairs by appointing senior officials to evaluate and supervise its defense efforts.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹ Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Khanh, Nguyen Dinh Le, *Đại cương lịch sử Việt Nam* (General History of Vietnam) vol. 2, Educational Publishing House, 2006, p.132.

The court paid careful attention to the overall security situation in the region and endeavored to mobilize individuals with the will and ability to contribute to the defense of the country. It also called on skilled individuals from all over Vietnam to step forward and fight against the enemy¹⁹⁰.

As previously noted, the Nguyen dynasty adopted a defensive stance and refrained from actively engaging with adversaries. Consequently, following the gradual conquest of strategic territories by French colonialists, including Dinh Tuong, one of the six western provinces, officials in the Hue court began engaging in fault-finding discussions rather than prioritizing the recapture of the lost territories. In this regard, Tu Duc pivoted to the idea of reconciliation rather than embarking on military campaigns to regain control¹⁹¹. The Vietnamese people could only lament the disastrous shortcomings of the court. When the French forces returned to Saigon with strength and defeated the Vietnamese army, it was already too late for Tu Duc to seek negotiations from a position of strength in the best possible conditions. Those debates had created an atmosphere of anxiety throughout the country. Once again, the court advocated a policy of surrender.

Hence, it can be asserted that despite the initial display of valor by the Nguyen army in confronting foreign invaders, the overwhelming superiority of modern weaponry and warfare tactics posed an insurmountable challenge, resulting in repeated retreats and substantial casualties. The feudal group entrusted with safeguarding national sovereignty ex-

¹⁹⁰ Nguyen Khac Thuan, *Đại cương lịch sử cổ trung đại Việt Nam* (Outline of ancient and medieval history of Vietnam), Education Publishing House, 2005, p.267.

¹⁹¹ Author Wieslaw Olszewski in the book *Historia Wietnamu* also wrote about the attitude of the Nguyen court at this time as follows:

"The catastrophic situation of the state deepened the internal division within the power apparatus. Patriotic officials, such as Nguyen Tri Phuong, Ton That Thuyet, and Hoang Dieu, advocated for the continuation of the fight. However, the faction led by Emperor Tu Duc, which included Nguyen Huu Do, Phan Thanh Gian, and Lam Duy Hiep, favored negotiations. Some of them advised making peace at the cost of limited concessions (freedom of trade, Catholic religion), while for others, these conditions did not play a significant role. Generally, the prevailing opinion was that defeating the invaders was impossible. Defensive capabilities were deemed insufficient, and the fate of the state in the event of a prolonged conflict was considered doubtful. There were, however, some hopes placed in discouraging the French and the chances of repurchasing the ceded provinces." (W. Olszewski, *Historia Wietnamu*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1991, p.225).

hibited timidity and impotence in the face of the French's massive assault, beset by internal divisions between the warring and pacifist factions. The former sought to emulate the Chinese feudal system to repel Western colonialism¹⁹², while the latter opposed this approach, with the majority of people supporting their stance. These circumstances attest to the ruling feudal class's flawed ideological framework, characterized by an ingrained apprehension of external threats.

During a certain instance, when King Tu Duc sought counsel from his King's special envoy Nguyen Ba Nghi, the latter responded in the following manner: *"I see that we cannot fight and defend at the same time. Even if we lose something, we can still deal with the problem in Cochinchina. The French believe that we have treated them indifferently for so long, and they have been looked down upon by neighboring countries. Therefore, they have sent troops to make us surrender. If they send someone to talk first, we can know that they intend to make peace. It is impossible to compete in fighting or defending. Therefore, we have not built forts, reduced the display of power, and called up troops for that reason. Now, in this situation, only the word 'peace' can work"*¹⁹³.

During the early stages of the conflict, the ruling class exhibited a degree of resistance as their interests were directly impacted. However, such resistance remained limited and ultimately gave way to capitulation, resulting in the relinquishment of territorial sovereignty to the colonial aggressors. This was a gradual progression from active opposition to passive acceptance, ultimately resulting in full surrender. The flawed ideological perspective of the imperial court resulted in missed opportunities to overcome the enemy. The court's passive strategy, failing to launch an active offensive, proved catastrophic as it provided the French colonizers with the opportunity to evade annihilation and eventually achieve their invasion objectives. Furthermore, the internal divisions among the ruling feudal class created further complications, preventing the court from effectively pursuing favorable terms for peace negotiations with France¹⁹⁴.

In the aftermath of the unsuccessful attempt to capture Da Nang, the French military leadership, from Genouilly in July 1859 to Page in March 1860, sought to initiate peace

¹⁹² Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.90.

¹⁹³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXIX, 1974, *op.cit*, p.210-213.

¹⁹⁴ Military History Institute, *Lịch sử cận đại Việt Nam* (The modern history of Vietnam) Education Publishing House, vol. 2, 1960, p.67-74.

negotiations. The proposed terms centered around establishing a long-term friendship between France and Vietnam, granting amnesty to those who collaborated with France, refraining from religious persecution and releasing priests, ensuring freedom of trade and religion, and permitting the establishment of consulates and shops at the port. Notably, France requested the immediate withdrawal of its warships from Gia Dinh upon signing the peace treaty, which was deemed reasonable given the prevailing circumstances.

In such a situation, it would have been judicious for the imperial court to leverage the opportunity to postpone peace negotiations and bolster its military capabilities to prepare for future resistance. However, the court failed to distinguish between temporary concessions and long-term interests, leading to their reluctance to sign the peace treaty when the opportunity presented itself. This impasse perpetuated a state of neither fighting nor negotiating, which ultimately benefited the enemy. It was only after France overcame its challenges in 1860 and signed the Beijing Treaty with the Qing Dynasty that it resumed its aggressive invasion of Vietnam.

During the period in question, the prevailing ideology of defeatism had a profound impact on the Hue court, leading it from one military and diplomatic setback to another. The ultimate manifestation of this defeatism was the court's betrayal of the people's interests through the hasty signing of the 1862 Treaty, which ceded the three eastern provinces of Cochinchine to France. This act occurred at a time when the anti-colonial movement in the South was gathering momentum, and its ramifications were significant. By relinquishing these territories, the court effectively handed the French a foothold in the region and provided them with the pretext to further expand their colonial holdings. The consequences of this decision were dire, as it forced the Vietnamese to confront the fact that *"conquered territories must be re-conquered"*¹⁹⁵.

According to historical records, the Tu Duc dynasty was compelled to sign a treaty due to a combination of factors. In Tonkin, violent uprisings were occurring, while in Cochinchine, French colonial forces had occupied four provinces (Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, Bien Hoa, and Vinh Long)¹⁹⁶. To address these concurrent threats, the Tu Duc dynasty dispatched Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep to Saigon to negotiate with the colonizers. Their objective was to secure an agreement that would allow the Nguyen dynasty to

¹⁹⁵ A. Thomazi, *La conquête de l'Indochine*, *op.cit.*, p.120.

¹⁹⁶ Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *op.cit.*, p.59 and Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit.*, p.261.

redirect its military resources towards suppressing the uprisings in the Tonkin, which posed a direct threat to the dynasty's reign¹⁹⁷.

Regarding the perspective of King Tu Duc prior to signing the treaty, in April 1862, a French lieutenant named Simon traveled by ship to the port of Thuan An to deliver a letter demanding that representatives from Dai Nam come forward for negotiations. King Tu Duc convened a meeting of high-ranking officials to discuss the treaty, and he stated to his advisors that *“temporarily yielding and accepting losses may be worthwhile if it can save our people and prevent the loss of territory”*¹⁹⁸.

Subsequently, the Emperor assented to the request of Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep, both high-ranking officials, to travel to Saigon for negotiations with the French. Prior to their departure, the Emperor hosted a banquet during which he made the following statement: *“Land cannot be given up, and the miscreance (meaning Christianity) cannot be allowed to spread freely”*¹⁹⁹. When he learned that the delegation had exceeded their authority and signed the draft treaty, which ceded the three eastern provinces of Cochinchine to the French, Emperor Tu Duc was disappointed and said, *“What a pity for the people of our dynasty, what wrong have we done?”*²⁰⁰. Emperor Tu Duc punished the two chief envoys by appointing Phan Thanh Gian as Governor of Vinh Long and Lam Huy Hiep as Governor of Thuan - Khanh (Binh Thuan and Khanh Hoa today), which were the provinces adjacent to the land just ceded to the French, in order for them to redeem their mistake by negotiating again.

After realizing their defeat and hearing the discontent of the literati and people in the South, and while deploying troops to suppress uprisings in the North, the Tu Duc court also urgently made plans to redeem the land, but without success²⁰¹.

The book *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam) records that *“Despite being compelled to concede three provinces in Cochinchine to the French, King Tu Duc*

¹⁹⁷ Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *op.cit*, p.60-61.

¹⁹⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.768.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p.770.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p.771.

²⁰¹ According to Rieunier, besides political benefits, the occupation of Cochinchine also had great economic benefits. According to the statistics printed in this book, the total income sources in the three provinces of Southeastern Vietnam in 1863 were 3,900,000 French Francs, so the land redemption was really difficult. (See A. B. L. H. Rieunier, *La question Cochinchine au point de vue des intérêts français*, Paris, 1864, p.12).

remained steadfast in his desire to reclaim them. One of these provinces, Gia Dinh, held immense sentimental value to the Nguyen dynasty as it was their birthplace. Following the signing of the treaty, the King dispatched envoys to negotiate with French officials to reclaim the lost land. However, the French, with their imperialistic ambitions, not only refused to return the provinces but also sought to expand their territorial possessions. This predicament left King Tu Duc at a loss, prompting him to send emissaries bearing gifts to both French and Spanish officials in a bid to resolve the issue...’’²⁰².

According to the *Việt Sử tân biên* (Revised History of Vietnam) (Volume 5), “Upon returning to the capital, Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep reported the outcome of their negotiations to the court. King Tu Duc expressed his disappointment and admonished the two envoys for exceeding their authority. Despite the court's disagreement with the terms of the treaty, they knew that any attempt to modify it immediately would be futile. Instead, they decided to send the two envoys back to Saigon to engage in further negotiations with the French authorities. Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep reluctantly accepted the assignment and departed for the South, carrying with them the heavy burden of their failure to secure a better outcome for their country’’²⁰³.

Following the signing of the treaty, the resistance against French colonial rule was taken up by the populace of Cochinchine. The uprising, spearheaded by Truong Dinh, commenced in the eastern provinces before spreading westward and ultimately northward, emerging as a central theme in Vietnamese history during the latter half of the 19th century, particularly for the intelligentsia and citizenry residing in the southern region²⁰⁴.

Extracted from the book "*La question de Cochinchine au point de vue des intérêts français*" by H. Abel (a naval officer in the advisory board of Admiral Charner, who played an important role in Cochinchine from 1860 to 1865):

“...The Hue court had to deal with the North and South wars simultaneously, which was very dangerous... However, after signing the peace treaty on June 5, 1862, the court of Tu Duc immediately realized its serious mistake. And their strategy was to redeem this mistake, but in terms of measures, it expressed both the "determination of the weak" and their "indecision and confusion."

²⁰² Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.262.

²⁰³ Pham Van Son, 1963, *op.cit*, p.170.

²⁰⁴ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Triều Nguyễn và xã hội Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX* (Nguyen Dynasty and Vietnamese society in the 19th century), in *Historical issues of the Nguyen Dynasty*, Past and Present Magazine, Saigon Cultural Publishing House, 2006, p.287.

*For a long time, the Hue court remained silent on all proposals, but suddenly agreed to the terms of the treaty... Could this be the strategy of a court that had reached a dead end when it realized the strength of the opponent and had to submit to avoid greater disasters? Or is this the victory of one faction over the other in the court? ... Surely all of the above reasons have happened”*²⁰⁵.

At that time, the initiative of the Hue court to “negotiate and quickly sign” the peace treaty surprised the French colonizers: *“Fortunately, when they were expecting a bad situation, Hue requested to sign the peace treaty”*²⁰⁶.

It is evident that the Nguyen dynasty had a poor understanding of their opponent. To this day, there remains a sense of confusion as to why the Nguyen delegation hastily agreed to such onerous terms during the brief negotiation period. As such, King Tu Duc not only deemed Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep as culprits of the court but also of posterity²⁰⁷. Historian Pham Van Son wrote: *“The Tonkin uprisings led to a calamitous outcome whereby the Tu Duc court was compelled to expeditiously ratify the 1862 Nham Tuat Treaty with France in Cochinchine, in order to prioritize the situation in Tonkin. The Emperor speculated that renewing diplomatic relations with France would present an opportunity to reclaim the territories that had been ceded. This raises the question of whether Tonkin faced a more pressing predicament compared to Cochinchine at the time. It is reasonable that Tu Duc deployed General Nguyen Tri Phuong and numerous other military leaders to the northern region in response to these circumstances”*²⁰⁸.

Following the conclusion of the 1862 treaty, a pronounced wave of opposition amongst the populace ensued, with a prevailing sentiment that *“the people of Cochinchine refused to follow the Westerners because of their righteous indignation”*²⁰⁹. This opposition movement reached its peak through a series of sustained uprisings. Despite the vigorous resistance of the people and the absence of formal ratification by either the court or the French government, the Hue court nonetheless proceeded with the implementation of the treaty's provisions. In December of 1862, the court committed to paying

²⁰⁵ A. B. L. H. Rieunier, *op.cit*, p.12,14,17.

²⁰⁶ A. Salles, *Souvenir de l'expédition de Cochinchine*, Paris, 1865, p.161.

²⁰⁷ Phan Khoang, *Việt Pháp bang giao sử lược* (The history of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and France), Hue, 1950, p.148.

²⁰⁸ Pham Van Son, *op.cit*, 1963, p.162.

²⁰⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII (Veritable Records of the Great South), 2006, *op.cit*, p.783.

the first five years of war indemnities and subsequently forwarded a letter to Saigon later that year, seeking to redeem the three provinces.

But France's attitude was that it had to take over the three eastern provinces as a springboard for future expansion. Therefore, immediately after the treaty was approved by the French and Spanish governments, in April 1863²¹⁰, France's representative Bonard and Spain's representative Palanca went to Hue to force Tu Duc to sign the ratified treaty. The ceremony to exchange the ratified treaty between France and Spain was held on April 14, and on April 16, the two missions from the two countries had an audience with King Tu Duc²¹¹. However, due to various opinions, the Nguyen court was forced to negotiate again in order to amend the content of the treaty with the aim of reclaiming the three provinces of Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, and Bien Hoa. The Nguyen court also agreed to pay war indemnities to France and Spain in the amount of 13,004 taels of silver, equivalent to 186,111 Western silver dollars²¹². With the aim of placating the vehemently anti-French sentiments prevalent among the people and to allay the vigilance of the court and the king, Bonard acceded to relinquishing Vinh Long to the court after his return to Gia Dinh on May 25th, 1863.

In June 1863, the Nguyen court sent a delegation led by Phan Thanh Gian along with Pham Phu Thu²¹³, Nguy Khac Dan²¹⁴, and an entourage, to France with the mission of requesting a revision of the 1862 treaty and either the redemption or repurchase of the three eastern provinces of Cochinchine²¹⁵. This decision by the Nguyen court was based

²¹⁰ According to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.106, this event took place on March 19, 1863.

²¹¹ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874..., op.cit*, p.70.

²¹² According to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.107.

²¹³ Pham Phu Thu (1821-1882) was a high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen dynasty and one of the individuals with progressive views on modernizing Vietnam during the latter half of the 19th century. (Nguyen Kim Hung, *Từ điển văn học (bộ mới)* (Literary Dictionary (new series), World Publishing House, 2004, p.1362).

²¹⁴ Nguy Khac Dan (1817-1873) was a renowned scholar and official of the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnamese history. (Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874..., op.cit*, p.155).

²¹⁵ King Tu Duc: “[...] This trip was planned in advance to determine how to say things in the best possible way. If they do not listen, it is better to stay and speak, to try to stir their hearts. If we go and do not return, or if we go and die without accomplishing anything, what benefit would it bring to the country? Let's discuss 2-3 important matters, and the rest will simply be revisions. Therefore, I will make adjustments to the

on a pre-existing idea, present since the signing of the treaty and during the reception of French and Spanish delegations in Hue, as well as during negotiations with Bonard after his return to Saigon in the second half of April 1863. This decision was also communicated to France by Bonard: “*The intention to send a delegation to Paris to see the Emperor has been officially expressed many times... The King of Annam has not had time to send up offerings worthy of his majesty, so he requests to make up for these shortcomings as soon as possible by sending a delegation to visit Emperor Napoleon*”²¹⁶.

The arrival of the Vietnamese delegation in France²¹⁷ coincided with a fortuitous moment for negotiations, as France found itself in a stalemate and enduring significant losses on the battlefield in Mexico. Additionally, France was facing the prospect of conflict with Russia and Prussia, further compounding the precariousness of the situation. As a result, public opinion in France was largely against expensive and hazardous military expeditions. Indeed, official statements were made in the French parliament regarding this very issue: “*The financial situation of our [French] country is facing a reef... All wars, if not fought for honor or for the duty to one's country, become a mathematical problem; you go to war to develop business, but can you be sure that the burden you put on our financial system will not exceed the growth you create for business? I urge you to stop and think carefully*”²¹⁸. In such a situation, the issue of Cochinchina was only a secondary issue and of “*only had secondary benefit*”²¹⁹ to France. Therefore, France was likely willing to negotiate with the imperial court in Hue on new terms.

national letter”. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VII (Veritable Records of the Great South), 2006, *op.cit*, p.812).

²¹⁶ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)*..., *op.cit*, p.71.

²¹⁷ According to French documents, the delegation of 66 members left Hue on September 13, 1863 and arrived in Gia Dinh, where they boarded the ship of Rear Admiral Rieunier. On September 18, they met with the French Foreign Minister Deroupin de Lhuys and met with the French emperor on November 5. During that time, the delegation not only visited Paris, but also Madrid (Spain) and returned to Saigon on March 18, 1864. According to the Nguyen Dynasty history, the delegation returned to the capital city of Hue around early April 1864. (Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.110).

²¹⁸ According to Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)*..., *op.cit*, p.77.

²¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

In the context described, the Nguyen Dynasty delegation's initial efforts in France offered a glimmer of hope. Assisted by Navy Captain Gabriel Aubaret²²⁰, Phan Thanh Gian presented to France a royal letter from Emperor Tu Duc, which contained requests for France to return land to Dai Nam (Vietnam) and in return, Dai Nam would cede Con Dao to France. The letter also proposed that France could choose Saigon, a selected location in Dinh Tuong province, and the commercial hub of Thu Dau Mot in Bien Hoa province²²¹. Although the French government was split on this issue, with some supporting the proposal while others remained committed to occupying Cochinchina, a tentative agreement was reached with minor modifications. This was just the first step in a process towards a perfected treaty. Subsequently, negotiations between the two sides continued in more concrete terms after Aubaret officially became the French envoy to Hue in June 1864. Given the disagreement among the Hue court's mandarins, Phan Thanh Gian was delegated with the responsibility of negotiation. Although several points were modified²²², the core provisions were eventually agreed upon by Phan Thanh Gian and Aubaret and submitted to higher authorities for approval, pending a final decision by the French government. During this time, opponents of the Cochinchina occupation, particularly Navy Minister and Colonies Chasseloup Laubat, vehemently opposed the redemption of the three eastern provinces.

Therefore, on November 10, 1864, the French government agreed not to approve the treaty submitted by Gabriel Aubaret²²³. This was also communicated to the Nguyen dynasty in February 1865²²⁴. As a result, the desired change in the treaty did not materialize, even though the Nguyen dynasty had not ratified any treaty. This was primarily due to the indecisiveness and weakness displayed by the dynasty in choosing between fighting

²²⁰ Gabriel Aubaret (1825-1894) was a French Navy lieutenant commander who was proficient in Vietnamese. Later, he transitioned to a diplomatic career and served as the French Consul in Bangkok. (Đồng Khởi Tiếng nói của Đảng bộ và nhân dân Bến Tre: <https://baodongkhoi.vn/nguyen-dinh-chieu-trong-con-mat-cua-cac-hoc-gia-nuoc-ngoai-30062022-a102338.html>). (accessed on November 23, 2022).

²²¹ Nguyen The Anh, *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ* (Vietnam under French domination), Saigon: Lua Thieng Publishing House, 1970, p.38.

²²² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII (Veritable Records of the Great South), 2006, *op.cit*, p.897.

²²³ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.115.

²²⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.897.

the foreign invaders or seeking peace to preserve their imperial status. It should be noted that the Nguyen dynasty's attitude towards peace was also influenced to some extent by the recent events in China²²⁵. With the example of China, the dynasty may have believed that like other imperialist countries waging wars to open up trade and for economic purposes, France's conquest of Cochinchina also had the same motive. Therefore, the dynasty could reclaim their lost land if they were willing to pay the full cost demanded by France. Additionally, the negotiating delegation of the dynasty showed a lack of confidence and firmness, and the aggressive colonialists' sabotage and occupation of Vietnam also played a part.

The negotiations failed, and the treaty of June 5, 1862 was still enforced. Not only was the attempt to reclaim the eastern provinces unsuccessful, but French colonialists were also vigorously preparing to conquer the western provinces when the time came. The French's coercive terms were implemented by the Nguyen dynasty with a somewhat submissive and accommodating attitude. The dynasty gradually loosened its preaching of religion, obstructed the patriotic movements against France among the people, and paid war indemnities. The Nguyen dynasty's history recorded: *"They deceived the people of the three provinces [Vinh Long, An Giang, and Ha Tien] with various tricks, anyone who borrowed the term "patriotic" was not allowed to enter the area, and if officials in the districts saw them, they would immediately capture them. Those who hid them were also punished"*²²⁶.

The signing and implementation of the treaty by the Hue court reflected a profound ideological failure. In the face of the struggles and sufferings endured by the people of the southern provinces who had lost their lands, Emperor Tu Duc failed to take decisive action to alleviate their plight. Rather than demonstrating empathy and actively engaging with the affected population to devise effective strategies for the recovery of the lost territories, the monarch chose to retreat behind the walls of the palace. Engaging in pursuits

²²⁵ In Emperor Tu Duc's royal letter, it mentioned the issue of the United Kingdom receiving war indemnities and returning Guangdong to China, expressing the desire for France to treat Dai Nam (Vietnam) in a similar manner. The letter stated, *"If my country has paid war indemnities, then the territories of the three provinces [in the Southeastern region] should be returned to my country. If additional indemnities are required, my country is willing to discuss and fulfill them"*. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII (Veritable Records of the Great South), 2006, *op.cit*, p.813).

²²⁶ *Ibidem*, p.898.

such as poetry composition, issuing ceremonial edicts, and indulging in extravagant projects like the construction of the Van Nien Mausoleum²²⁷, the royal court demonstrated a disconnection from the pressing concerns of the nation and a misallocation of national resources. This approach not only failed to address the grievances of the people but also perpetuated a sense of disillusionment and frustration among the populace.

Despite the pleas of many close advisors urging the king to remember the provinces that had fallen into enemy hands, the uprisings devastating the northern region, and the rampant poverty throughout the country, and demanding that the king put an end to such wastefulness. In 1866, while the construction of Van Nien mausoleum was still incomplete, the laborers revolted. Governor Binh Phu (also known as Binh Dinh – Phu Yen), Than Van Nhiep²²⁸, sent a letter of reproach and resentment to Tu Duc. The letter stated: *“Our own flaws and the neighboring countries are all aware of it. They only wait for our vulnerabilities, causing us great anxiety. This enmity, this shame, I implore Your Majesty not to forget even for a moment... While sitting on the nine-tiered royal palace, one should think of the houses of the people in Southern Vietnam being burned and destroyed; while admiring the magnificent castle at Vạn Niên, one should think of the abandoned tombs of the people in Southern Vietnam; enjoying exotic delicacies, one should think of what remains of the agricultural produce of Southern Vietnam; consoling the poor people in the Capital, one should think of whether anyone has pity for the people of Southern Vietnam...*

²²⁷ Van Nien mausoleum (Tu Duc mausoleum) (嗣德陵) is a complex of architectural structures, including the burial site of Emperor Tu Duc after his passing, located in a narrow valley within the city of Hue. The construction of the mausoleum was initiated by Emperor Tu Duc in 1864 and completed in 1873. Tu Duc mausoleum showcases intricate architectural designs, picturesque natural landscapes, and is considered one of the most beautiful mausoleum of the Nguyen royal dynasty). (Cổng thông tin điện tử Thừa Thiên Huế (Thua Thien Hue portal): (<https://thuathienhue.gov.vn/vi-vn/Du-kh%C3%A1ch/Du-l%E1%BB%8Bch/Th%C3%B4ng-tin-chi-ti%E1%BA%BFt/tid/Lang-Tu-Duc-Khiem-Lang/newsid/08052207-490B-477F-9998-E61266FC1619/cid/2307076E-60C2-43EE-93A1-B7C8C3A475A9>, Accessed July 7, 2023) and [National Archives Centre NI: <https://archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiep-vu/khiem-lang-%E2%80%93-93-lang-cua-hoang-de-tu-duc.htm>] (Accessed October 12, 2023).

²²⁸ Than Van Nhiep (1804 - 1872) was a prominent statesman of the Nguyễn dynasty. He was a military strategist and a dedicated public servant, always working to enhance the well-being of the people. (Thân tộc nhất gia (Genealogy of the Than family): <https://www.hothan.org/danh-nhan/than-van-nhiep-nha-quan-su-loi-lac-vi-quan-cuong-truc-thuong-dan>, Accessed July 7, 2023).

Unnecessary tasks, inconvenient policies, employing people, sustaining the military, reducing extravagance and promoting frugality, should be implemented one by one, allowing everyone to be satisfied. But first, some actions must be taken: ceasing the Eastern and Western expeditions, calling on those who went to China to bring back steamships to Thuan An port for defense, not burdening the soldiers with excessive work, and not being overly strict in commanding them. These actions should be genuinely implemented, with their positive effects spreading far and wide, satisfying the people, and garnering the support of heaven. Thus, the nation's foundation will be steadfast and in line with the saying 'Encountering numerous calamities brings prosperity to the country; encountering numerous worries brings enlightenment to the mind'."²²⁹ However, Tu Duc remained unmoved in his intentions and replied to Than Van Nhiep: *"The things you criticize are all my faults. But I have many matters to attend to, and my body often aches. If I am strict with these minor matters, I will no longer have the strength to carry out my duties"*²³⁰. And the king continued to spend enormous sums of money on the construction of his tomb.

Despite the significant loss of territory and the sacrifices made by the people, Tu Duc exhibited a notable absence of complaint or lamentation. From 1862 to 1867, during the period of courageous resistance by the people of the South against the Franco-Spanish alliance, pleas were made throughout the country, beseeching the king to aid in repelling the foreign invaders. Tu Duc's responses to these appeals reflect a policy characterized by a sense of failure and inadequacy: *"All you ask is to fight the enemy [France] from morning till night, and now you want both my mother and me to abandon everything?"*²³¹. This response not only exposes the shortcomings of the Hue court's policies in the face of foreign aggression but also sheds light on the underlying factors that led to Vietnam's loss of national independence and its transformation into a French protectorate.

Therefore, in response to the invasion and aggression launched by the Franco-Spanish coalition, the Nguyen dynasty promptly organized resistance against the French from

²²⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXXV, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.182.

²³⁰ *Ibidem*.

²³¹ According to Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)* (The beginning of the installation of the French colonial system in Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)), Hong Duc Publishing House, 2018, p.117.

the outset. However, the resistance strategy was heavily focused on defensive measures, lacked proactive attacks, harbored illusory beliefs about the colonial French, and was feeble in the face of the demands of the French colonizers. The Nguyen dynasty, under the leadership of King Tu Duc, exhibited a lack of insight and decisiveness, was indecisive, and misjudged the military situation. King Tu Duc failed to recognize the fundamental nature of the conflict and was unable to capitalize on opportunities to secure a victory. Consequently, the French colonizers were able to turn the tide from a disadvantageous position to a favorable outcome. In actuality, the Nguyen feudal dynasty was primarily concerned with maintaining the position of the royal court and the family lineage without prioritizing the goal of safeguarding the nation and its people. The end result was failure and the gradual erosion of Vietnamese sovereignty in the face of French military incursion. The land was gradually annexed, and the people were forced into a state of miserable enslavement²³².

On the side of the populace, they rose up in active resistance with a resolute and courageous spirit. Initially, when the French colonialists opened fire in their invasion, the populace joined forces with the dynasty's army to repel the aggressors. Even after the dynasty's surrender, the populace continued to resist with even greater determination and resourcefulness, utilizing various flexible and creative methods. From 1862 onwards, the people's resistance became independent of the dynasty, targeting both the French colonialists and the surrendered feudal dynasty. The people's struggle encountered numerous difficulties due to the neglectful and alienating attitude of the royal court towards the populace's forces. Indeed, even the Nguyen dynasty court itself aided the French colonialists in suppressing the Vietnamese people's struggles.

2.4 The reaction of Vietnamese society to the French invasion activities

2.4.1 The anti-French movement of the people in Cochinchine

While the ruling dynasty initially exhibited some resistance to the French, their opposition gradually waned, leading to a relinquishment of territory to the invading forces. Nevertheless, the populace of the nation fervently opposed the French from the onset of their aggression. In addition to the regular army of the dynasty, a multitude of civilian

²³² Tran Van Giau, *Sự phát triển của tư tưởng ở Việt Nam* (Development of thought in Vietnam), *Hệ ý thức phong kiến và sự thất bại của nó trước các nhiệm vụ lịch sử* (Feudal ideology and its failure to historical tasks), vol 1, Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 1993, p.182.

militias emerged, “comprising individuals who were not afflicted by infirmity or incapacity”²³³. Notably, in Tonkin, upon receiving word of the French encroachment upon Danang, Pham Van Nghi²³⁴, a provincial education officer in Nam Dinh, successfully recruited three hundred able Confucian scholars to augment the Quang Nam army from the north. Upon arriving in Hue, the scholars discovered that the French had already retreated from Danang, and sought to engage in combat in Gia Dinh. Regrettably, the dynasty insisted that they return to their northern province.

Simultaneously, in May of 1859, the Quang Nam militia unit collaborated seamlessly with the army of the ruling dynasty on the Danang front to repel the adversary's assault, thereby compelling them to withdraw to the Son Tra peninsula²³⁵.

The resistance war against the French on the Gia Dinh front

On the Gia Dinh front, immediately following the Franco-Spanish coalition's bombardment of the Can Gio gate and subsequent advance towards Gia Dinh, Tran Thien Chinh²³⁶ and Le Huy²³⁷ both former court officials who had been dismissed, expeditiously enlisted in excess of 5,800 militiamen, assembled defeated court soldiers, mobilized citizens to contribute provisions and funds, and commanded the volunteer army in thwarting the enemy, thereby facilitating the retreat of the court troops²³⁸. In addition, the inhabitants of Gia Dinh razed their domiciles and voluntarily relocated to alternative locales. The populace of Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong, and Gia Dinh provinces also voluntarily furnished the court troops with military equipment and materials for the production of weapons and ammunition²³⁹.

²³³ A. Thomazi, *La conquête de l'Indochine*, *op.cit*, p.31.

²³⁴ Pham Van Nghi (1805-1880) was an educator, poet, and a government official under the Nguyen dynasty who followed the anti-French policy in the 19th century in Vietnamese history. (According to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.885).

²³⁵ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.123.

²³⁶ Tran Thien Chinh (1822?-1874) was a poet and a Nguyen Dynasty official in Vietnamese history, who lived in Gia Dinh. (according to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.889).

²³⁷ He was a martial arts official and was dismissed by the Nguyen dynasty. (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện*, vol 2. Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p. 751 and Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.889).

²³⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.602.

²³⁹ *Ibidem*, p.603.

In addition to the resolute fortitude displayed by the inhabitants of Gia Dinh, the citizens hailing from six provinces situated in Southern Vietnam exhibited a zealous enthusiasm for aiding the soldiers. Significantly, soldiers and civilians alike mobilized to confront the adversary in numerous locations, with some confronting the court troops, while others initiated their own offensives employing diverse tactics²⁴⁰. Notably, the French aggressors themselves conceded that every night, the populace devised stratagems to surreptitiously navigate past the enemy's surrounding forts in Gia Dinh, progressively demolishing their encampments via shootings and incendiary attacks, thereby causing them to experience a sense of intense trepidation and anxiety²⁴¹. According to the author Léopold Pallu's account, *"In truth, resistance was ubiquitous. The resistance movement was deeply rooted and systematically implemented across the region. One could contend that the number of resistance centers corresponded to that of the Vietnamese populace, or more precisely, every peasant attending to their paddy field constituted a resistance center"*²⁴². As the French invaders expanded their dominion from Gia Dinh to other provinces, the resistance campaign of the Southern inhabitants continued to flourish. The more the French ventured into the hinterland, the greater the toll they had to bear. Guided by patriotic scholars and intellectuals, the Southern people, primarily composed of farmers, initiated uprisings against the adversary throughout the region. Whereas previously the impoverished farmers had directed their wrath towards corrupt officials and landlords, now, confronted with the peril of national eradication, their ire was aimed directly at the occupying forces²⁴³.

*The Truong Dinh Rebellion*²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, 1999, p.277.

²⁴¹ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.123-124.

²⁴² L. Pallu, *op.cit*, p.248.

²⁴³ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng*, *op.cit*, p.432.

²⁴⁴ Truong Dinh (1820 – 1864) was born in Quang Ngai. He was a martial arts official under the Nguyen dynasty and the leader of the anti-French resistance from 1859 to 1864 in the history of Vietnam. (Bảo tàng lịch sử Quốc gia (Vietnam National Museum of History): <https://baotanglichsu.vn/vi/Articles/3097/15047/thang-9-1861-truong-dinh-truong-cong-dinh-khoi-nghia-chong-phap-o-gia-dinh.html>) (accessed on January 23, 2022).

"Truong Dinh was knowledgeable in martial arts, brave, and strategic. In the 14th year of Tu Duc's reign (1861), when trouble arose in Gia Dinh, he responded to the call of duty and recruited an army of over 6,000 soldiers to fight against the French. He also captured and used airguns and even manufactured more

The Truong Dinh Rebellion was a significant revolutionary movement during the period. Truong Dinh was a prominent figure in the early battles in Gia Dinh. Upon the French capture of Gia Dinh in February 1859, Truong Dinh organized a militia composed of rural peasants to collaborate with the royal army and engage the enemy. His leadership inspired a valiant fight and garnered the trust and support of soldiers and civilians, who eagerly followed him. When Nguyen Tri Phuong was assigned to take charge of the Gia Dinh front from Danang (March 1860)²⁴⁵, Truong Dinh actively coordinated with his troops in combat. According to the Truong Dinh monument, after the Chi Hoa defense line fell and the Dai Don was lost in February 1861, Truong Dinh retreated with his militia group to operate in Go Cong, Tan Hoa district (Gia Dinh), with a long-term fighting objective²⁴⁶. In the initial stages, exploiting the enemy's distraction across several locations, Truong Dinh's forces expanded rapidly, enlisting additional troops and stockpiling resources and armaments, thereby securing several victories. The area of operations was broadened, and interaction was established with a vast majority of other militia factions. Additionally, several high-ranking officials from the royal court, imbued with patriotism towards thwarting the French, pledged their support to Truong Dinh's militia. Furthermore, many others recruited substantial numbers of civilians to augment the strength of the militia²⁴⁷.

In tandem with the broader resistance movement in various localities, the Truong Dinh Rebellion gained momentum and grew increasingly formidable. By 1862, the movement had reached its zenith and was spreading throughout the South, attracting a large influx of supporters and forcing French invaders to retreat from many locales by March

for his troops” (according to Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện*, vol 2, 2006, *op.cit*, p.877).

Lieutenant Léopold Pallu (1828 - 1891), the Headquarters attaché officer of Commodore Charner and the commander of the marine team attacking Chi Hoa Fort, Dinh Tuong citadel (My Tho), wrote:

“At that time (June 1861), there was a very determined and heroic Annamese man named Truong Dinh who said he would start an uprising throughout the country... As one of the most energetic people, he deceived us into thinking he had died in the battle of Go Cong, but later reappeared and fought throughout the rainy season... Much later, when we had occupied Bien Hoa, Truong Dinh went on a rampage and devastated the two quadrangles”. (L. Pallu, *op.cit*, p.252)..

²⁴⁵ Phan Tran Chuc, Le Que, *Nguyễn Tri Phương*, Saigon, 1956, p.96.

²⁴⁶ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.287.

²⁴⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.733.

1862, out of fear of being attacked and annihilated by the patriotic forces²⁴⁸. Notably, most of the important districts and towns in the provinces of Gia Dinh and Dinh Tuong were liberated during this period. The Quy Son (Rua Hill) base assault on June 23, 1861, led by Do Trinh Thoai²⁴⁹, with the assistance of Truong Dinh's patriotic forces, was the most significant battle during this time.

Although they did not capture the position, Do Trinh Thoai and some others sacrificed themselves, but the patriotic soldiers fought bravely and forced the enemy to acknowledge that the Vietnamese people fought very courageously and “*now have to open their eyes to an obvious truth that the Vietnamese have the spirit of self-determination and determination to maintain national independence*”²⁵⁰. In addition, it is noteworthy to mention the adept coordination of strategic maneuvers employed by Commander Nguyen Trung Truc²⁵¹, leading to the incineration and subsequent sinking of the French naval vessel *Espérance* on the Nhat Tao River on December 10, 1861. According to the Nguyen dynasty's records, when the enemy's copper-clad warship anchored near Nhat Tao village, Nguyen Trung Truc commanded a group of 59 battle-hardened soldiers, disguised as merchants, to board a boat and directly engage in combat with the enemy ship. Some soldiers were killed, while others jumped into the river in fear and were subsequently eliminated by Nguyen Trung Truc's forces. The patriotic forces then set the ship on fire and destroyed it²⁵². In this battle, the French army of 25 soldiers and 20 horsemen, who were camping near the warship on the river bank, were entirely eliminated. This victory sparked a widespread anti-French movement in Cochinchine, with many regions adopting the tactics and strategies used in this battle during their resistance against the French.

²⁴⁸ Bảo tàng lịch sử Quốc gia (Vietnam National Museum of History): <https://baotanglichsu.vn/vi/Articles/3097/15047/thang-9-1861-truong-dinh-truong-cong-dinh-khoi-nghia-chong-phap-o-gia-dinh.html> (accessed on January 23, 2022) and L. Pallu, *op.cit.*, p.252.

²⁴⁹ Do Trinh Thoai (? - 1861) was a Nguyen Dynasty official from Tien Giang province and a leader of the anti-French resistance in Vietnamese history. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit.*, p.902).

²⁵⁰ L. Pallu, *op.cit.*, p.254.

²⁵¹ Nguyen Trung Truc (1838 - 1868), born in Binh Dinh, was a leader of the anti-French uprising in the southern part of Vietnam in the late 19th century. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit.*, p.903).

²⁵² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.760.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Treaty of 1862 was not ratified, the Nguyen dynasty proceeded to implement some of its provisions, notably the demobilization and cessation of military activities by the former court and self-organized groups in the three eastern provinces, with the aim of resuming negotiations for the redemption of lost territory. As for Truong Dinh's guerrilla force, the court issued contradictory orders, instructing the group to disband while simultaneously appointing Truong Dinh as a military commander in An Giang and subsequently in Phu Yen. *"Since the peace treaty was concluded, orders were given for the demobilization of troops in Cochinchine, and Truong Dinh was transferred to Phu Yen"*²⁵³. Phan Thanh Gian sought to postpone the retaliatory action in order to prepare his forces for future battles, hence he personally composed a letter to Truong Dinh, requesting him to demobilize. The opposing commander Bonard also made several attempts to deliver the letter to entice him. As recorded by historians of the Nguyen dynasty, in November 1862, *"Phan Thanh Gian constantly tempted Truong Dinh, who vowed not to coexist with the enemy. The people from six provinces under Truong Dinh's authority all resisted the Western enemy. The French commander attempted to lure Dinh, but he refused to surrender, prompting Thanh Gian to request a demotion to lure Dinh..."*²⁵⁴. Nonetheless, Truong Dinh remained steadfast, stating that *"although the Hue court does not recognize us, we must safeguard our country... If the court wishes to seek peace, let them do so, and I will perform my duties. I would rather go against the court than witness our country's decline"*²⁵⁵.

In defiance of the court's orders, Truong Dinh, with the support of the patriotic masses, resolutely remained in command of the guerrilla army and continued to fight. He established a large base in Go Cong, while the guerrilla force operated in six provinces. Exploiting the enemy's withdrawal from most districts and garrisons due to fear of guerrilla attacks, Truong Dinh and the local commanders urgently mobilized people to construct fortresses, dig trenches, block rivers, and lay obstacles on the enemy's routes. Simultaneously, the guerrillas stockpiled food and weapons, trained tactics, and planned for a general offensive under Truong Dinh's command. As a result, the guerrilla army grew stronger by the day, with a rapid increase in the number of troops. Forges worked around

²⁵³ *Ibidem*, p.667, p.783.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p.797.

²⁵⁵ Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol 2, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.879-880.

the clock to produce more weapons, including the casting of gun barrels. Truong Dinh also actively sought out overseas Chinese merchants to purchase foreign guns and ammunition²⁵⁶.

On December 16, 1862, Truong Dinh's rebel army initiated a new campaign by launching simultaneous attacks on all enemy strongholds in various regions, gaining an initial advantage. As reported by a French witness, "*most of the French garrisons in Saigon and Bien Hoa provinces were attacked*"²⁵⁷. These early battles allowed Truong Dinh's forces to gain control over many areas, leaving the enemy in a passive and confused state. However, the French received reinforcements and began to launch offensives against key rebel strongholds from the beginning of 1863, with their primary target being the Quy Son stronghold. Despite the enemy's use of deception tactics and exploitation of marshy terrain, the rebels inflicted heavy losses on them, ultimately forcing them to retreat.

In their efforts to quell the resistance movement in Cochinchine, the French recognized the critical importance of capturing the Tan Hoa stronghold (located in Go Cong). To this end, on February 25, 1863, the French launched a significant assault on Tan Hoa from three sides. In response, Truong Dinh ordered rebel forces to attack enemy strongholds, diverting the French's attention and reducing their offensive capabilities at the center. Although the rebels fought bravely for three consecutive days, a lack of ammunition forced them to withdraw and relinquish Tan Hoa to the enemy on February 28, 1863.

Despite the setback of losing the Go Cong stronghold, Truong Dinh persisted in his anti-colonial efforts and maintained a presence in various locations, including the periphery of Saigon. He prioritized consolidating his forces, expanding recruitment efforts, and stockpiling ammunition²⁵⁸. Concurrently, the insurgents frequently infiltrated cities under temporary French occupation to disseminate pro-resistance propaganda and rally support for their cause. Through such efforts, the populace continued to circulate Truong Dinh's anti-French messages, which condemned the treacherous conduct of Phan Thanh Gian

²⁵⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), 2002, *op.cit*, p.404-405.

²⁵⁷ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)*..., *op.cit*, p.291.

²⁵⁸ See Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.154.

and Lam Duy Hiep and attributed the plight of the people to the court's abandonment of their interests²⁵⁹.

On September 25th, 1863, the French launched another attack. In response, Truong Dinh and his loyal army fought fiercely against the invaders. Despite being heavily outnumbered, Truong Dinh and his soldiers showed immense bravery in the face of the enemy. However, during a particularly intense battle on August 20th, 1864, Truong Dinh was struck and suffered a broken spine²⁶⁰. Rather than be captured, he chose to take his own life by drawing his sword and committing suicide²⁶¹. He was only 44 years old at the time. Truong Dinh's death was a significant loss to the resistance movement of the Southern people, but it did not mark the end of their struggle. The loyal army retreated to Dong Thap Muoi to regroup, establish a new base, recruit more soldiers, and accumulate supplies and weapons. They continued to engage in guerrilla warfare and sought to exploit any weakness in the enemy's defenses to attack their bases and fortifications. In doing so, they aimed to lay the foundation for a sustained and long-term resistance movement.

*The rebellion of Vo Duy Duong*²⁶²

Following the demise of Truong Dinh, the reins of the insurrectionist movement were taken up by Vo Duy Duong, who proceeded to establish a stronghold in the Dong Thap Muoi locality. The site possessed strategic significance, as it was characterized by challenging terrain, encompassing marshy terrain, that impeded the smooth transit of contemporary vehicular transportation, and provided a conducive environment for guerilla-style combat. Moreover, the area was amenable to linkage with other locales in the Cochinchine region. Vo Duy Duong proceeded to construct a multi-tiered fortification network that could reinforce each other during conflict²⁶³. Within a brief span of time, Vo Duy Duong succeeded in amassing a formidable insurrectionary army comprising close to ten thousand combatants.

²⁵⁹ Pham Van Son, 1963, *op.cit*, p.192.

²⁶⁰ Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.921.

²⁶¹ M. W. McLeod, *The Vietnamese Response to French Intervention, 1862-1874*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991, p.65 ("Wounded and facing capture, he took his own life") and Pham Van Son, 1963, *op.cit*, p.195.

²⁶² Vo Duy Duong (1827-1866) was the leader of the anti-colonial uprising against the French (1862-1866) in Dong Thap Muoi, Vietnam. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.925).

²⁶³ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.295.

Despite knowledge of the rebels' location, the French were unable to infiltrate the Dong Thap Muoi region until early 1866. During this period, the rebel forces initiated attacks on the French from their stronghold, catching the latter off guard in several skirmishes and inflicting significant damage. In April of that year, the French launched a three-pronged offensive on the center of Dong Thap Muoi, utilizing three armored columns. The ensuing battles were fierce, and the rebel fighters demonstrated exceptional bravery and resilience. The French suffered substantial losses, with many fatalities, particularly during the April 16, 1866 engagement, in which two French platoons were entirely annihilated²⁶⁴. Ultimately, the rebel forces were compelled to retreat in the face of the superior modern weaponry of the French, resulting in the latter capturing the rebel fortifications. Despite the retreat from their principal stronghold, the rebel fighters continued to engage in periodic small-scale attacks on the enemy. Following the evacuation of the Dong Thap Muoi region, Vo Duy Duong collaborated with other rebels in subsequent battles. In June 1866, Vo Duy Duong was summoned to the imperial capital on court orders²⁶⁵, but tragically, his vessel sunk in the Than Mau sea en route²⁶⁶.

2.4.2 The popular uprising in Tonkin and central Vietnam (Annam) following the signing of the Nham Tuat Treaty (May 1862)

Despite its defeat in foreign diplomacy, the Hue court remained impervious to reality and increasingly reactionary. The Nguyen Dynasty failed to acknowledge the only viable solution to reclaim lost land, which was to rectify politics, empower the people,

²⁶⁴ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.132.

²⁶⁵ There exist divergent views on the nature of Vo Duy Duong's trip in October 1866. It was during this time that he embarked on a maritime voyage to Binh Thuan in order to elicit aid from the imperial court and establish communication with other patriots in Central Vietnam for the purpose of reinforcing their military capacity. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that the imperial court was attempting to constrain Vo Duy Duong's activities so as to placate the French and prevent them from using his actions as a justification for further territorial encroachment. At that juncture, French authorities harbored suspicions that officials in the three western provinces were harboring Vo Duy Duong and called for his surrender: "The insurgent Vo Duy Duong must come forward and surrender himself... Whenever his name is discovered, it must be altered, and a horse must be supplied for him to return to the capital. He should be dispatched to other localities to quash any rumors that might arise". (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXXI, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, p.64).

²⁶⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1017.

and launch a patriotic war. Instead, it focused on suppressing peasant uprisings. We concur with the view that “*King Tu Duc was compelled to sign the peace treaty and accept France's terms only to quell the turmoil*”²⁶⁷. The frequent famines, hunger, and droughts of the time led to an influx of refugees who were willing to join any movement that promised a better life by overthrowing the Nguyen Dynasty. Economic crisis was undoubtedly the primary cause of the peasant uprisings in the Tonkin. Scholars have estimated that during King Tu Duc's reign (up to 1862), there were 40 peasant uprisings²⁶⁸, all of which gained momentum if there were leaders.

In April 1862, Nguyen Thinh²⁶⁹ led a rebellion in Bac Ninh, which was joined by impoverished peasants. The rebels initially laid siege to and attacked Bac Ninh, but were later repelled by the Nguyen Dynasty's army. Nguyen Thinh also formed alliances with anti-government groups in Quang Yen, an area considered an enemy by the Nguyen Dynasty, and led his forces to Lang Giang²⁷⁰. Additionally, he established contact with the religious community in Nho Quan, Ninh Binh, with the aim of capturing the area and rescuing the arrested religious followers²⁷¹.

It must be said that the anti-government movement erupted during this period of ethnic minorities, which was mainly concentrated in a large area of Hung Hoa and Tuyen Quang on the northern border. According to historical records, in the period from 1863 to 1867, there were more than 10 uprisings of ethnic minorities alone in the northern mountainous region²⁷².

The nationwide movement against the feudal monarchy was gaining momentum during this period. Notably, students from all three imperial examination schools in Thua Thien, Hanoi, and Nam Dinh voiced their opposition and protested against the monarchy's

²⁶⁷ Nguyen Phan Quang, 1963, *op.cit*, p.324.

²⁶⁸ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)*..., *op.cit*, p.61.

²⁶⁹ Nguyen Thinh (1800-1862/1863), was the leader of an uprising against the Tu Duc dynasty in the Bac Ninh region in 1862 due to dissatisfaction with the ruling policies of the Nguyen dynasty. (Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.502).

²⁷⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.763.

²⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p.763-764 and Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)*..., *op.cit*, p.63.

²⁷² Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.142.

decision to cede land to the enemy²⁷³. Unfortunately, their struggle and attack were unsuccessful, and many were heavily punished. Despite this failure, the events hold great significance as they exemplify resistance against the treaty and set the stage for enduring and intense religious discrimination in contemporary society.

In September 1866, a significant uprising erupted within the imperial city of Hue involving soldiers and shipbuilders, led by a group of intellectuals and aristocrats. Their dissatisfaction stemmed from King Tu Duc's land cession policy to the French enemy. Initially, the protest was against harsh labor conditions and brutal treatment of those involved in building Tu Duc's tomb, but it quickly transformed into a movement aiming to overthrow King Tu Duc and establish a new figurehead. Although the rebels managed to invade the imperial city, the majority of workers were not familiar with combat, leading to a hasty assembly and eventual suppression by the imperial troops. The leaders were arrested and given heavy sentences. Despite the failed rebellion, it attracted widespread attention and marked a shift from resistance to a higher step of overthrowing the current figurehead and establishing a new monarchy capable of managing the country during a critical period. The Nguyen Dynasty's historical records provide a vivid and detailed account of the event²⁷⁴.

Besides the popular uprisings, this period also saw numerous ethnic minority forces operating in the northern border region, as well as groups from the Qing Dynasty engaged in regular looting and pillaging in the northern mountainous areas and coastal regions. The historical records of the Nguyen Dynasty indicate that during this time, many groups of ethnic minorities from China flooded into Vietnam, both along the land border and on the sea, conducting raids while the Nguyen Dynasty was forced to deal with France and Spain in Cochinchina²⁷⁵.

Alongside these actions, there were subversive activities carried out under the deceptive strategy of the Le court's minions, covertly aided by Western powers. The ulterior motives of the clergy in this matter became evident: *"The current dynasty must be overthrown, and someone from the old Le lineage must be placed on the throne. In Northern Vietnam, there are many descendants of this lineage, and the people of Northern Vietnam*

²⁷³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, p.763, p.892-893.

²⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p.1009-1011.

²⁷⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.784-787.

hold them in high regard; they are Catholics. This presents a golden opportunity to elevate the Catholic faith to a prominent position in Annam, under this new monarch”²⁷⁶.

The Nguyen dynasty mobilized large military forces led by the nobles, including General Nguyen Tri Phuong who had confronted the French in battles in Quang Nam, Da Nang, and Gia Dinh, to suppress uprisings and resist the plundering of the rebels in the North²⁷⁷. In November 1865, the Nguyen dynasty held trials for criminals and imposed severe punishments to serve as an example for rebels²⁷⁸. The Hue uprising was brutally crushed by the dynasty. As a result, all uprisings were unsuccessful and marked the extreme decline of the Nguyen dynasty and the high resentment of the people towards the feudal ruling class. Especially during this time, the Nguyen dynasty implemented a policy of religious discrimination, harshly suppressing those who followed Christianity. Not only were monks, especially Western missionaries, severely condemned and punished, but also the majority of Christian followers were affected by various levels of punishment. According to the Nguyen dynasty records, in April 1862, the court authorities in the locality “*sent troops from Thanh Hoa to the North to suppress the rebels, and whoever dared to cause chaos would immediately be punished*”²⁷⁹. Recognizing the role of Western missionaries in popular uprisings and rebel raids, the Nguyen dynasty implemented such a harsh policy, but due to excessive actions and failure to distinguish the nature of the problem, innocent people were also implicated. In some ways, this policy stimulated general resistance against the dynasty. It is certain that these factors not only weakened the role of the dynasty but also pushed the people towards a dead end.

2.4.3 The French Annexation of Cochinchina's Western Provinces and the Indigenous Resistance Movement in Cochinchina

While the imperial court directed its forces towards quelling the agrarian movement in the Central, Northern, and peripheral areas, and sought to obstruct the patriotic anti-French movement among the populace of the South, the French colonialists diligently devised a comprehensive plan to seize the three western provinces of Cochinchina.

²⁷⁶ According to Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)...*, *op.cit*, p.63.

²⁷⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p. 954-955.

²⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 964-965.

²⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p.764.

Vice Admiral De La Grandière²⁸⁰ informed that: “*We cannot ignore the three provinces in the West, partly because all the river mouths of the Mekong River are there, and partly because we do not want to have a constant threat from the enemy outside who may attack us. These provinces will belong to us when we want, by temporarily adding 3,000 troops. We have plenty of reasons to invade. And once the Hue imperial court really wants to end political assassinations and subversive plots, those activities will stop immediately. The only solution to end the silent hostility is to merge the three provinces and prohibit them from trading with the people of the Hue imperial court*”²⁸¹. They have repeatedly accused officials of the three provinces in the Western region of secretly supporting or organizing the anti-French movement in the three provinces in the Eastern region. They warned Phan Thanh Gian, the representative of the Hue imperial court in Vinh Long, that such hostile actions would force them to annex the remaining provinces. Of course, the reason why the French side threatened the Nguyen dynasty was like that, but the main point of their intention to occupy the three provinces in the West was economic. “*Overall, everyone in Saigon accepts that the three provinces in Cochinchine [the West] are at least as wealthy as the provinces we have occupied [the three provinces in the East], and if we occupy them, it will double our budget income in a moment*”²⁸².

During the aforementioned period, the Hue court failed to exhibit a proactive response and instead opted for a conciliatory approach towards the French by attempting to redeem land. As a result of their lack of alertness, grave errors were made, including the disbandment of the Eastern Volunteer Army and prohibiting support for resistance efforts in the East from individuals residing in the West. In the course of the correspondence that ensued between France and the Vietnamese court subsequent to the failed negotiations between Phan Thanh Gian and Gabriel Aubaret, the Hue court's submissive and amiable stance was evident, as they expressed regret for their inability to recover lost territories

²⁸⁰ Pierre-Paul Marie de La Grandière (1807-1876) was a French Vice Admiral who served as the Governor-General of Cochinchina (Military Governor) during the periods of 1863-1864 and 1866-1868 (L. de La Roque, *Le Bulletin héraldique de France; ou, Revue historique de la noblesse*, Paris: Administration du Bulletin Héraldique de France, 1890, p.673).

²⁸¹ See Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)*..., *op.cit.*, p.155.

²⁸² *Ibidem*, p.156.

and displayed no signs of anger. Despite the fact that the 1862 Treaty had not been ratified, the Hue court obediently adhered to its terms²⁸³. It was during this time that the issue of the French invasion of the West came to the forefront.

In light of the prevailing circumstances, the French colonial administration became increasingly restless and assertive in their actions. In April 1866, the French emissary arrived at the port of Thuan An, delivering a missive which reported the presence of numerous bandits and the resultant challenges they posed in Ha Tien, An Giang, and Vinh Long. Consequently, the French requested the authority to assume governance over these regions²⁸⁴. In October 1866, De Lagrandière sent a diplomatic letter to gauge the royal court's response, demanding the acquisition of the three western provinces²⁸⁵. Despite the overwhelming demands, the Hue court was still unable to make a decisive decision. Numerous opinions and strategies were proposed, but King Tu Duc did not agree with any of them and continued to pursue the traditional approach of “redemption of land” or “exchange of land” in exchange for war reparations.

The circumstances in France at the time were favorable for the expansionist ambitions of French colonizers. Following the disastrous outcome of the Mexican War, French forces sought to achieve a victory, no matter how minor, to make up for recent significant losses. On June 15, 1867, a French fleet consisting of 17 ships and 1,600 soldiers, commanded by De Lagrandière, assembled in My Tho. That same night, the enemy proceeded towards Vinh Long. After completing all necessary preparations, the French army advanced towards Vinh Long's fortress on the morning of June 20, 1867. The French dispatched an emissary to demand that Phan Thanh Gian relinquish the three western provinces to French colonial rule²⁸⁶. Unaware of the situation, Phan Thanh Gian went to negotiate with the enemy on their ship and was compelled to surrender the Vinh Long fortress²⁸⁷. The enemy effortlessly took control of the provincial capital of An Giang (Chau Doc) on June 21 and then Ha Tien on June 24 without any opposition, having seized Vinh Long. Despite the residents of both locations uniting to fight against the enemy to the

²⁸³ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.148.

²⁸⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.898.

²⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p.1016-1018.

²⁸⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1058.

²⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

bitter end, the officials of the court shifted blame on each other before finally surrendering the fortress to the enemy. French historian Taboulet described the event as follows: “*The fortresses of Vinh Long, Chau Doc, and Ha Tien were captured without encountering any resistance. The local administration turned over tax records and other documents to the newly-appointed officials tasked with governing the recently acquired territories*”²⁸⁸.

On June 25, 1867, the French colonial administration issued a declaration and communicated to king Tu Duc that the six provinces of Cochinchina were their territory, and in this region, there existed only one legitimate authority, which was the colonial administration of France²⁸⁹. From this point onward, the Nguyen dynasty held no power or authority over Cochinchina. Thus, the six provinces of Cochinchina became a colony of France without the need for a new treaty²⁹⁰.

Upon learning of the French capture of the three western provinces, the Hue court opted not to react, but instead requested the exchange of the newly lost territories for Bien Hoa province, a request which France did not address. In response, the court bolstered defense measures in the central region stretching from Binh Thuan to Thanh Hoa²⁹¹. The prevailing understanding of colonialism among most court officials under the Nguyen dynasty at that time remained vague, as they still harbored hopes for French sympathy and benevolence, unaware of the deep-seated plan to invade Vietnam and establish it as a French colony. “*The Nguyen dynasty's defeat at the hands of France can be attributed to a lack of clarity in their political and military strategies, despite their considerable military might. Additionally, their anxieties regarding the emergence of new ideological trends were reflected in their fear of these movements, yet they lacked effective solutions and thus retreated and became increasingly isolated*”²⁹².

After the three western provinces fell into the hands of the French, the resistance movement among the people grew stronger. Some scholars and feudal intellectuals went to the Binh Thuan region in the far south of Central Vietnam to rely on each other and

²⁸⁸ G. Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, t. 2, 1956, *op.cit*, p.512-513.

²⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p.513.

²⁹⁰ Dao Duy Anh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ nguồn gốc đến thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from its origin to the 19th century), Culture and Information Publishing House, 2002, p.502.

²⁹¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1060.

²⁹² Nguyen Phan Quang, *Triều Nguyễn và xã hội Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX...*, *op.cit*, p.325.

prepare for a long-term resistance. Others remained resolute and stayed to join the growing and spreading anti-French movement²⁹³.

Cochinchina was the first to be invaded by French colonialists, and thus the people of Southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) were the first to rise up courageously to fight the invaders and defend their country. The anti-French patriotic movement of the people of Southern Vietnam lasted for over 20 years (1859-1885), demonstrating the fierce and persistent fighting spirit of the people in this southern region of the country. Beginning in the East, the resistance movement quickly spread and grew into a large-scale people's war, strong in many places and at many times, forcing the enemy to repeatedly express their admiration. This movement originated from the limitless hatred of the masses (primarily farmers) towards the foreign invaders, willing to sacrifice everything and fight to the end for the cause of defending the country²⁹⁴.

As a result of deliberate abandonment or suppression by the Hue court, successive uprisings ultimately failed. However, the anti-French patriotic movement among the people of the South persisted despite numerous repressive tactics employed by the French. This was exemplified in Nguyen Trung Truc's bold declaration to the French: *"Until you remove all the grass from this land, you can never fully eradicate the patriotism of its people"*²⁹⁵.

Another notable aspect of the anti-French movement in the South was the simultaneous cultural and ideological struggle. These two forms of resistance were intimately linked and mutually reinforcing. Patriotic poetry during this period celebrated the valiant fighting spirit of the righteous army while condemning traitors who betrayed their country. Nguyen Dinh Chieu²⁹⁶ a shining star of this movement, was known for his poetry, essays, and speeches imbued with a deep sense of humanity and righteousness. In fact,

²⁹³ Pham Van Son, 1963, *op.cit*, p.198.

²⁹⁴ T. Yoshiharu, Nguyen Dinh Dau (translated) *Nước Đại Nam đối diện với Pháp và Trung Hoa (L'Empire Vietnamien face à la France et à la Chine (1847-1885))*, Tri thuc Publishing House, Ha Noi 2014, p.384.

²⁹⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.760.

²⁹⁶ Nguyen Dinh Chieu (1822 - 1888) was a great poet of Cochinchina in the late 19th century. In 2021, he was honored and commemorated by UNESCO and Vietnam for his birth and death anniversaries. (Danh nhân Văn hóa Nguyen Dinh Chieu (Cultural Celebrity Nguyen Dinh Chieu): <https://nguyendinhchieu.vn/ndc.nsf/cuoc-doi-su-nghiep/nguyen-dinh-chieu-tieu-su.html>) (accessed on February 08, 2023).

patriotic poetry was a potent weapon in the fight to safeguard the independence and national dignity of the Southern people during the colonial invasion by the French²⁹⁷.

²⁹⁷ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.153.

CHAPTER 3

VIETNAM TOWARDS THE FRENCH COLONIAL EXPANSION IN PERIOD 1867-1874

3.1 Vietnam within France's Strategy of Expanding the Scope of Colonialization

3.1.1 *The Situation of Vietnam since 1867*

Prior to the French colonialists' successful conquest of Cochinchina's Vietnam, the Nguyen dynasty's feudal court exhibited a markedly passive and ineffectual stance. The court continued to pursue policies of subservience and appeasement, refraining from taking decisive action to confront the situation at hand. Despite growing anti-French sentiment among the populace, which urged the court to take measures to defend the country, the Nguyen dynasty limited itself to slow and incremental defensive actions, such as establishing additional military bases in the provinces, appointing martial officials to weak areas, fortifying Thi Nai (Quy Nhon), installing cannons and guns to protect Thuan An (the gateway to the capital city of Hue), and increasing firearm production. Simultaneously, the Nguyen dynasty sought to hinder and dismantle resistance bases among the people, dissolving self-formed defense groups, and demoting or imprisoning officials and intellectuals involved in the anti-French movement in various localities. The primary strategy of the Nguyen court persisted in negotiating and making concessions to regain control of the six provinces¹.

Regarding internal affairs, the situation in Vietnam after 1867 became more miserable. The feudal dynasty continued to exploit and oppress the people throughout the country, satisfying their luxurious desires and paying war reparations to France². Meanwhile, agriculture was lagging behind, and land reclamation and irrigation projects were abandoned, leading to frequent flooding and crop failures. The commercial and industrial sec-

¹ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858 - 1896* (Vietnamese History 1858 – 1896), ed. Pham Quang Trung, Nguyen Ngoc Co, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi 2003, p.266.

² T. Yoshiharu, Nguyen Dinh Dau (translated) *Nước Đại Nam đối diện với Pháp và Trung Hoa (L'Empire Vietnamien face à la France et à la Chine (1847-1885))*, Tri thuc Publishing House, Ha Noi 2014, p.303.

tors remained stagnant. The repressive policies, such as the closed-door policy in commerce and the restriction on industry, still hindered the development of these two fields³. As a result, the financial situation of the feudal state became increasingly dire, and the people's living conditions became more miserable⁴. Social contradictions, therefore, became deeper, leading to a series of uprisings by farmers in many parts of the delta region⁵.

Along the Vietnam-Laos border, people of the northern ethnic groups and ethnic minorities in the South Central region also rose up. In particular, the situation in Tonkin at this time was even more complicated due to the infiltration of bandits from China and the rampant activities of pirates⁶. To address this situation, the Hue dynasty employed two distinct measures. Firstly, it employed brutal repression to suppress the peasant uprisings. Secondly, it sought assistance from the Qing dynasty (China) to dispatch troops to quell the bandits⁷.

Such a difficult situation in the country prompted some officials and scholars to boldly propose many reforms in internal affairs, diplomacy, economics, culture and society. In 1868, Tran Dinh Tuc⁸ requested the opening of the Tra Ly sea gate (Nam Dinh)⁹. In the same year, Dinh Van Dien¹⁰ requested the promotion of land reclamation and mining, the development of foreign trade, and the strengthening of national defense. In 1872,

³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXX, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.302.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.304.

⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXXI, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, p.289.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.238.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p.215-217.

⁸ Tran Dinh Tuc (1818-1899) was a high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen dynasty (during the reign of Emperor Tu Duc) who held positions such as Governor of Ha Ninh (Hanoi, Ninh Binh). He was one of the key mandarins involved in negotiating peace with the French during their invasion of Vietnam. (According to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *Từ điển nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam* (Dictionary of Vietnamese historical figures), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, p.1022).

⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXXI, 1974, *op.cit*, p.227.

¹⁰ Dinh Van Dien was a Catholic layperson from Ninh Binh who loved his country and understood the times. At the end of 1868, he sent a secret letter to King Tu Duc proposing some actions that would benefit the nation and the people. However, the Tu Duc court completely rejected his proposals, citing ongoing

the Trade Bureau or Trade Office¹¹ requested the opening of three sea gates, Danang, Ba Lat and Do Son, for wide-ranging trade with foreign countries. Of all the reform proposals, Nguyen Truong To's¹² proposals attracted the most attention, addressing a range of important issues such as rectifying the official system, developing agriculture, industry and finance, reforming the military, expanding diplomacy, and restructuring education¹³...

In general, all proposals for reform stemmed from a patriotic spirit, which was driven by the desire to enrich and strengthen the country in order to counter the escalating assaults of Western capitalism, particularly French capitalism. Given the context of the feudal Vietnamese society during this period, the only viable solution was to courageously pursue the development of capitalism¹⁴. Although the reform proposals of late 19th century Vietnam aimed to satisfy this historical imperative, they exhibited a fragmented, disconnected nature, heavily influenced by external factors and lacking an internal foundation¹⁵. Furthermore, these reform proposals failed to address the fundamental issues of the time, which involved resolving the two primary contradictions within Vietnamese society: the conflict between the Vietnamese people and the invading colonialists,

conflicts between the Catholic and Buddhist factions at the time. Dinh Van Dien was a Catholic, and if his proposals were implemented, they would not have been "in line with the times, and could have caused criticism and suspicion among the people." (According to *Ibidem*, p.262-263).

¹¹ This was an institution in Vietnam during the Nguyen Dynasty, responsible for managing trade and diplomatic relations, particularly with foreign countries (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), Translation by National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1998, p.473).

¹² Nguyen Truong To (1830? - 1871) was born into a multi-generational Roman Catholic family in Bui Chu village, Nghe An province. He was a scholar, architect, and social reformer in 19th-century Vietnam. (*Từ điển Việt Nam* (Vietnamese Dictionary), ed. by. Thanh Nghi, The Times Publishing House, vol 2, Hanoi 1958, p.1427).

¹³ M. W. McLeod, *Nguyễn Trường Tộ: A Catholic Reformer at Emperor Tu-Duc's Court*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", 1994, vol. 25, No.2, p.313-330 and Do Bang and many authors, *Tư tưởng canh tân đất nước dưới triều Nguyễn* (Thoughts on national renewal under the Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 1999, p.15-75.

¹⁴ Tran Van Giau, *Luận về những nguyên nhân Việt Nam mất nước về tay Pháp* (Discourse on the causes of Vietnam's loss of country to France), "Past and Present Magazine", 2003, No. 148, p.7-8, p.35-37.

¹⁵ Do Bang and many authors, *Tư tưởng canh tân đất nước dưới triều Nguyễn* (Thoughts on national renewal under the Nguyen Dynasty), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 1999, p.78.

and the tension between the peasants and the feudal landlords. Meanwhile, the ruling feudal class remained deeply antagonistic towards the populace, consistently rejecting all proposals for reform, regardless of their scope. In doing so, they dismantled new foundations for society and prevented breakthroughs from emerging out of the impasse and crisis¹⁶. The Nguyen Dynasty feudal class bears immense responsibility towards the fate of the nation within the broader context of Vietnamese history.

3.1.2 Regarding the schemes and policies of France

Following their successful conquest of Cochinchina, the French colonizers enjoyed even more favorable conditions to prepare for the subjugation of the entire Vietnam. They pursued two parallel strategies. On the one hand, they hastened to consolidate their repressive ruling machinery from top to bottom, creating a direct rule that was heavily influenced by military dictatorship and controlled by aggressive and zealous officers. This ruling machinery employed all means available, including killing, looting, capturing, taxing, and conscripting soldiers from the local populace. On the other hand, they initiated some colonial economic measures, such as vigorously extracting rice for export and profit, confiscating land for auction or long-term rent, and commencing construction of the Saigon-Cholon city with ports, boat repair docks, and the Ba Son factory¹⁷, etc. In pursuit of their ruling and economic objectives, the French colonizers established several educational institutions, translation bureaus, and French-Vietnamese Confucian schools to rapidly train diverse personnel. Furthermore, they published newspapers in both Vietnamese and French languages to advance the impending occupation of Tonkin¹⁸. Simultaneously, while legalizing their occupation of the three provinces in the West and thwarting any negotiation attempts by the Hue court, they pursued two distinct approaches. Firstly, they actively lobbied French politicians to recognize their recent invasion. Secondly, they demanded that the Hue court revise the 1862 Treaty.

Because there were still many concerns in France, until 1873, French colonialists did not dare to advocate for expanding the war in Vietnam, sending troops from the Cochinchina to invade the Tonkin. Defeated in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, part of

¹⁶ Tran Van Giau, *Lược về những nguyên nhân Việt Nam mất nước về tay Pháp* (Discourse on the causes of Vietnam's loss of country to France), "Past and Present Magazine", 2003, No. 150, p.33-35.

¹⁷ Vương Hồng Sển, *Sài Gòn năm xưa* (Old Saigon), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 1991, p.103-104.

¹⁸ Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chủ nghĩa thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam* (French colonialism in Vietnam), Substance and myth, Nam Son Publishing House, Saigon, 1970, p.83.

French territory was occupied by German troops¹⁹. By 1873, although the German army withdrew from French soil, only leaving Alsace and Lorraine, the threat posed by Germany to France remained constant and strong, forcing the French government at that time to be wary of the eastern border²⁰. The war with Prussia caused France to be heavily exhausted in many aspects. The military strength of the French army was shamefully depleted²¹. The war also had a detrimental impact on the French economy, leading to a state of paralysis and instability. The commercial system came to a standstill, production facilities were either non-functional or operating at reduced capacity, and unemployment rates soared in both rural and urban areas. Adding to the turmoil, France itself was convulsed by a revolution: the Paris Commune, widely considered as the world's first proletarian revolution, erupted in March 1871. The revolution dismantled the bourgeois government system and installed a specialized proletarian government. However, despite their differences, the bourgeoisie of France and Germany negotiated a compromise to quell the revolution and suppress the Paris Commune, resorting to bloodshed²².

These reasons did not allow France to embark on a new, expensive and risky war. However, because they understood the strategic position of the Tonkin, French colonialists in the Cochinchina still eagerly pursued invasion plans and were impatient to act, because the conquest of the Tonkin was "A matter of survival for the future of French hegemony in the Far East", as stated in Dupré²³'s report sent to the French government in

¹⁹ Dinh Xuan Lam, *Việt Nam trong mối quan hệ Pháp – Đức thời kỳ chiến tranh Pháp – Đức (1870 – 1871)* (Vietnam in the Franco-German relationship during the Franco-German war (1870-1871)), "Journal of Historical Research", 1994, No. 1, p.77-80.

²⁰ Dang Thanh Tinh, *Lịch sử nước Pháp* (History of France), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006, p.148.

²¹ In the course of the French-Prussian War, the French armed forces incurred a combined total of 140,000 fatalities, 150,000 injuries, and 500,000 captives. (According to Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 – 1896* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896), ed. Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Manh Dung and Le Thi Thu Hang, vol 6, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2017, p.157.

²² Vu Duong Ninh, Nguyen Van Hong, *Lịch sử thế giới cận đại* (Modern World History), Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1999, p.215.

²³ Marie Jules Dupré (1813-1881) was a French statesman. He was born in Albi and served as an officer in the French Navy, eventually reaching the rank of Admiral. He was appointed as the Governor of the French colony Réunion (1865-1869) and later transferred to Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam), where he held the position of Governor from 1871 to 1874. In Vietnamese history, he is referred to as "Du Bi Lê" by the

May 1873²⁴. Therefore, the Tonkin was always a tempting piece of bait for the colonialist forces, especially since the consolidation of the Cochinchina was favorable for them, and they knew that the weakening Hue court would not react significantly when they took action.

Implementing the plan to invade Tonkin, from 1872, the French colonizers in Cochinchina sent gunboats to survey the coastal areas of Hai Duong, Bac Ninh, Quang Yen in the Gulf of Tonkin. The findings of this reconnaissance mission were submitted to the highest authorities of the colonial government in Cochinchina and reported to the French Navy Ministry to seek approval for the invasion of Tonkin.: “... *although there are still many difficulties at this time, to use force to establish a permanent base in the Red River Delta, for a long-term and permanent occupation here*”²⁵. At the same time, in order to pave the way for the invading army, they secretly sent spy agents disguised as monks to Tonkin to spy on the situation and lure some misguided religious followers to become internal reactionaries. They also secretly incited rebellious groups using the name of supporting the Le dynasty²⁶ against the Nguyen dynasty to exert pressure on the Hue court to ask them to send troops to the Tonkin to help restore order. French traders were also active at that time. After an unsuccessful attempt to find a route up the Mekong River to enter Yunnan (China)²⁷, and knowing that it was impossible due to many dangerous rapids and obstacles, the French colonialists decided to explore the route up the Red River to enter this area. During this time, the French expeditionary force met with Jean Dupuis²⁸, a French merchant who was wearing a Chinese official's uniform. Jean Dupuis

Nguyen Dynasty. (Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), *op.cit*, p.582).

²⁴ According to Nguyen Khanh Toan, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 đến 1945* (Vietnamese History from 1858 to 1945), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2004, p.72.

²⁵ According to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.343.

²⁶ The Later Le dynasty (1428-1789) was a Vietnamese feudal dynasty that existed after the fourth Chinese domination period and before the Nguyen dynasty.

²⁷ That is the exploration of the Doudard de Lagrée and Francis Gamier expedition from 1866 to 1870.

²⁸ Jean Dupuis (transcribed as Do Pho Nghia in ancient Vietnamese history) was born on December 7, 1828, in Saint-Just-la-Pendue, France, and passed away on November 28, 1912, in Monaco. He was a French explorer and businessman. (Trung tâm lưu trữ quốc gia 1 (National Archives centre N1): https://archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiep-vu/thanh-ha-noi-tu-bi-tan-cong-that-thu-den-den-chiem-dong-va-pha-huy-%E2%80%93mot-thoi-ky-bi-trang-trong-lich-su-can-dai-viet-nam-1873-1897.htm#_ftn5). (accessed on February 25, 2023).

often carried firearms into the Yunnan-Quy Chau region to sell to Qing generals to suppress the uprising here, along the Truong Giang River (Yangtze River). However, this route was both far and expensive, so from 1867, Jean Dupuis planned and negotiated with Qing generals stationed in the upper reaches of the North to allow the use of the Red River²⁹. The Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi, acting on behalf of the Qing Dynasty of China, made a request to the Hue court for Dupuis to travel up the Red River to Yunnan for business purposes. Meanwhile, Dupuis sought support from the French authorities for his enterprise. The French colonizers in Cochinchina viewed this as an opportune moment to take action. They aimed to prevent the expansion of British influence in southwestern China, consolidate their position in Cochinchina, compel the Hue court to formally recognize the French occupation of the three provinces in southwestern Cochinchina, and expel their traditional enemy, Britain from Tonkin.

In response to Dupuis' proposals, French and Cochinchina authorities exercised great caution, prompting Dupuis to take independent action. In October of 1872, he travelled to Hong Kong and Shanghai to purchase warships, ammunition, and recruit soldiers. By November of the same year, he had arrived in Tonkin with his forces. Concurrently, the aggressive colonizers in Cochinchina capitalized on the Hue court's request for assistance in eradicating piracy by sending their own warships to support Dupuis. With a formidable military presence, Dupuis pressured Viceroy Le Tuan³⁰ into soliciting permission from the Hue court to utilize a route to Yunnan within a two-week timeframe. However, before the permit was secured, Dupuis initiated a surprise attack and proceeded to advance his fleet into Cua Cam (Hai Phong), up the Red River to Hanoi (December 22, 1872). According to the historical records of the Nguyen dynasty, on December 2, 1872, Dupuis "departed from Hai Duong to Bac Ninh and Hanoi, where he encountered repeated objections from provincial officials and the second and third army commanders, but remained undeterred"³¹. During the period of 1872 to 1873, Dupuis engaged in a systematic violation of Vietnam's sovereignty by leveraging the French army and the Qing dynasty.

²⁹ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)* (Vietnam in the 19th century (1802-1884)), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 1999, p.321.

³⁰ Le Tuan (1818-1874) was a renowned scholar, diplomat, and high-ranking mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty. (Nguyễn Quang Thắng, Nguyễn Bá Thề, *op.cit.*, p.836.)

³¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South). vol VII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.1365.

This course of action resulted in numerous incidents of provocation, as well as instances of looting against the populace situated along both banks of the river, while also mounting attacks on garrisons belonging to the Nguyen dynasty.

Before Dupuis' reckless actions, the people of Hanoi, although they had not received any orders from the court, were actively vigilant. The order of non-cooperation was announced and actively implemented by the people, with no one giving directions or trading with the French, and the markets were closed. At the same time, people in many places also built barricades on the river to prevent or sink enemy boats. Meanwhile, the Nguyen dynasty not only did not retaliate, but also instructed Nguyen Tri Phuong, the Governor of Hanoi at the time, "not to provoke incidents"³². King Tu Duc even hinted that "For the northern provinces, when Dupuis' ship arrives, it must be handled according to established protocol with care, so as not to arouse suspicion"³³. Additionally, the court officials in Hung Yen ordered the search of Dupuis' ships and were punished for the downgrade³⁴. Moreover, the Nguyen dynasty insisted on the reconciliation policy and sent a letter to the French authorities in Cochinchina to request the resolution of the chaotic incidents caused by Dupuis.

Dupuis, recognizing the hesitancy of the Hue court, not only persisted in his actions but also expanded his operations, intensifying his looting in the areas he traversed. Through the assistance of select Chinese merchants in Hanoi and the Qing army stationed in Bac Ninh, Dupuis was able to secure some modest boats to transport goods upstream the Red River near the border in the beginning of March 1873. After vending the merchandise, he was granted a full escort by Qing generals in Yunnan for his return trip. Dupuis also recruited soldiers from the Guangdong and Guangxi army in Tonkin, thereby increasing his military might. With a considerable fighting force at his disposal, Dupuis became more forceful and made unreasonable demands, such as seeking to establish military garrisons on the banks of the Red River, calling for the release of those who aided him and were incarcerated by Vietnam, demanding concessions in Hanoi, asking for salt and coal to be transported to Yunnan for trade, and even tearing up Nguyen Tri Phuong's

³²Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), 1998, *op.cit*, p.368-369.

³³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1365, p.1367.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

announcement as the newly appointed Governor of Hanoi upon his arrival from Hue. Dupuis ordered French and native troops to arrest officials, soldiers, and civilians and transport them to his ship, looted rice boats of the court moored along the riverbank³⁵; claimed control over Hanoi's commerce, and dispatched spies to gather intelligence from various locales. He declined Nguyen Tri Phuong's invitation for negotiations.

As for the French colonialists in Cochinchina, as mentioned above, they wanted to act quickly at this time, sending troops to occupy Tonkin, especially fearing that if they were delayed, Tonkin would fall into the hands of other countries that were also eyeing this strategically important land. To reassure the French government, which was still hesitant, Admiral Dupré always reported to Paris, affirming the success in invading Tonkin: "Tonkin has been liberated by the victory of Dupuis, which has had a profound impact on the commerce of England, Germany, and the United States. We must occupy Tonkin decisively before any invasion by Europeans or the Chinese and bring this only trade route under French control. I don't need any troops, I'll do it with my abilities, and I'll certainly succeed³⁶".

As the French colonialists were actively preparing to invade Tonkin, the Hue court took measures to expedite the situation. On August 31, 1873, a delegation was dispatched to Saigon to negotiate with the French, seeking their intervention in Tonkin to resolve the Dupuis incident. As the colonial forces sought pretexts, a fortuitous opportunity presented itself. The French army's deployment to Tonkin was in accordance with the wishes of the Hue court, thus legitimizing their entry and avoiding any potential backlash from foreign forces or the Vietnamese populace. The Nguyen Dynasty believed that the French army would effectively resolve the ramifications of Dupuis' actions, stabilize the situation in Tonkin, and did not perceive the underlying conspiracies of the colonial forces. Therefore, the French colonial forces in Saigon acted without hesitation, seizing the opportunity

³⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1406.

³⁶ "Le Tonkin a été libéré par la victoire de Dupuis, qui a eu un impact profond sur le commerce de l'Angleterre, de l'Allemagne et des États-Unis. Nous devons occuper le Tonkin de manière décisive avant toute invasion des Européens ou des Chinois et mettre cette unique voie commerciale sous contrôle français. Je n'ai pas besoin de troupes, je le ferai avec mes capacités, et je réussirai certainement". (According to Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 1, 1959, p.237).

to urgently dispatch Lieutenant Commander Francis Garnier³⁷ to lead the army into Tonkin. While ostensibly dispatched to resolve the Jean Dupuis incident, their true intention was to deeply intervene in the affairs of North Vietnam. The Nguyen Dynasty court's political illusions exacted a steep price, with their sovereignty over the Tonkin region effectively transferred to the French colonialists.

3.2 The Response of the Nguyen Dynasty Military and the Vietnamese Population to the French Colonial Expansion Process

3.2.1 The Reaction of the Nguyen Dynasty Court's Military to the Initial French Invasion of Tonkin

On October 11, 1873, Francis Garnier's expedition, consisting of two warships and 180 soldiers³⁸, left Saigon and arrived in Hanoi³⁹ on November 3. The mission assigned to the colonial aggressors in Cochinchina by Garnier, as they marched northwards, was to have complete autonomy and depending on the situation, to establish a protectorate or a colonial regime. Upon arriving in Hanoi, Francis Garnier revealed his provocative intentions. On November 5, 1873, Garnier teamed up with Jean Dupuis and began their provocations⁴⁰. Dupuis' warships fired nine warning shots and established a line of honor

³⁷ Marie Joseph François (Francis) Garnier (historically transcribed as An Nghiep or Ngac Nhi), born on July 25, 1839, in Saint Etienne, France, was a naval officer and a French explorer. From 1860 to 1862, he participated in the Advisory Board of Admiral Charner, who commanded the attack on Cochinchina. Garnier led the first attack on Hanoi in 1873 and tragically lost his life on December 21, 1873, during a battle with the Black Flag Army in Hanoi. (Trung tâm lưu trữ quốc gia 1 (National Archives centre N1): https://archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiep-vu/thanh-ha-noi-tu-bi-tan-cong-that-thu-den-den-chiem-dong-va-pha-huy-%E2%80%93mot-thoi-ky-bi-trang-trong-lich-su-can-dai-viet-nam-1873-1897.htm#_ftn5). (accessed on February 25, 2023).

³⁸ According to Nguyen Khanh Toan, *op.cit*, p.74. According to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p. 351, there were 56 soldiers in Francis Garnier's expeditionary force.

³⁹ During the reign of the Nguyen Dynasty in Tonkin, the Hanoi Citadel held significant strategic importance as a formidable fortress and military stronghold. Following its reconstruction in 1805, the citadel was designed in the Vauban architectural style, featuring a square shape and a circumference measuring 5.42 km. The citadel originally comprised five gates, but by 1835, only three gates in the North, East, and West directions remained accessible. The surrounding area of the citadel was characterized by open space, while the outermost perimeter was fortified with a 20m wide moat boasting a depth of 5m. (See Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.163).

⁴⁰ J. Dupuis, *L'ouverture du Fleuve Rouge au commerce et les événements du Tonkin 1872-1874* (Journal de voyage), Paris, 1879, p.148.

on the riverbank. From the outset, Francis Garnier showed friendliness towards Dupuis and from November 13 onwards, he personally demanded Nguyen Tri Phuong to allow him to establish a garrison in the Hanoi Citadel, to open the Red River for trade, to collect taxes, to send troops to patrol the streets, to arrest, beat and oppress the people⁴¹... At the same time, he strengthened his ties with Bishop Puginier⁴² in order to gather reactionary religious elements, as well as groups disguised as members of the Le family, and hastily recruited soldiers to serve France's invasion plans in Tonkin.

In response to the French colonial aggression, Nguyen Tri Phuong, along with the officials of the imperial court in Hanoi, initially assumed a passive stance, awaiting instructions from the court in Hue. However, when the actions of the French troops became excessive, Nguyen Tri Phuong responded by unequivocally rejecting Francis Garnier's demands and proclaiming his unwillingness to make any further concessions, except for the resolution of the Jean Dupuis incident. On November 10, 1873, he made a public announcement throughout the city regarding the official mission of Francis Garnier in Hanoi, which was solely to expel Jean Dupuis⁴³. The statement declared, "*Garnier's purpose here is only to prosecute and expel Dupuis. Once that is accomplished, he will have to withdraw, as he has no authority to interfere in the affairs of our country*"⁴⁴. Subsequent to learning of Francis Garnier's provocative actions in Hanoi, the Hue court exhibited a lack of clear direction and could only offer a feeble response. Their efforts primarily consisted of dispatching Tran Dinh Tuc to Tonkin to initiate negotiations, dismiss or demote certain officials in Hanoi, and issue a proclamation forbidding the people from en-

⁴¹ According to Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)* (France's diplomatic activities to strengthen its base in Cochinchina (1862-1874)), World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, p.321.

⁴² Paul-Francois Puginier (1835-1892) was a French clergyman, bishop of the Diocese of Tay Dang Ngoai, and also a member of the Paris Foreign Missions Society. (E. Lounet, *Vie de Mgr Puginier, évêque de Mauricastre, Vicaire apostolique du Tonkin occidental*. Hanoi 1894, p.86).

⁴³ In *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu*, there is a record of the conflicts between Dupuis' people and the Hanoi authorities: the king reprimanded Nguyen Tri Phuong for his lack of restraint. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chánh biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), 1998, *op.cit*, p.383).

⁴⁴ P. Devillers, *Người Pháp và người An-nam: bạn hay thù?* (French and Annameese - friend or enemy?) Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 2006, p.204.

gaging in trade or communication with the French. Nevertheless, the Hue court unequivocally stipulated that Francis Garnier's responsibility for his mission in Tonkin was limited to dealing with and expelling Jean Dupuis, and that he was to withdraw thereafter⁴⁵.

The inhabitants of Hanoi demonstrated strict adherence to the court's mandate to abstain from any form of collaboration with the French colonialists. Notably, the French troops were compelled to concede that no merchants or religious individuals dared to approach their garrison. Consequently, Garnier's occupying force in Hanoi found themselves in a precarious position. Their drinking wells were contaminated, and they feared being ambushed by Vietnamese troops during the night. Their ammunition depot on the riverbank was repeatedly targeted and destroyed, and their provisions became increasingly scarce. Ultimately, the French colonialists were forced to withdraw from Hanoi, leaving behind significant losses and damages.

In the midst of tense circumstances, Francis Garnier received reinforcements from Saigon and Hong Kong. On November 11, 1873, the Espingole gunboat, Scorpion warship, and Decrès gunboat, equipped with modern weaponry and a substantial number of soldiers, arrived in Hanoi. With the bolstering of troops, Francis Garnier unilaterally declared the opening of the Red River for commerce and instituted a new customs regime on November 16, 1873⁴⁶. Subsequently, on the morning of November 19, Francis Garnier delivered a final ultimatum to Nguyen Tri Phuong, demanding that he disarm his troops, remove all weapons from the city walls, cede control of the Red River, and surrender Tonkin to the French colonialists. Instead of providing a direct response, Nguyen Tri Phuong mobilized the people and military in active preparation for combat. Without awaiting a response, on the morning of November 20, Francis Garnier commanded his troops to fire cannons at the walls of Hanoi⁴⁷.

By November 20, although Garnier's forces had been reinforced, they remained insufficient. In total, his forces consisted of only 212 soldiers, including French and Chinese combatants and laborers. The weaponry was also limited, with only a handful of handheld guns and 11 large guns of 86.5mm, 2 warships, and 1 landing craft⁴⁸. In response to the escalating military situation, Nguyen Tri Phuong ordered increased security measures,

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.341.

⁴⁶ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.355.

⁴⁷ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, 1999, p.321.

⁴⁸ Nguyen Khanh Toan, *op.cit*, 2004, p.359.

reinforced defenses, and warned the French troops of their invasion actions. The court in Hue was also informed of the situation. Despite having a large number of soldiers, including 3,000 regular troops inside the city walls and a total of 7,000 soldiers, the court was ill-equipped and ill-prepared for the invasion. The artillery training was lacking, and the cannons mounted on the walls at the gates could only fire in one direction. Although Nguyen Tri Phuong called on the people of Hanoi to rise up and fight the French, he did not provide any specific strategy, only reinforcing defense and waiting for orders from the Hue court. Nevertheless, the people of Hanoi were vigilant and aware of the French invasion plot. Before the attack, they burned the ammunition depot containing 20,000 rounds of ammunition on the riverbank to disrupt the enemy's attack. When the attack came, the people of Hanoi fought bravely⁴⁹.

On the morning of November 20th, the French colonial troops executed a coordinated attack on the city of Hanoi by dividing their forces into two wings, facing southwest and southeast. They were supported by the Espingole artillery and Scorpion warship stationed in the middle of the Red River. Meanwhile, the royal troops inside the city, led by Nguyen Tri Phuong, calmly prepared to defend against the enemy. At 6 o'clock in the morning, the French infantry charged in while being heavily supported by fire from the warship outside the river. The artillery was ordered to fire simultaneously. Following the fierce bombardment, the French troops concentrated their firepower to support the wings. One of their wings encountered intense resistance by Vietnamese forces at the Thanh Ha gate, where a group of 100 Vietnamese soldiers, led by a sergeant, fought courageously but ultimately perished⁵⁰.

Nguyen Tri Phuong assumed direct command of the battle from the southern gate at the outset. The royal artillery fired in unison, but their divine guns proved ineffective as the bullets missed their targets and could not be accurately adjusted to the French army. Meanwhile, the French warships aimed directly at the city gates and targeted Nguyen Tri Phuong's commanding position. The battle was intense, marking the first time in history that the Hanoi army and people had to withstand and resist the forceful attack of modern weapons. With their strong firepower, France had breached most of the city gates within

⁴⁹ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1959, p.242.243.

⁵⁰ According to Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.359-360.

an hour. The navy and Dupuis' army promptly rushed into the city, capturing weak positions. Although he was wounded in the abdomen during the first round of French firepower, the French tried to save Nguyen Tri Phuong to secure his loyalty. However, he removed the bandage covering his wound and refused to eat until he passed away. In response to Bishop Puginier, Nguyen Tri Phuong said, *"Did you - the leader of the French priests come here to witness my dying moment? You must be completely satisfied. Thanks to you, thanks to your advice, those French bandits have stolen our Cochinchina land and will continue to steal the Tonkin. My greatest wish after so many disasters is to die as quickly as possible"*⁵¹. Nguyen Tri Phuong also replied to Garnier, *"A soldier must die in battle, and it is not a shameful death"*⁵². On December 20, 1873, Nguyen Tri Phuong passed away, a month after the battle. His son, Nguyen Lam (Nguyen Tri Lam)⁵³ from Hue, had joined his father on the city walls and was killed by a bullet during the gunfire. Other commanders also lost their lives in the conflict. Some officials were captured by the French and transported to Saigon by ship, while the majority sought refuge in Son Tay to coordinate with the royal army under the command of Hoang Ta Viem⁵⁴. According to Vu Huy Phuc's statistics, the royal side suffered significant losses in the French colonial attack on Hanoi, with 80 casualties and approximately 300 wounded⁵⁵. Despite the courageous and heroic sacrifices of soldiers, commanders, and civilians, Hanoi ultimately succumbed to the overwhelming French firepower, armed with modern weapons.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p.361-362.

⁵² E. Millot, *Le Tonkin*, Paris, 1888, p.142 and Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)* (The beginning of the installation of the French colonial system in Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)), Hong Duc Publishing House, 2018, p.177.

⁵³ Nguyen Van Lam (1844-1873), the son of the prominent mandarin Nguyen Tri Phuong, received the news of Nguyen Lam's heroic sacrifice. Emperor Tu Duc issued a decree, stating:

"To die for one's country and to die as a dutiful son is the traditional principle of the past. Nguyen Lam had no obligation to defend the fortress, yet he displayed filial piety and loyalty that is admirable both for the nation and the family. Compared to ordinary offspring of noble families or those who abandoned their posts at that time to seek personal convenience, should we not praise him even more?". (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol 3. Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.506-507).

⁵⁴ Hoang Ke Viem (1820 - 1909) was born in Quang Binh. He married the fifth daughter of King Minh Mang and was a famous general of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnamese history. (According to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.961).

⁵⁵ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.362.

This battle stands as a poignant moment in history where primitive weapons could not hold their own against a technologically advanced military force.

Following the capture of Hanoi, Garnier strategically stationed his troops within the city walls and sealed off all gates except for the Eastern Gate to guard against potential Vietnamese attacks. To assert his control, Garnier distributed proclamations throughout the city, urging the recruitment of Chinese soldiers and imposition of heavy taxes for further expansion. On November 20, 1873, Garnier led a force of 65 soldiers to attack the strategically located Hoai Duc. Despite the counsel of Dupuis to advance towards Son Tay, Garnier opted to occupy the provinces downstream of the Red River. The French successfully captured Hung Yen and Phu Ly, with the latter falling after a brief skirmish on November 26. On December 2, the French army took control of the town, confiscating a significant quantity of assets including 54,000 zinc coins, 30 artillery pieces, and 60 rifles, as well as a large amount of salt, rice, and grain⁵⁶. The French navy proceeded to advance towards Hai Duong, demanding that the provincial army negotiate, but received the response that “there was no imperial order to discuss the matter”⁵⁷. On December 4, the French army attacked and overwhelmed the provincial army, forcing them to retreat to neighboring areas.

Therefore, on December 4th, the French army initiated an assault and launched an attack. Despite the royal officials' valiant efforts to fend off the enemy, they ultimately had to abandon the city and withdraw to the surrounding regions (Gia Loc, Cam Giang) due to the formidable might of the enemy's weaponry. Also on December 4th, a French detachment of merely six soldiers proceeded to Ninh Binh, a location of strategic importance between Tonkin and Annam. The imperial court had erected a robust defense force comprising a substantial number of mortars, artillery, ammunition, and soldiers. Nevertheless, on the morning of December 5th, the court officials submitted and opened the gates, ceding the city to the enemy. Losing Ninh Binh dealt a severe blow to the imperial court in Hue, depriving them of the connecting point between Tonkin and Annam. King Tu Duc lamented that "Ninh Binh province is a strategically important location

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p.367.

⁵⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.1416.

in the North-South region, and the Thu gang⁵⁸ willingly surrendered it to others"⁵⁹. The loss of Ninh Binh had serious consequences, and communication between the imperial court and the northern front was disrupted. Banditry and unrest began to emerge, making it difficult to control the situation. "*The absence of communication channels between northern and southern regions necessitates the transfer of mail through a delegate from Thanh Hoa station using a shortcut, thereby exposing it to potential interception and robbery by bandits*"⁶⁰.

Following the capture of Ninh Binh, the French colonial forces dispatched additional troops from Hanoi and Hai Duong to advance towards Nam Dinh, a strategically significant region and a hub of strong resistance movements. Along the way, the French encountered determined opposition from both military and civilian forces. On December 12th, the enemy employed naval gunfire and launched three assaults on the Nam Dinh fortress, which was manned solely by court troops. Despite valiant resistance, Nam Dinh eventually fell to the French, leading to the withdrawal of a significant number of righteous troops to other regions in the province to continue the protracted struggle. In less than a month, numerous small and large provinces in the North Central area succumbed to the French due to the inadequacy of the court troops. Consequently, the Tonkin region, which was once thriving, plunged into chaos. The Hue court system was effectively dissolved and paralyzed⁶¹.

The emergence of conflict between the militia and Catholic villages in Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh contributed to the already tumultuous situation. According to documents from the colonial government of Cochinchina, every time the Vietnamese army was defeated, the non-Catholics harbored more hatred towards the Catholics: "Many massacres and village burnings followed the capture of Nam Dinh by the French on December 9, 1873. In the provinces of Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, and Hanoi, these scenes became very brutal"⁶². The killing within the peasant community in many rural areas of Tonkin not

⁵⁸ This is Nguyen Thu, the Governor of Ninh Binh, who opened the city gates to negotiate with the French. (According to Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.168).

⁵⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, Vol XXXII, 1976, *op.cit*, p.341.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p.340.

⁶¹ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.376.

⁶² Tran Tam Tinh, *Thập giá và lưỡi gươm* (The Cross and the Sword), Young Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1988, p.122.

only had no effect, but it also weakened national unity and ultimately benefited the French colonialists.

The triumph of Francis Garnier's capture of Hanoi was met with delight by the aggressive French colonialists in Saigon. However, they also expressed concern about the Nguyen dynasty's resolute response and call for a nationwide resistance. Nonetheless, the Nguyen dynasty's unpopularity among the people of the country made such a resistance impossible to mobilize. In a bid to defend against the French, the court dispatched troops and generals to the north, including a 500-strong army led by Tran Dinh Tuc from Nghe An. Despite issuing orders to establish positions in Ninh Binh and Tam Diep, among other areas, these measures proved to be too little, too late, as Garnier seized the opportunity to capture many other places in the Tonkin provinces. Despite the precarious situation, the court continued to advocate for negotiation and diplomacy, even as it became apparent that the French could not be trusted. For instance, they wrote letters and dispatched envoys to Saigon and Hanoi to demand the return of the citadel and treasure. Tu Duc had already recognized the French's treachery, yet he still: "*Direct the Viện Thương Bạc (Trade Bureau or Trade Office) to compose a formal letter addressed to France, requesting their envoy to provide a detailed explanation regarding. The letter should emphasize the importance of clarity and cooperation in resolving the matter at hand*"⁶³ in the hope of having them return the citadel to Hanoi.

3.2.2 The Struggle of the Nguyen Dynasty Military and the People of Northern Vietnam against French Colonialism

During the intensification of French colonialism in Tonkin, the bureaucratic system of the imperial court was deeply divided. Some officials witnessed the overwhelming power of modern Western weaponry and became fearful, leading them to surrender to the enemy. In contrast, others chose to resist and were willing to make great sacrifices for their country, even in the face of failure. The earliest patriots in this group were the inhabitants of Hanoi, who refused to acquiesce to the invaders. Despite the French occupation of Hanoi and the rapid dissolution of the court officials, the people of Hanoi persisted in their resistance under the leadership of patriotic scholars. The army and civilians in the Gia Lam and Hoai Duc regions⁶⁴ also continued their struggle against the foreign invaders

⁶³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol VII, 2006, p.1414.

⁶⁴ Here are the districts of Hanoi.

after Hanoi's fall. Many working-class individuals, including traders, fishermen, and even some overseas Chinese who outwardly appeared to support the French, were attracted to the clandestine operations of the Confucianism Association, which aimed to subvert French control⁶⁵.

In the early stages of French colonialism in Tonkin, the localities fell quickly under French control, but the people's fierce resistance met them at every turn. Nam Dinh saw the gathering of patriotic intellectuals such as Nguyen Mau Kien⁶⁶, and his sons, who led thousands of troops from Nam Dinh, Hai Duong, and Thai Binh to attack the French in the Truc Ninh area of Kien Xuong, Thai Binh⁶⁷. Pham Van Nghi recruited 7,000 soldiers to build a resistance base in the An Hoa mountains of Phong Doanh, Y Yen⁶⁸. In Thai Binh, other intellectuals organized resistance and established a base. Subsequently, Nguyen Mau Kien and Doan Khue⁶⁹ joined forces to combat the French across a vast area along the Red River. Local officials in Hai Duong also refused to surrender to the French and launched numerous attacks in rural areas. Notably, Hoang Ta Viem (Son Tay) and

⁶⁵ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.170.

⁶⁶ Nguyen Mau Kien, an official of the Nguyen Dynasty, was relieved of his position in 1873 for accusing fellow officials of surrendering to the French colonialists. Subsequently, he recruited soldiers and led a resistance movement against the French. (according to Dinh Xuan Lam, *Nguyễn Mậu Kiến - người xướng nghĩa đầu tiên trên đất Thái Bình* (Nguyen Mau Kien - the first person to lead the uprising in Thai Binh), "History Research Journal", 1992, No. 3, p.262).

⁶⁷ At that time, Thai Binh was a district of Nam Dinh province. (Sở Văn hóa, thể thao và Du lịch Thái Bình - Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Thai Binh <https://sovhthdl.thaibinh.gov.vn/tin-tuc/thai-binh-manh-dat-con-nguoi/lich-su-hinh-thanh-tinh-thai-binh.html>) (accessed on March 27, 2023).

⁶⁸ Phong Doanh and Y Yen are now districts of Nam Dinh province.

⁶⁹ Doan Khue (1813-1878), a mandarin in the Nguyen Dynasty of Vietnam, was a rare progressive figure under King Tu Duc. He was a fervent patriot and progressive educator who mentored numerous exceptional students, many of whom became leaders of anti-French resistance movements. He was also an early and staunch advocate of the pro-war faction against the French. In 1873, he was among the first to voluntarily spearhead the resistance against the French incursion into Tonkin. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.943).

Truong Quang Dan (Bac Ninh)⁷⁰ who coordinated with Liu Yongfu's⁷¹ Black Flag⁷² army to pose a direct threat to the French military in Hanoi's two northern gateways. In other regions, volunteer soldiers dealt heavy blows to the French when they attempted to infiltrate rural areas, eliminating the French collaborators and establishing village fighting positions, causing the French to retreat and defend themselves in the provincial capitals⁷³.

During the time when Francis Garnier led his troops in an attack on Nam Dinh, the defenses of Hanoi were weakened, leaving the city vulnerable to attack. Hoang Ta Viem's army stationed in Son Tay, together with Truong Quang Dan's army in Bac Ninh, prepared to launch an attack on Hanoi. The battle-hardened Black Flag army, led by Liu Yongfu, who had previously assisted the court in suppressing rebellions in the Lao Cai and Ha Giang regions, joined forces with them. The Vietnamese forces were advancing towards Hanoi, prompting Garnier to quickly withdraw his troops from Nam Dinh on December 18, 1873. Meanwhile, on December 19, the Hue court envoy arrived in Hanoi to negotiate with the French. Seizing the opportunity, Garnier issued a proclamation declaring a cessation of hostilities to weaken the morale of the Vietnamese forces surrounding Hanoi and put pressure on the Hue court envoy during negotiations.

On December 1, 1873, Truong Quang Dan's forces launched an attack on Gia Lam post. After a fierce struggle, neither side emerged as the clear victor, prompting Truong

⁷⁰ Truong Quang Dan (1833 - 1914), who hailed from Quang Ngai, was a revered figure during the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnamese history. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.928).

⁷¹ Liu Yongfu (劉永福/刘永福) (1837-1917) was a Qing Dynasty general who was involved in the Taiping Rebellion (太平天). After fleeing to northern Vietnam, he became the leader of the Black Flag Army and played a key role in the resistance against the French during the Sino-French War. He eventually returned to serve as a general for the Qing Dynasty. In addition, he served as the second and final president of the short-lived Republic of Formosa (Taiwan) from June 5, 1895 to October 21, 1896. (According to Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Times Publishing House, 2010, p.693).

⁷² The Black Flag Army (黑旗军) was a group of former soldiers, mostly hailing from the Guangxi region of China, who migrated to Northern Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty in 1865 and operated in the mountainous regions of the area. Their clashes with French forces during the resistance against French colonialism garnered them significant notoriety. The group derived its name from their leader, Liu Yongfu, who adopted the use of a black flag as their emblem (See Tran Huy Lieu, *Góp ý kiến về việc đánh giá Lưu Vĩnh Phúc và quân Cờ Đen trong cuộc kháng Pháp ở Việt Nam* (Comments on the evaluation of Liu Yongfu and the Black Flag in the French resistance in Vietnam), "History Research Journal", 1962, No. 42, p.15-16).

⁷³ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 1, 1959, *op.cit*, p.247.

Quang Dan to withdraw his troops and direct his attention to Phu Thuan Thanh, which he attacked on December 3. The Vietnamese army proved successful in this engagement, claiming many enemy lives and capturing 150 soldiers⁷⁴. Meanwhile, Hoang Ta Viem's troops made their way westward and recaptured Hoai Duc post on December 9, followed by a fierce counterattack against the French on December 14. By the morning of December 21, 1873, the forces of Hoang Ta Viem and Liu Yongfu had reached the outskirts of Hanoi, where they confronted the French. Francis Garnier, in the midst of negotiations with the imperial envoy, Tran Dinh Tuc, was compelled to suspend the meeting. Driven by his hubris and desire for victory, Garnier urged his troops to pursue the enemy along the Hoai Duc road (Son Tay). However, he and his forces fell into an ambush at Cau Giay, resulting in the collapse of their bridge and a costly defeat. Another French contingent found themselves in a similar predicament, with their commander meeting his demise in the ensuing battle. According to historical records of the Nguyen Dynasty, *“on the morning of the event, Liu Yongfu's troops arrived near the walls of the palace and challenged the French. At that time, Francis Garnier was meeting with Tran Dinh Tuc when they received news of the approaching enemy. Garnier rushed out to confront them, but the enemy pretended to flee. Garnier pursued them on horseback to Cau Giay, where the enemy launched a surprise attack and killed him”*. According to the records, *“five heads were cut off, including that of Captain Garnier, one second lieutenant, one first lieutenant, and two other soldiers whose ranks are unknown”*⁷⁵.

The triumph at Cau Giay on December 21st, 1873⁷⁶ elicited immense elation among the Vietnamese populace, whereas the French colonizers in Hanoi were pervaded with a profound trepidation. They were poised to forsake the city and withdraw to their warships. *“The atmosphere of terror was pervasive throughout the city, particularly among the French inhabitants. A mere 40 individuals remained in good health, and numerous others were fatigued from days of marching. In addition to the fatalities, eight individuals had*

⁷⁴ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.378.

⁷⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1422.

⁷⁶ It is often referred to as the First Battle of Cau Giay because ten years later, at the same location of Cau Giay, there was another resounding victory in the Second Battle of Cau Giay (May 19, 1883).

been wounded”⁷⁷. During that juncture, Liu Yongfu orchestrated an assault on the French within Hanoi by utilizing hundreds of long ladders for climbing over the walls. The Vietnamese populace from all corners of the land collaborated in a concerted effort to launch robust attacks, leading to the French in Nam Dinh fleeing to Hanoi. However, the French navy's arrival rescued them from the threat of imminent decimation, providing them with sanctuary.

The French colonialists in Cochinchina were extremely panicked by the sudden developments that were unfavorable to them in Tonkin. Moreover, the situation of France in Europe at that time did not allow the French bourgeoisie to decisively engage in a far-reaching war of aggression. They were also concerned about China and England's intervention in the issue of Tonkin to prevent the French from developing their power. From the perspective of the Nguyen Dynasty, it is evident that a decisive push to advance the resistance against the French colonial forces in Hanoi and surrounding provinces would have resulted in their complete defeat. Nevertheless, the imperial court exhibited a notably weak stance, particularly with the aim of facilitating new negotiations. Tu Duc issued orders for Hoang Ta Viem to attack Son Tay and for Liu Yongfu's Black Flag army to remain stationed in the northwest mountainous forest, awaiting further instructions. Tu Duc instructed Hoang Ta Viem and Ton That Thuyet, “*The troops in the central region have been reinforced. You should station troops in the Son Tay area, build up power, contain strength, wait for the tea exchange in the provinces to finish, and then send troops to fight against the enemy Hoang Anh, immediately pacifying all of Tam Tuyen province*”⁷⁸. Upon receiving news of the escalating conflict in Tonkin, the imperial court in Hue dispatched Nguyen Van Tuong⁷⁹ alongside French envoy Philastre⁸⁰ to the region to

⁷⁷ J. Dupuis, *L'ouverture du Fleuve Rouge au commerce et les événements du Tonkin 1872-1874...*, *op.cit.*, p.352.

⁷⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.1427.

⁷⁹ Nguyen Van Tuong (1824-1886) was a high-ranking official of the Nguyen dynasty. He came from a poor working-class family in Quang Tri province. He was one of the important figures in the anti-French movement (Can Vương) during the later period (1885). (According to Thư viện lịch sử (History library): <https://thuvienlichsu.com/nhan-vat/nguyen-van-tuong-161/>) (accessed on March 28, 2023).

⁸⁰ Philastre is quite an exceptional figure. Originally a naval officer, he later became an Inspector of Indigenous Affairs (Inspecteur des affaires indigènes) in Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam). However, Philastre specialized in the study of languages, particularly Vietnamese and Chinese characters, demonstrating great

address any pertinent issues. However, upon their arrival at Cua Cam on December 24, they learned of Garnier's demise, which prompted Philastre to hastily initiate peace talks to avoid the risk of French forces facing complete annihilation. Hence, it is evident that the Nguyen dynasty's approach consistently favored peaceful negotiations with France in order to consolidate their resources in quelling internal dissension and safeguarding their dynasty's interests.

On January 3rd, 1874, negotiations between French envoy Philastre and the royal court officials were jeopardized by the disruptive behavior of Dupuis and Bishop Puginier. Despite these obstacles, Philastre remained steadfast and demanded the quick transfer of forts to the royal court officials, recognizing it as the only feasible option. The disbandment of the 12,000-strong French army was also ordered, with soldiers required to relinquish their weapons and given salaries to return to their hometowns⁸¹.

Subsequently, on January 5th, 1874, Philastre and Nguyen Van Tuong signed an agreement to withdraw French troops from the provinces of Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh, returning these positions to the royal court. Within two weeks, fortresses in Hai Duong (January 2nd, 1874), Ninh Binh (January 8th), and Nam Dinh (January 10th) were all returned to the royal court and the French troops, along with their equipment, were withdrawn to Hanoi. Finally, on February 16th, 1874, all French occupying forces, including Dupuis' soldiers, withdrew from Hanoi to Hai Phong, with only a platoon of 40 men left to guard the French consulate.

Following the resolution of the conflict, Philastre and Nguyen Van Tuong sailed to Saigon on March 4th, 1874, to prepare for a new treaty. Despite the efforts of Dupuis and Bishop Puginier to derail the negotiations, Philastre's unwavering commitment to peace resulted in the withdrawal of French troops from key provinces and their eventual evacuation from Hanoi.

3.2.3 The Diplomatic Concessions of the Vietnamese Feudal Dynasty to French Colonial Expansion: The Giap Tuat Treaty of March 15, 1874

Following a serious incident in Tonkin, both the French colonialists and the Hue court were motivated to seek reconciliation. Dupré, the French commander in Tonkin,

proficiency in both. (Phan Huy Le (editor), *Lịch sử Thăng Long-Hà Nội History of Thang Long-Hanoi*, vol. 2, Hanoi Publishing House, 2012, p.37).

⁸¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.1427-1428.

pursued reconciliation to present a favorable report of his activities to Paris, while the Hue court sought to mitigate the threat to its territory. Similar to twelve years prior to the signing of the 1862 treaty, both parties met to negotiate a treaty in hopes of resolving their mounting difficulties. The French government directed Dupré to negotiate with the Hue court on acceptable conditions, leaving him with little choice but to comply. Consequently, less than two weeks later, the Peace and Alliance Treaty (Giap Tuat Treaty) was signed in Saigon on March 15, 1874, and it would be supplemented by a trade agreement signed on August 31, 1874⁸².

The Giap Tuat Treaty of 1874 constituted the second bilateral agreement between the Nguyen Dynasty and France. Comprising 22 provisions, the treaty served as a replacement for the 1862 Treaty of Saigon. Its core elements included formal acknowledgement of France's perpetual sovereignty over Cochinchina, the transfer of foreign affairs to French administration, the liberalization of French commercial access to port cities and the Red River, and the granting of religious liberties to French missionaries⁸³.

The Giap Tuat Treaty of 1874 contained 22 articles, with Article 5 being of paramount importance as it acknowledged France's complete sovereignty over the six provinces of Cochinchina. Despite Tu Duc's government holding out for seven years before finally conceding, the negotiators were ultimately responsible for the outcome. While France coveted the six provinces, they did not believe they could keep all of them. The Tu Duc envoy, failing to grasp the intentions of the other party, was unable to defend their demands tenaciously, which only emboldened the French negotiators. Prior to the treaty, the Tu Duc government was unwilling to cede any part of their national territory and made efforts to reclaim the three eastern provinces and delay recognition of the loss of the other three. In addition to the economic benefits of rice production, there was also a psychological factor that contributed to Tu Duc's willingness to concede. As a king with a strong emotional attachment to his country and its heritage, he felt a sense of guilt for not being able to preserve it⁸⁴. This allowed France to achieve their primary goal of

⁸² H. Peyssonnaud, Bui Van Cung, *Le traité de 1874*, Journal du secrétaire de l'annanite, B.A.V.H., 1920, p.365-384.

⁸³ According to Thư viện lịch sử (History library): <https://thuvienlichsu.com/su-kien/hiep-uoc-giap-tuat-1874-108/> (accessed on April 12, 2023).

⁸⁴ “On March 12th, Tu Duc summoned Philastre to his bedside to inquire about the means to reestablish authority over the vassal provinces. This was prompted by his ailing health, which left him troubled by the

strengthening their foundation in Cochinchina. French colonialism had additional aims, including the spread of French influence throughout Tu Duc's kingdom through means such as the protectorate system and trade. Admiral Dupré attempted to incorporate these provisions into the treaty.

Regarding the protective regime, this is an important issue in Duypré's policy. Based on the content of the 1874 Treaty, it is clear that in reality, Vietnam became a protectorate of France, although the text did not specifically mention this term⁸⁵. France recognizes the sovereignty and full independence of Vietnam: "*The President of the French Republic acknowledges the supreme authority of the king of Annam and the complete independence of all foreign powers, whatever they may be...*" (Article 2). The Nguyen dynasty will implement a foreign policy that is in line with the interests of France; they will not establish diplomatic relations with other countries (except for trade relations): "*The king of Annam undertakes to apply his foreign policy in accordance with the policy of the French government and not to change anything in the current diplomatic relations. This political commitment does not extend to commercial treaties. But in any case, the king of Annam cannot sign a commercial treaty with any country that goes against the treaty signed between France and the kingdom of Annam, and without notifying the French government in advance*"⁸⁶.

France pledged to assist the Nguyen Dynasty in maintaining order, providing military training, and furnishing some weaponry. These promises of aid were aligned with the pressing and practical needs of the Tu Duc government, given the persistent uprisings, ravages wrought by Chinese insurgents in Tonkin, and pirate incursions which constituted the three chronic wounds afflicting the country. In this regard, France's pledges were

steady reduction of his ancestral territory". (according to Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)...*, op.cit, p.379).

⁸⁵ Due to the concerns of the Hue court and the cautious steps taken by Paris, the protectorate was not mentioned in the text of the March 15th, 1874 Treaty. In Duypré's directive sent to Philastre on December 11th, 1873, when he was in charge of the mission to Hue, he wrote: "*You will encounter great difficulties related to the protectorate, and I am obliged to let you, with your knowledge of the Annamese language, find the appropriate words to achieve our goals without arousing their suspicion.*" (Quoted from Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)...*, op.cit, p.381).

⁸⁶ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)...*, op.cit, p.382.

warmly received. Concurrently, reform and modernization schemes had been proposed at the Hue court, including the program advanced by commoner Nguyen Truong To, which ultimately failed to secure approval. Nonetheless, the court evinced a desire to experiment with certain initiatives, such as the adoption of steamship technology. Thus, the Tu Duc government appeared to place its trust in French assistance to extricate the nation from its technological backwardness⁸⁷.

In terms of trade, the Treaty stipulated that several Vietnamese ports, including Thi Nai (Quy Nhon), Ninh Hai (Hai Phong), Hanoi, and the Red River, would be open to foreign merchants (Article 11). The French were granted the liberty to conduct industrial business and engage in trade in the aforementioned provinces, while the Vietnamese government was required to provide them with land for building warehouses and residences, as well as to permit the employment of Vietnamese laborers (Article 12). However, foreign nationals who desired to enter inland Vietnam were mandated to possess a pass issued by France and were prohibited from engaging in trade. Any violation of this provision would result in the confiscation of their goods (Article 15). To ensure compliance with these terms, France was permitted to establish a Consulate in Hue, a provision that the Tu Duc court consistently opposed. Even in the final meetings held in March 1874, Vietnamese representatives refused to agree to the immediate appointment of a French Consul in Hue. The court officials' animosity towards foreigners persisted even after the Tonkin events, and they were unable to ensure the safety of French representatives⁸⁸. However, Duypré regarded this apprehension as exaggerated and agreed only to postpone the appointment of the French Consul for one year following the treaty's signing, in order to facilitate France's expansionist agenda. In his view, the presence of a French Consul in Hue was essential. The French envoys regarded it as the most effective guarantee of their treaty-granted freedom and continually advocated for its establishment.

Regarding the religious provisions in the treaty, the dynasty was required to recognize that Catholicism promotes good deeds and consequently, withdraw all measures taken against it and its followers. Emperor Tu Duc was compelled to concede to all the guarantees demanded by the French envoys for themselves and for the faithful. These guarantees included the freedom to practice any religion, the right to evangelize, and the

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p.384.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the meeting on March 11th, 1874. (Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ (1862 – 1874)...*, op.cit, p.387).

abolishment of any discriminatory measures taken against the faithful and indigenous priests. Additionally, Vietnamese citizens were granted the right to participate in the civil service through examinations....

The Treaty of 1874, signed under arduous conditions for France, was a resounding victory for the nation. Its provisions ensured that France gained complete control over Cochinchina, a vast and bountiful region with a strategically important permanent position under French sovereignty⁸⁹. Additionally, the Nguyen dynasty's foreign sovereignty, a key and fundamental aspect of national sovereignty, was now firmly in the hands of the French. Notably, the Nguyen dynasty had previously aimed to negotiate to regain some lost territories from the French or to exchange provinces in the East and West, but with the Treaty, they had essentially relinquished their sovereignty over the land, highlighting their vulnerability to French colonialism. Despite having to cede Hanoi, France had secured political, economic, and military bases in crucial Tonkin locations. Article 9 of this treaty stipulated: "The government of Annam shall cede a piece of land on the riverbank to build a residence for the French Envoy and for the garrison of his bodyguards. This land shall be located near the place where, after the treaty's signing, French merchants will be allowed to establish their premises..."⁹⁰. In Hanoi, there is a "concession" where France will establish a consulate with a permanent garrison of 100 soldiers.. While religious freedom and evangelism were recognized under the Treaty, these provisions failed to quell the opposition of the Nguyen dynasty's feudal officials, who perceived Catholics as a Western force. Moreover, such provisions contributed to the intensification of religious conflicts among the people in numerous regions and fueled resistance against the Nguyen dynasty. Overall, the Treaty of 1874 foreshadowed the inevitable return of French colonialism to Hanoi.

Moreover, leveraging the compliant demeanor of the feudal class, the French colonizers coerced the Hue court into signing a supplementary treaty on August 31, 1874. This treaty, comprising of 29 articles, conferred upon the French extensive economic privileges throughout Vietnam, thereby transforming Vietnam into a market under French domination. The French assumed control over customs duties at the ports, regulated all import and export activities, and possessed unbridled authority to permit or prohibit entry

⁸⁹ Nguyen The Long, *Bang giao Đại Việt Triều Nguyễn* (State of Dai Viet - Nguyen Dynasty), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005, p.139.

⁹⁰ F. R du Caillaud, *Histoire de l'intervention française au Tonkin (1872-1874)*, Paris, 1880, p.433.

of ships from other nations into the ports. French warships enjoyed unhindered access, and French troops were authorized to occupy the ports. Notwithstanding, the Nguyen dynasty remained oblivious to the true nature of France's protectorate over Vietnam, and clung to the "mirror" of the Qing dynasty, contending: "Recently, the Qing dynasty and four Western bordering countries made peace, and also allowed consuls and Western traders to trade at the Chinese coastal ports. This is a natural occurrence, which everyone can see and understand. It is not a new thing nowadays, nor is it unique to our country. We must think carefully before acting, and unite to protect the whole country. I have a strong desire for this"⁹¹.

In Hue, on April 13, Nguyen Van Tuong and Brossard de Corbigny engaged in a formal ceremony to exchange the ratified Giap Tuat Treaty, which had been concluded on March 15, 1874.

Vietnam's Response and Reactions Following the 1874 Treaty

After the 1874 Treaty was signed, it became evident that Vietnam's existence as a nation was being shaken, and the foundation of its national independence was under serious threat. This sense of concern was formed among the Vietnamese people, finding support, at least from those conscious of their responsibilities in governing the country.

Simultaneously, as significant and pressing events unfolded, posing a threat to Vietnam's future, a movement of reforms and innovations emerged among the people, causing concern for the Hue court.

Encouraged by passionate individuals such as Phan Thanh Gian in 1864, Nguyen Truong To in 1866, Dinh Van Dien in 1868, Pham Phu Thu in 1874..., numerous noteworthy reform proposals were suggested, stemming from the pens of those who had traveled extensively and lived abroad. They were aware of their country's backwardness and shortcomings compared to European nations, genuinely desiring to restore and elevate their homeland's standing. Regrettably, these proposals were not respectfully accepted by the ruling leaders as they should have been.

Among the high-ranking officials of the court, only Phan Thanh Gian and Pham Phu Thu truly embraced a new spirit and advocated for genuine national reform. Having had the opportunity to travel to Europe and witness the strength and prosperity of Western civilization, Phan Thanh Gian desired to make his country benefit from that civilization. However, the court wrongly suspected him of being pro-French.

⁹¹ See Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.399.

Pham Phu Thu, who accompanied Phan Thanh Gian to France and Spain in March 1865, presented a memorandum to Emperor Tu Duc, proposing the establishment of naval schools to teach foreign languages, developing technology, and exploiting the country's mines and resources. He persuaded Emperor Tu Duc to quickly “reform education and develop industries”⁹² In 1873 and 1874, Pham Phu Thu suggested reorganizing the military with modern techniques, opening trade with foreign countries, seeking allies among the European powers, and establishing a consulate in Hong Kong for easier communication with foreign nations⁹³.

Only the high-ranking official, Tran Tien Thanh⁹⁴, wholeheartedly supported the innovative ideas of Phan Thanh Gian and Pham Phu Thu. Additionally, Tran Tien Thanh also backed the intellectuals who presented significant modernization and reform proposals to the court⁹⁵.

In 1866, Nguyen Truong To proposed separating administrative power from judicial power, introducing precise scientific subjects into the education curriculum, sending students abroad for further studies, conducting surveys and exploiting mines, modernizing agriculture, developing industry and trade, restructuring the military, and constructing roads and railways. To secure funds for these reforms, he envisaged a financial system based on protective tariffs and customs laws⁹⁶.

In 1868, Dinh Van Dien presented a memorandum addressing issues related to gold mining, construction of railways, calling for European assistance in modernizing the country, establishing commercial offices in foreign seaports, granting freedom for people

⁹² Tran Van Giap, *Tìm hiểu kho sách Hán Nôm* (toàn tập) (Understanding Han Nom bookstore (Complete Edition)). Social Science Publishing House, 2003, p.1047.

⁹³ Nguyen Xuan Tho, *op.cit*, p.281.

⁹⁴ Tran Tien Thanh (1813-1883) was a prominent mandarin of the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnamese history. “He was known for his honesty and integrity, serving as an upright official, and was greatly cherished by Emperor Tu Duc. In his old age, when facing hardships and unfortunate circumstances, his passing was deeply mourned and regretted by many” (Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies), vol 3, Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.703-704).

⁹⁵ He also showed signs of desiring national renewal by hosting Nguyen Truong To multiple times and arranging the marriage of his daughter, Tran Thi Nhan, to Nguyen Lo Trach... (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.1016).

⁹⁶ Truong Ba Can, *Hoạt động ngoại giao của nước Pháp nhằm củng cố cơ sở tại Nam Kỳ...*, *op.cit* p.252. And Dao Duy Anh, *Biographie de Trần Tiễn Thành*, BAVH, 1944, p.134.

to study military knowledge, providing regular military training in shooting, and implementing preferential policies for disabled soldiers for their lifetime...⁹⁷. Bui Vien proposed opening trade with foreign countries and was sent by Emperor Tu Duc to China to establish commercial relations⁹⁸.

In response to the demands for national renewal, the Nguyen dynasty, as the governing body responsible for receiving and implementing the program of modern reform, did not turn a blind eye. All memoranda were carefully read, examined, and discussed by Emperor Tu Duc and the court officials to determine whether to implement them or set them aside, whether to execute the entire proposal or only parts of it⁹⁹. This attitude and approach demonstrated that the Nguyen dynasty was aware of the need for reform in order to survive, rather than blindly discarding the proposals. In practice, the Nguyen court carried out activities related to various fields such as organizing mining, engaging in foreign trade and commerce, adopting new education methods, training technical personnel, recruiting talents, establishing agricultural settlements, and implementing irrigation projects...¹⁰⁰.

The Nguyen dynasty did not reject the reform requests of the patriotic figures, nor did they consider them insignificant or financially burdensome. Implementing those reforms required considerable expenses. However, these efforts did not demonstrate a large-scale, determined, and purposeful implementation of reforms by the Nguyen court. The execution was more of an exploration rather than a resolute pursuit of achieving the goals. Some aspects were merely superficial and half-hearted¹⁰¹. As a result, despite the

⁹⁷ Do Bang and many authors, *op.cit*, p.188 and Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), *op.cit*, p.369-370.

⁹⁸ Bui Vien (1839 - 1878) was a reformer and diplomat of late 19th-century Vietnam, serving as an official under the Nguyen dynasty. Emperor Tu Duc praised him, saying, "*I have not bestowed any favor upon you, yet you treat the country as your own home, without caring about distance or hardships. The spirits and deities will surely bear witness to this*". (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.67).

⁹⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), *op.cit*, p.355.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p.378.

¹⁰¹ Nguyen Quang Trung Tien, *Huế với vị trí trung tâm của trào lưu canh tân đất nước nửa sau thế kỷ XIX* (Hue with the central position of the national renewal movement in the second half of the 19th century), Hue Magazine Past and Present (No. 27/1998), p.41-42.

vigorous reform movement, it failed to change the course of history, and the downfall of the Nguyen dynasty seemed inevitable.

The Nguyen dynasty played a central role in the reform movement. However, from the king to the officials, they adhered strictly to feudal ideology and belonged to the feudal class. On the other hand, the reform movement had bourgeois characteristics, demanding a transformation in both the socio-economic infrastructure and the superstructure along the path of bourgeois capitalism. This required the feudal class itself to adopt a tendency toward bourgeois transformation. Consequently, the majority of the Nguyen courtiers had limited vision, were bound by conservative attitudes, and had limited personal capabilities. As a result, most of the reform initiatives were stifled within the planning stage.

All the reform proposals were unable to set the administrative machinery in motion due to excessive emphasis on formalities. At first, King Tu Duc showed a willingness to embark on a path of reform when he sent Nguyen Truong To to survey mines in the Nghe Tinh region and travel to France to purchase machinery and recruit specialists in 1866. However, the court persisted in a narrow and conservative attitude, and the officials and courtiers all resisted Western-style reforms, often criticizing the reform projects. The king's temperament, being hesitant and indecisive, added to the apprehensive spirit, eventually leading to the rejection of these initiatives. The reports submitted to the king for approval were either considered impractical or not suitable for the current times by the officials and courtiers. For instance, when discussing the opening of trade, they argued, *“Until now, we haven't engaged in trade, and yet some have secretly transported military equipment to the river and smuggled prohibited items to the sea. How much worse it will be if we open trade and gather people from various places, providing opportunities for dishonest individuals to cause war”*¹⁰² It can be said that the failure of these reform measures was *“due to the lack of a comprehensive principle of renewal”*¹⁰³.

As for public opinion, the majority of the people and intellectuals were almost entirely unaware of events happening beyond the country's borders. They had no access to information channels, and Western countries were perceived through the lens of invading

¹⁰² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), *op.cit*, p.423.

¹⁰³ Nguyen Hong Phong, *Văn hóa chính trị Việt Nam – truyền thống và hiện đại* (Vietnamese political culture – tradition and modernity), Center for research and development consulting, Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.156.

forces due to their military conflicts with Vietnam¹⁰⁴. Deeply influenced by Chinese culture, most scholars and court officials, who had never ventured abroad, were completely ignorant of the scientific and technological advancements achieved in European countries. They couldn't grasp the concept of a civilization different from the Chinese world¹⁰⁵.

The continuous setbacks of the Hue government caused dissatisfaction throughout the country. While King Tu Duc and his officials were burdened with failed feudal ideas and held responsibility for the nation's enslavement and decline, a considerable number of patriotic intellectuals, living among the people, refused to become officials and took the lead in the uprising against the king and the court¹⁰⁶. The Van Than movement¹⁰⁷ was established in Nghe An in March 1874 under the leadership of Tran Tan¹⁰⁸ and Dang Nhu Mai¹⁰⁹, gathering three thousand intellectuals armed and rising up against the Hue court. They opposed the Treaty of 1874 and their activities simultaneously targeted Western influences and unorthodox beliefs.

In Tu Duc's first statement, the nature of the uprising was described as "*killing people in the name of religion, mesmerizing the masses into rebellion*"¹¹⁰. In March 1874,

¹⁰⁴ Nguyen Xuan Tho, *op.cit.*, p.283.

¹⁰⁵ Le Thanh Canh. "Notes pour servir à l'histoire de l'établissement du protectorat français en Annam." Bulletin des amis du vieux Hué 15 (3) (Juillet –Septembre 1928): p.180-204.

¹⁰⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXXI, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, p.285.

¹⁰⁷ The Van Than Movement was a mass movement led by Vietnamese Confucian scholars with the goal of "eliminating the French and killing Catholics" to save the country. In a call from the Van Than Movement, it was written: "*The false religion of Jesus has infiltrated our country. Their prayers only believe in God and the Holy Spirit. Their doctrine teaches that on this earth, there are no kings, no parents. Their argument is both absurd and paradoxical; their character is rife with arrogance. They robbed fertile land to build churches for a false religion. Morally, they seek to corrupt our country and turn it into Catholicism. They humiliate Confucian morality.*" (Nguyen Hong Duong, *Thông báo Hán Nôm học* (Notice of Han Nom Studies), Hanoi, 2008, p.196-211).

¹⁰⁸ Tran Tan (? - 1874) was a leader of the Van Than movement against the French during the Nguyen dynasty. He hailed from Nghe An province. (Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit.*, p.483).

¹⁰⁹ Dang Nhu Mai (1829-1883) was from Nghe An province. He was a disciple of Tran Tan and passed the national examination in 1848. He was devoted to his country and stood alongside Tran Tan to lead the resistance movement. (Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit.*, p.484).

¹¹⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXXII, *op.cit.*, p.11.

the rebel forces, comprising 3,000 people, carried out arson, destruction, and massacres of many houses, villages, and followers of the Christian religion (over 1,000 people). On the other hand, the provincial officials were slow to respond, and no intense confrontation occurred¹¹¹. Fearing the actions of the rebels, the court sent Ton That Thuyet to urge the soldiers to counterattack vigorously, forcing the rebels to retreat and suffer significant losses in terms of both people and resources.

At the beginning of July 1874, the court again dispatched Nguyen Van Tuong to combine Western ships with military forces in Ha Tinh to advance and attack the rebel forces. The rebel forces were dispersed, and their leaders were forced to retreat¹¹².

Professor Tran Van Giau commented: *"It cannot be denied that the 1874 movement in Nghe Tinh was a patriotic movement initiated by Van Than lovers of the country. However, it cannot be denied that the Van Than patriots made significant political mistakes when they considered "killing and destroying" as the first condition for "pacifying the West," failing to distinguish between ordinary civilians and the Catholic followers who collaborated with the French invaders. They held the same stick to punish everyone and unintentionally pushed all the Catholic followers to the side of the French... The Van Than insurgents have inadvertently isolated themselves, making them vulnerable to suppression by the ruling dynasty"*¹¹³.

Following the Van Than uprising in Nghe An as mentioned above, many other uprisings occurred in various localities since the signing of the 1874 Treaty. These included the violent actions of officers within the royal army in the districts of Thanh Oai, Thanh Tri, and Chuong Duc (in Hanoi). In August 1874, a peasant uprising that started in 1867 with about 400 initial participants grew to 2000 people¹¹⁴. In February 1875, Ton That Thuyet commanded his generals to launch a decisive attack. The uprising came to an end.

As a result of the apparent failures against the French colonizers, the Nguyen dynasty had to bear the strong reactions from various layers of the population, ranging from

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p.28-29.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, p.35-40.

¹¹³ Tran Van Giau, *Sự phát triển của tư tưởng ở Việt Nam* (Development of thought in Vietnam), *Hệ ý thức phong kiến và sự thất bại của nó trước các nhiệm vụ lịch sử* (Feudal ideology and its failure to historical tasks) (vol 1), Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 1993, p.126.

¹¹⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXXII, *op.cit*, p.67.

patriotic intellectuals to military officers, and the peasantry everywhere, especially in Central (Annam) and Tonkin regions of Vietnam.

According to the 1874 Treaty, the Hue court no longer had to pay tribute to any other country, but it continued to maintain diplomatic relations with China. Emperor Tu Duc continuously sent envoys to the Qing dynasty in China for annual tribute missions. According to the Nguyen dynasty's historical records: "*At that time, because the Qing invaders had not yet been pacified, a memorial was made stating the border situation, and someone was sent to Guangxi to request assistance, asking to send troops to help suppress*"¹¹⁵.

All attempts to establish relations with Britain, Spain, Germany, etc., were unsuccessful as the French colonialists used Article 3 of the 1874 Treaty to block these efforts. Finally, the Hue court had to rely solely on the promise of aid from the Qing dynasty in times of crisis.

Due to many Qing troops infiltrating Tonkin and engaging in plundering activities, the Hue court repeatedly contacted officials in the provinces of Guangxi and Guangdong, asking the Qing forces to enter Vietnam together with the Hue court's troops to suppress the invaders. In reality, the Hue court's forces were struggling and inept in dealing with the Qing troops. In a situation where both the French and the Qing dynasty had dark intentions, the Hue court had to rely on both, even though they knew the dangers involved.

In July 1879, while the Qing army followed the request of the Hue court and brought tens of thousands of troops to Tonkin to suppress Ly Duong Tai's forces¹¹⁶, by the end of that year, the Hue court had to seek the help of the French army to pacify and suppress rebellions in Nam Dinh. Taking advantage of the situation, the French doubled the number of troops stationed, exceeding the terms agreed upon in the 1874 Treaty¹¹⁷.

As a result, after losing the Southern provinces, Emperor Tu Duc was well aware that the Northern provinces would also be lost eventually. The people were discontented,

¹¹⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXXIV, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.350.

¹¹⁶ Ly Duong Tai (? - ?) formerly served as a governor in Tam Chau, Guangxi Province. However, he later rebelled and led troops to invade Lang Son Province in Tonkin, Vietnam. (according to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXXII, *op.cit*, p.187.

¹¹⁷ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.133.

and the Emperor was at a loss. Surrounded by weak and timid officials, the Emperor lost his political direction. Despite this, he still persisted in attempting to reclaim the lost provinces¹¹⁸. Relying solely on external assistance without valuing internal strength, self-reliance, and the power of the people were significant mistakes made by the Tu Duc court, which ultimately led the Nguyen dynasty to failure¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁸ The book *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien* records: "France fought with Prussia, the king was captured by the Prussians, and the French general reported it. King Tu Duc thought he could take advantage of the opportunity, so he ordered the Institute of Trade to write a letter telling the general to return 6 provinces, in order to save the base... The general sent a reply, only thanking him for asking, but did not say anything else. Imperial officials stated that the country did not wish to negotiate. We have affairs at the Northern border and matters in the West, so we cannot take action yet. The king adheres to the words of his advisors". (according to *Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn* (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXXII, *op.cit*, p.48).

¹¹⁹ Tran Van Giau, *Luận về những nguyên nhân Việt Nam mất nước về tay Pháp* (Discourse on the causes of Vietnam's loss of country to France), "Past and Present Magazine", No. 148, p.7-8, 35-37.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROCESS OF FRENCH COLONIZATION OF VIETNAM WAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

4.1 France's activities in completing the colonization of Vietnam

4.1.1 Colonialism strengthened in France and there were intentions to invade Tonkin

During the period between 1874 and 1880, the capitalist countries in Europe entered a relatively developed period, although there were still significant crises. Capitalism was advancing towards its peak - the era of imperialism. It was the monopoly concentration of industrial production bases, banks, the combination of industrial and financial capitalism... It was the phenomenon of capital flowing into underdeveloped countries with abundant cheap labor and resources. It was the invasion and exploitation of colonies by developed capitalist countries in Europe¹. The two established colonial powers, England and France, had already attained formidable positions², boasting advanced technology and naval capabilities. However, these nations were confronted with intensified competition from emerging capitalist countries in Europe³. The British colonialists did not succumb to their competitors and instead heightened their efforts to expand their markets and territorial holdings. By constructing and utilizing the Suez Canal, which connected the Mediterranean Sea through Egypt to the Indian Ocean and provided the shortest sea route from England to India, the British colonialists gained significant economic advantages. Additionally, they occupied territories such as Cyprus in the Mediterranean, the Malay Peninsula, and eventually southern Myanmar⁴... This situation led the French colonialists to

¹ M. Adas, P. N. Stearns. *Turbulent Passage A Global History of the Twentieth Century*, Pearson Education, 2008, ISBN 0-205-64571-2, p.54-58.

² L. James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, New York 1997, p.169-83.

³ J. I. Herbst, *States and power in Africa: comparative lessons in authority and control*. Princeton University Press, 2000, ISBN 0-691-01028-5, p.71-72 and Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)* (The beginning of the installation of the French colonial system in Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)), Hong Duc Publishing House, 2018, p.275.

⁴ P. J. Marshall, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*. Cambridge University Press 1996, ISBN 0-521-00254-0, p.156-157.

also make efforts to participate in the competition for markets and colonies. French capitalism felt the need to occupy exclusive areas for themselves.

In France, after the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, capitalist economy recovered and advanced to a higher stage of imperialism. Especially with the strong development and influence of banks and the financial bourgeoisie. Three important banks, namely Crédit Lyonnais, Comptoir National d'Escompte, and Société Générale, held up to 80% of the capital of all banks in France⁵. In addition to their financial holdings, the three banks mentioned exerted significant control over the management of metallurgical, electricity, shipping, and railway companies, among others. These financial capitalists actively lobbied the French government to establish a bank in Southern Vietnam, leading to the establishment of the Bank of Paris - Netherlands (Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas). This bank, in collaboration with the aforementioned financial institutions, played a central role in the creation of the Indochinese Bank in 1875, which held the exclusive right to print silver certificates and issue currency in Indochina⁶. Alongside the accumulation of capital, advances in the industrial and technological sectors led to the formation of large, centralized production bases such as the Andat Loren steel complex and the Alpe mountain power plant. Notably, foreign technological and agricultural goods began to infiltrate the French market and compete with domestic products. The economic situation had a profound impact on the bourgeoisie and consequently influenced the politics of France and the colonial policy of the French government.

Following the establishment of the Third Republic in 1870, the government was handed over to President Adolphe Thiers after the failed Paris Commune, which he subsequently suppressed violently in 1871⁷. During the initial phase of the power shift to the moderate Republican or Opportunist party in 1879, a prominent historian within the party, Anphret Rambo, made the following statement: "Expanding was perceived as the sole means of preservation by the French colonial authorities. The French protective presence

⁵ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858 - 1896* (Vietnamese History 1858 – 1896), ed. Pham Quang Trung, Nguyen Ngoc Co, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi 2003, p.468.

⁶ The Bank of Indochina (Banque de L'Indochine) was established on January 21, 1875. At first, it enjoyed the privilege of a bank of issue, which it carried out first in Nam Ky (Southern Vietnam), then throughout the entire Indochina region as well as in Nouvelle-Calédonie, in French agencies in India, in the Pacific, and on the Somali coast under French control. (According to Nguyen Xuan Tho, *op.cit*, p.298).

⁷ Vu Duong Ninh, Nguyen Van Hong, *Lịch sử thế giới cận đại* (Modern World History), Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1999, p.217.

in Tonkin was seen as providing stability and security for Cochinchina, akin to how Tunisia was perceived as serving as a stronghold for Algeria"⁸. During that period, a significant number of colonialists held sway in politics, espousing similar views to Rambo. The theorist Leroy Beaulieu pondered over France's future in relation to the towering nations of Russia, Germany, the Anglo-Saxon countries, and China, and concluded that France would inevitably become a fading power. According to Beaulieu, France's only way to avert this hopeless decline was through colonization, which he believed was a matter of life and death for France⁹. Politician Jules Ferry¹⁰ said: "What is increasingly lacking for our great industry focused on export, is the market... Because, nearby, Germany has erected trade walls; because, across the Atlantic, the United States has a strict trade regime; because the big countries are starting to flood our market with goods we never saw before. We can predict that the South American market has been in our hands for a long time, and will later be snatched away, dominated by North American goods... Would the government let another country set foot on the land of Tonkin? To allow another country to control the Red River? To allow other countries to seize the equatorial regions of Africa? In our time, a great country is a great country not because of cultural influence, but because of action... Therefore, if France wants to maintain its position as a great country, it must take its voice, customs, flag, and weapons wherever it can"¹¹. He declared that France had a civilizing mission: "The superior races have a right over the inferior races. They have a duty to civilize the inferior races"¹². Along with Jules Ferry, there was Leon Gambetta¹³, a famous politician and government member who came from an upper-class

⁸ G. Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, t.2, Paris: Éditeur Adrien Maisonneuve, 1956, p.755.

⁹ According to P. L. Beaulieu, *De la colonization chez les peuples modernes*, Guillaumin, Paris, 1874, p.132.

¹⁰ The Prime Minister of the Third French Republic held office for two terms, from 1880-1881 and 1883-1885. (Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia I – National Archive center N1: https://archives.org.vn/cuoc-tan-cong-thanh-ha-noi-lan-ii-nam-1882-%E2%80%9393-khuc-dao-dau.htm#_ftnref1) (accessed on March 20, 2024).

¹¹ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1959, p.10, p.21.

¹² E. Jouannet. *The Liberal-Welfarist Law of Nations: A History of International Law*. Cambridge UP 2012, p. 142.

¹³ The Prime Minister of the Third French Republic held office during the term of 1881-1882. (Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia I – National Archive center N1: https://archives.org.vn/cuoc-tan-cong-thanh-ha-noi-lan-ii-nam-1882-%E2%80%9393-khuc-dao-dau.htm#_ftnref1) (accessed on March 20, 2024).

background. Gambetta was particularly interested in Tonkin and publicly declared that "Tonkin is truly the future of France"¹⁴. At that time, two journals - *Journal de voyage* by Jean Dupuis and *L'histoire de l'intervention française au Tonkin de 1872 à 1874* by Romanet du Caillaud¹⁵ - attracted public attention about the need for a permanent occupation in Tonkin. This idea was repeated by geographical societies and supported by chambers of commerce. For many years, the newspapers of the chambers of commerce had been spreading the arguments of those who supported the invasion:

*"All of France's interests are concerned with opening up this huge consumer market (Tonkin)... Marseille for shipping, Lyon for silk, Bordeaux, Nantes, Le Havre for colonial goods. Conquering a new country with nearly 15 million consumers... a new market to easily exchange our processed goods for raw materials, worthy of our efforts. The strategic occupation of the Red River only partially meets the desires of French commerce. The most necessary thing to really contribute to solving the economic crisis is the trade route of the Red River, which is the entire Tonkin with its 15 million people"*¹⁶.

The colonial authorities of France, particularly those in power before 1882, held a clear consensus on their policy of invading and occupying Vietnam. Their intention to abrogate the 1874 Treaty with the Nguyen dynasty and fully occupy the country was evident as early as 1875. In a letter dated April 19 of that year, the Minister of the Navy and Colonies corresponded with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, De Carter, articulating this intention: "The information I have received about the issues in Tonkin shows that the situation is very good. The Hue court is honestly acknowledging the results of the Treaty. Now that Annam is weakened and admits it is unable to govern the people, such a country will be dominated by a great power. Our position, once we have taken Cochinchina, will not allow any other force to oppress Tu Duc. When we first started our invasion, we were not able to establish a strong foothold in the Far East. But now it is no longer possible. We have occupied three provinces, and we have taken six provinces of Annam, and we have established protection in Khmer... We must continue our work, not hastily and never lose our way, especially not retreat and not lose our hard-earned benefits"¹⁷.

¹⁴ G. Taboulet, t.2, 1956, *op.cit*, p.757.

¹⁵ F. R du Caillaud, *L'histoire de l'intervention française au Tonkin (1872-1874)*, Paris, 1887, p.125.

¹⁶ Quoted by J. Chesneaux, *Contributions à l'histoire de la nation vietnamienne*, Editions Sociales, Paris 1955, p.127.

¹⁷ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, vol 2, 1959, *op.cit*, p.10, p.21.

It can be inferred that the scheme to invade Tonkin was not only in consonance with the overarching strategy of the French colonizers active in Vietnam, including Governor of Cochinchina Duypré, Ambassador Rheinart, Paul Vial, and numerous other officials who were stationed in Hanoi during that period. Rheinart wrote: *"I always feel sorry when I have to use force to make people obey me, suppress those who are trying to escape from the colonialism of foreign countries, but I still have to do it...I have reminded the local officials many times that no matter what they do, I will always go further than them; that if they are bad, I will be even worse; that they will see me as their true nature. I think that in our conquering situation, we have something to say and must do: always maintain the winning position against the subdued, always surpass them on the path they are following"*¹⁸. They understood the situation in Vietnam and were particularly interested in the economic resources in Tonkin. Taking advantage of the 1874 Treaty, French colonizers openly went to many provinces and localities in Tonkin and Annam to search for coal mines, gold mines, and other resources. Along with investigating these resources, France also spied on the roads, rivers, and coasts throughout the provinces of Tonkin. Seeing the rich resources in Tonkin, the French colonizers became even more eager, especially when they saw the Hue court becoming increasingly weak, with internal turmoil due to many uprisings against it. These were favorable conditions for realizing their invasion plan. In addition, the presence and activities of other European powers such as England, Germany, and Spain in Tonkin, despite France's resistance, further encouraged France's plan to invade this land early. In 1878, both England and Germany expressed their desire to send consuls to Hai Phong. Bismarck - the German Prime Minister¹⁹ declared, *"If France does not act, Germany will pacify the Red River for German trade..."*²⁰ while England conspired to seize the coal mines in Hong Gai under the cover of the Chinese Maritime Company.

¹⁸ C. Gosselin, *L'Empire d'Annam*, Perrin, Paris, 1904, p.182.

¹⁹ Bismarck (1815-1898) was the man who united the small German states into a powerful German Empire and became the empire's first chancellor. (Nghiên cứu quốc tế (International Research): [https://nghiencuuquoccte.org/2015/04/22/otto-von-bismarck/#:~:text=Bismarck%20\(1815%2D1898\)%20l%C3%A0,%E1%BB%9F%20Sch%C3%B6nhausen%2C%20t%C3%A2y%20b%E1%BA%AFc%20Berlin](https://nghiencuuquoccte.org/2015/04/22/otto-von-bismarck/#:~:text=Bismarck%20(1815%2D1898)%20l%C3%A0,%E1%BB%9F%20Sch%C3%B6nhausen%2C%20t%C3%A2y%20b%E1%BA%AFc%20Berlin). (accessed on May 05, 2024).

²⁰ Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ năm 1858 đến cuối thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to the end of the 19th century), vol.3, part 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1979, p.22.

France swiftly impeded and once again disregarded the Hue dynasty²¹. In 1880, France opposed the Spanish representative to Vietnam, refusing to acknowledge the Vietnam-Spain treaty and leaving the Hue court with no alternative but to capitulate. France's underlying intention was to entirely colonize Vietnam to exploit the aforementioned economic benefits, which elucidates the political, military, and economic interventions that France carried out in Central and North Vietnam, as discussed in earlier sections. France portrayed itself as the protector of Vietnam as a whole, and even orchestrated and supported multiple uprisings against the Nguyen dynasty with the objective of installing a puppet government to supplant it. The intentions of the colonialists were revealed in a letter dated June 5, 1876, from the French Consul in Hai Phong to Admiral L. Lafont²², Governor of Southern Vietnam, which stated: *"I am anticipating a revolt to erupt in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An, and those conspiring to install a king from the Le, Ly, Mac or Tran families under France's protection with a French ambassador stationed alongside a provincial governor"*²³. In addition to inciting rebellion, the French colonizers exploited the land disputes in Thanh to foment turmoil and intervene in a beneficial manner, irrespective of the Hue court's outcome²⁴.

In relation to the Nguyen dynasty's stance, it is evident that they held the 1874 Treaty in high regard. Alongside granting France unhindered access to establish trade in Hanoi, Haiphong, Haiduong, and other locations, as well as permitting them to station an ambassador in Hue, the Nguyen dynasty acquiesced to ongoing reconnaissance undertakings in Tonkin, including Jean Dupuis' search for gold in Kim Boi, the examination of water levels in Son Tay and Hoa Binh (1875), and the exploration of coal mines in Quang Yen (1876). Although the Nguyen dynasty occasionally expressed apprehensions and even reproached France, their responses were constrained. The Nguyen dynasty's historical records state: *"During May of 1876, French naval vessels made their way to Dong Province, proceeding upstream along the Luc Dau River, followed by the Nguyet Duc*

²¹ Pham Van Son, *Việt Sử tân biên* (Revised History of Vietnam), Volume IV, Khai Tri Publishing House, 1961, p.432.

²² Louis Charles Georges Jules Lafont (1825 – 1908) was a French naval officer who held the position of Governor of Cochinchina from October 16, 1877, to July 7, 1879. (J. Corfield, *Historical Dictionary of Ho Chi Minh City*, Anthem Press, 2012, p.148).

²³ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, vol 2, 1959, *op.cit*, p.23.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p.23-24.

River until reaching Dap Cau. Currently, this same route continues to be utilized, extending through the Luc Dau River and onward along the Nhat Duc River to Luc Ngan, situated in Bac Ninh province, with provincial authorities assuming responsibility for its maintenance. The monarch commanded Hanoi and Haiduong provinces to examine this issue"²⁵. Afterwards, the king ordered a letter to be written to the French envoy, stating that *"warships of all nations should travel only on the high seas, and if they must enter a river, they should only go from the Cam River to Hanoi and nowhere else"*²⁶. This protest had no effect, as in October 1876, the Nguyen court wrote: *"The French Consul in Hanoi went on a tour upstream of the Red River, passing through the upper Thao River and arriving at Chau Thuy Vi"*²⁷. The royal court displayed a lack of response. However, the Hue court subsequently took initiative, repeatedly seeking assistance from the French in capturing pirates and soliciting the Qing army's aid. Additionally, the court detained individuals who rebelled against the French in Cochinchina, with the intent to hand them over to French authorities. This action was taken as early as 1876. The Nguyen dynasty historian recorded: *"Before the Southern rebels were caught by the French and imprisoned in Con Lon Island, 24 of them escaped. The French general had to hunt them down. Until now, the seven rebels led by Tran Ngoc Truc escaped to Binh Thuan. The provincial official, Truong Gia Hoi, reported the situation and was ordered to stay away. Later, due to the difficult situation, the court decided to hand them over to the French for immediate release"*²⁸. The ultimate position of the Nguyen dynasty was one of compliance. Despite being cognizant of both the short- and long-term schemes of the French, the court failed to adopt an unyielding and apt strategy. A notable example occurred in January 1881, when it came to light that a French doctor had arranged to travel to Bien Hoa, but instead embarked on a Tonkin expedition to study natural science. Tu Duc contended that *"his journey was not motivated by scientific curiosity, but rather to survey the mountainous regions and entice the people. Both of these were pernicious intentions that should not be*

²⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXXIII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.293.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.340.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p.296.

taken lightly... The king directed the provinces of Binh Thuan and Khanh Hoa in the north to exercise vigilance and conduct an exhaustive investigation"²⁹.

Nevertheless, the imperial court in Hue persisted in its passive defensive approach. In July 1881, when Reinart³⁰, a resolute invader, arrived in Hue as an ambassador, the Nguyen court recorded: *"Upon the arrival of French ambassador Rheinart at the Thuan An gate, the king dispatched officials to welcome him. Subsequently, Rheinart proceeded to the embassy to deliver a congratulatory letter. During their audience, the king articulated his thoughts: "In the past, there was a maxim that one would lay down one's life for a confidant and honor a statesman with respect and gratitude. Although we are not intimate enough to address each other as confidants, having spent a significant amount of time together and assessed his character, I deem him a virtuous person. However, I am undecided whether to assist him or not. Conversely, Philastre, despite his brief stay, seized the opportunity to make significant contributions, thereby earning a laudable reputation as a notable figure of the two countries. Even if he had stayed in various locations for an extended period, he might not have accomplished anything worthwhile that could have endured. If he were to spurn my assistance and continue to act aggressively, he would not be viewed as a gentleman, but rather as a confidant betrayer. This would be a matter of great import. Hence, I will communicate my thoughts to him"*³¹. In September 1881, the Nguyen court received an announcement from Rheinart, who had arrived just a month prior and was regarded by the court as a "gentleman", revealing France's intent to safeguard the entirety of Vietnam. The Nguyen court understood Rheinart's intention and recorded: *"If our country has a problem, that country must help us, although they did not clearly say that they would protect us, the meaning is implied. If we do not listen to them,*

²⁹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXXV, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.44.

³⁰ Rheinart was the first French Consul-General in Hanoi, assuming office after the signing of the 1874 treaty. (Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia National Archives centre N1: <https://www.archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiep-vu/khu-nhuong-dia-o-ha-noi-thoi-phap-thuoc.htm#:~:text=Rheinart%20l%C3%A0%20vi%C3%AAn%20C%C3%B4ng%20s%E1%BB%A9,sau%20ng%C3%A0y%20k%C3%BD%20hi%E1%BB%87p%20C6%B0%E1%BB%9Bc>. (accessed on September 20, 2023).

³¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXXV, *op.cit.*, p.48.

we must still try to achieve our goals. The court is very worried"³². Tu Duc engaged in discussions with court officials and deliberated on the possibility of sending a delegation to France or forging alliances with several influential Western nations, including England, Italy, and Prussia, via the Chinese route. However, the plan was not executed as planned. *"The king cited the ongoing flooding and the need to wait for Thanh Y's return to confirm before considering departure. In November of the same year, the court deliberated once more about sending an envoy to France, but it remained inconclusive due to unresolved matters"*³³.

During this period, France intensified its pressure on Hue, as evidenced by Rheinart's confrontational approach. Rheinart was acutely aware of the advance of Liu Yongfu's army towards the imperial court and their blockade of the Red River trade route, which further fueled the ire of the French colonialists. Prior to this, Liu Yongfu's army had achieved notable victories against France and rebellions, making the French army both fearful and indignant. They repeatedly lodged complaints with the Hue court about Liu Yongfu's disruption of the Red River trade, citing this as a pretext for intervention and invasion. Despite the Hue court's deliberation on how to utilize Liu Yongfu's army, they held him in high regard. In the preceding month, in September 1881, the French colonialists had already instigated a provocation against Liu Yongfu's army at the Lung Lo station on the Red River, only to withdraw thereafter. The French consul had blamed Vietnam on that occasion. *"The king sends the provincial officials of Hanoi and Haiduong to explain this matter to them, and they must listen"*³⁴. Of course, France continued to exert stronger pressure. In November 1881, France once again demanded that the court of Hue expel the troops of Liu Yongfu, stating that if this was not done *"by January 1st of the following year, there would be consequences"*³⁵. This pretext merely provided a convenient rationale for the French colonialists to launch their second invasion of Tonkin, which was, in fact, premeditated. The driving force behind this invasion plan was the French Navy Minister, Admiral Jaurégniberry³⁶, who had previously participated in the

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*, p.59.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p.66.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p.79.

³⁶ At that time, under the authority of Gambetta, the Protectorates were under the Navy Ministry, and they were later separated and placed under the Ministry of Commerce, called the Ministry of Commerce and Protectorates. The Minister was Rouvier, and his deputy was Félix Faure (See Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*,

invasion of Vietnam in the Son Tra and Saigon peninsula in 1858-1860. As early as October 1st, 1879, Jaurégniberry had proposed an action plan to dispatch a formidable expeditionary force comprising 16,000 soldiers and 12 warships to Vietnam to safeguard France's interests. However, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, William Waddington³⁷, had not responded to Jaurégniberry's letter at the time, owing to his concerns about European and foreign affairs. Subsequently, in April 1880, Jaurégniberry once again requested funding to control the northern river ports of Vietnam. Although this proposal was endorsed by the Prime Minister of the Interior, Charles de Sauloss de Freycinet³⁸, who also harbored the same intention of occupying the Red River region, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hesitated due to concerns in Egypt and Tunisia. Nevertheless, the colonialists eventually settled on a moderate intervention to invade northern Vietnam.

In July 1881, the French Parliament sanctioned a budget of 2,487,851 francs as per the recommendations made by the Ministry of Navy and Foreign Affairs. In the ensuing autumn, Cloué, who succeeded Jaurégniberry, and Governor of Cochinchina Le Mye de Vilers³⁹, who was on leave in France at that time, jointly decided to adopt a policy of minimal intervention in Tonkin. In December 1881, upon his return to Saigon, Governor Le Mye de Vilers submitted a plan to the Ministry to peacefully resolve the Tonkin issue.

p.476). He held the position of Minister from January 30, 1882, to January 29, 1883. (Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia I – National Archive center N1: https://archives.org.vn/cuoc-tan-cong-thanh-ha-noi-lan-ii-nam-1882-%E2%80%9393-khuc-dao-dau.htm#_ftnref1). (accessed on May 20, 2023).

³⁷ William Henry Waddington (1826 - 1894) was a prominent French politician of the 19th century. Born to affluent British industrialist parents, he enjoyed a privileged upbringing. Both of his parents had acquired French citizenship through naturalization. Waddington's political career reached its apex when he assumed the role of Prime Minister in 1879. Additionally, he served as the French ambassador to London, a position of significant diplomatic influence. (according to P. R. Marshall. *William Henry Waddington: The Making of a Diplomat*, Historian 38.1, University of Cambridge, 1975, p.79–97).

³⁸ Charles Louis de Saulces de Freycinet (1828 – 1923) was a French statesman and four times Prime Minister during the Third Republic. He also served an important term as Minister of War (1888–1893). He belonged to the Moderate Republicans faction. (H. Chisholm, "Freycinet, Charles Louis de Saulces de". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 11, Cambridge University Press, 1911, p.211).

³⁹ Charles Le Myre de Vilers was born on February 17, 1833, in Vendôme Loire-et-Cher (France) and passed away on March 9, 1918, in Paris. He was a French politician and diplomat who served as the first civilian Governor of Cochinchina from May 13, 1879, to November 1882. He also served as the Consul General to Central China during his career. (Trung tâm Lưu trữ Quốc gia I – National Archive center N1: https://archives.org.vn/cuoc-tan-cong-thanh-ha-noi-lan-ii-nam-1882-%E2%80%9393-khuc-dao-dau.htm#_ftnref1). (accessed on May 20, 2023).

However, the Gambetta⁴⁰ Cabinet was hesitant due to various reasons, particularly the ongoing conflicts with Britain and Egypt. Gambetta announced the postponement of Le Myre de Vilers' plan to send troops to Tonkin. Vilers insisted, "*The fruit is ripe. It's time to pick it. If we don't, others will pick it or it will wither away... We must occupy a base in Hanoi, seize control of the city and its suburbs...*"⁴¹ As Minister of the Navy in the second Freycinet Cabinet, Admiral Jaurégniberry approved the plan of the Cochinchina Governor on March 4, 1882, although he still believed that the plan was inadequate⁴². However, in order to carry out this intention, France knew that they needed a "pretext", and this was revealed by a colonial official in Cochinchina named Paul Vial: "*When it comes to finding pretexts, we never lack them*"⁴³.

During the initial assault, France invoked the pretext of "*resolving the Jean Dupuis smuggling incident in Hanoi*" while in the subsequent invasion, France relied on Articles 2 and 3 of the 1874 Treaty. These articles established that "*the King of Annam held complete and independent sovereignty over all foreign powers*" and "*had a foreign policy that was in alignment with France's policy*". Additionally, the treaty obligated France to assist the dynasty in maintaining order and peace, eradicating any enemies, specifically the Black Flag forces in upper and middle Tonkin that had attacked two French ships near Lao Cai in 1881.

On March 13, 1882, Governor of Cochinchina Vilers sent a letter to Emperor Tu Duc protesting against the Black Flag forces and added: "*The leader of the Chinese bandit group, Liu Yongfu, prevented Mr. Champeaux, the consul of Haiphong, and Mr. Fuchs, the chief mining engineer, from continuing their journey and even threatened them...I am sorry that I have to resort to preventive measures to protect the safety of our compatriots*"⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ Léon Gambetta (1838-1882) served as the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic for two years from 1881 to 1882. (Tuoitronline: <https://tuoitre.vn/tuong-dai-sai-gon-xua-co-so-phan-bi-hai-nhat-1188766.htm>). (Accessed on September 21, 2023).

⁴¹ G. Taboulet, t. 2, 1956, *op.cit*, p.763.

⁴² N. Cooper, *France in Indochina, Colonial Encounters*. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2001, p.30-31.

⁴³ G. Taboulet, t. 2, 1956, *op.cit*, p.768.

⁴⁴ "*Le chef du groupe de bandits chinois, Liu Yongfu, a empêché M. Champeaux, le consul de Haiphong, et M. Fuchs, l'ingénieur en chef des mines, de poursuivre leur voyage et les a même menacés... Je suis désolé de devoir recourir à des mesures préventives pour protéger la sécurité de nos compatriotes*". (*Ibidem*, p.766).

On January 17, 1882, Governor of Cochinchina Le Myre de Vilers decided to double the number of stationed troops at the Northern Vietnamese trade missions and designated Henri Laurent Rivière⁴⁵ to carry out this action. Vilers chose Navy Brigadier General Henri Rivière to lead an expeditionary force of 230 people (two infantry companies, 20 naval artillery, 15 colonial troops) to Hanoi, leaving Saigon on March 26, 1882, with a commitment: *"If you need additional forces, you just request it, and I will respond immediately"*⁴⁶.

Rivière's troops arrived in Hai Phong on April 1, then transferred to small gunboats up the Red River and arrived in Hanoi on April 3, 1882. According to Vilers' instructions to H. Rivière from January 17, 1882, the objective of this expedition was still limited. A section of the instructions read: *"I trust in your patriotism and wisdom to avoid leading the French government down a path it does not wish to follow... My entire line of thought can be summed up in the following sentence: Avoid firing shots, those shots will not benefit you in any way, but only create confusion for you"*⁴⁷.

As for the imperial court of Hue, they also immediately saw the ambition of French colonialists. According to the Nguyen Dynasty historical records, in February 1882, *"French generals sent warships to Tonkin, claiming that it was to chase the army of Liu Yongfu and protect trade. Nguyen Lap secretly reported this to the king. The king believed that the French envoy wanted to take Tonkin, and only borrowed the pretext of chasing Liu Yongfu's army. The deeper intention could not be foreseen, so we must be prepared in advance. The king ordered that Nguyen Lap's secret letter be distributed to all provinces"*⁴⁸. The crux of the matter is how to prepare for the most severe scenario, but it is crucial to take into account France's invasion plans. The discourse often revolves around two distinct invasion strategies employed by French colonialists. However, there were

⁴⁵ Henri Laurent Rivière was born in 1827 and served the French colonialism to suppress rebellions in many places around the world. He was awarded the rank of Navy Lieutenant Colonel in 1856, Navy Colonel in 1880, and became the Commander of the Navy in Saigon on November 19, 1881. (Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.477).

⁴⁶ P. Vial, *Nos premières années au Tonkin*, Challamel, Paris 1889, p.127.

⁴⁷ *"Je fais confiance à votre patriotisme et à votre sagesse pour éviter de conduire le gouvernement français sur une voie qu'il ne souhaite pas emprunter... Toute ma ligne de pensée peut se résumer dans la phrase suivante : Évitez de tirer des coups de feu, ces coups de feu ne vous bénéficieront en rien, mais ne feront que vous plonger dans la confusion"*. (G. Taboulet, t. 2, 1956, *op.cit.*, p.768).

⁴⁸ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol XXXV, 1976, *op.cit*, p.98.

actually two different approaches to the invasion war, advocated by the two main representatives, Navy Minister Jaurégniberry and Governor of Cochinchina Le Myre de Vilers. While Jaurégniberry favored a robust military approach to thoroughly invade the region, Vilers sought to establish a protectorate in a gradual "spreading oil stain" style. Both approaches were informed by divergent analyses, interpretations of the local and regional situation, as well as personal inclinations. Nonetheless, these differences did not hold much significance in light of H. Rivière's aggressive actions. At the Hue court, the king's officials prepared: "What needs to be done cleverly, should not be done with achievements ... Appoint Governor Hoang Ta Viem, Truong Quang Dan, Nguyen Huu Do⁴⁹ to deal with Liu Yongfu's army ... At that time, when the French warships arrived in Hanoi, people's hearts were horrified. The king only instructed: *"If they only protect trade, treat them carefully, do not provoke them first, or if they want to avenge the Liu's army, the Governor should keep them away. If they rely on their strength to fight in the mountains, then do whatever makes sense. I advise you to be fair and not biased towards anyone, and if possible, stay out of trouble. If there is no other way but to use the military to transport goods, then do it immediately, don't delay even a little bit"*. Subsequently, a court emissary by the name of Nguyen Thanh Y⁵⁰ was dispatched to Gia Dinh with the purpose of presenting a comprehensive account of Liu's army, the advantages of Tonkin, and engaging in dialogue with the French military commanders. During his discussions, he conveyed the following statements: *"If you are a noble person, you must eliminate chaos, solve problems, and fulfill the expectations of the court ... How can you turn a*

⁴⁹ Nguyen Huu Do (1833-1888), originally from Thanh Hoa Province, was a high-ranking official in the Nguyen Dynasty. Contemporary public opinion believed that Nguyen Huu Do had close and secretive connections with the French, especially with Palasme de Champeaux, making his words more influential with the French than others. He played an active role in helping the French bring Dong Khanh to the throne. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *Từ điển nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam* (Dictionary of Vietnamese historical figures), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, p.487).

⁵⁰ Nguyen Thanh Y (1820-1897) was a high-ranking official in the Nguyen Dynasty. He is considered the first diplomatic representative of Dai Nam (1874-1883) in Cochinchina under French rule, and one of the prominent officials who supported modernization efforts in the country during the mid-19th century. (Đà Nẵng online: <https://baodanang.vn/channel/5433/201011/chuyen-xua-xu-quang-vi-lanh-su-dau-tien-trong-lich-su-ngoai-giao-2015262/>, accessed on September 25, 2023).

blind eye to being a hostage, sacrificing yourself for the court? One should strive to fulfill the king's wishes"⁵¹.

The evident preparations and consistent mindset of King Tu Duc serve to highlight a significant reality: the officials and monarch of my dynasty in Hue were entirely passive, lacking in both the capability and spirit required to organize a worthy confrontation. In essence, the Nguyen dynasty promptly entertained the idea of negotiating with the enemy in Gia Dinh. Nguyen Thanh Y was dispatched to Gia Dinh with a status that Tu Duc described as "delivering a hostage, sacrificing for the court". Simultaneously, H. Rivière was stationed before the Hanoi fortress.

4.1.2 The second time the French army captured Hanoi city.

Following the events of 1873, Hanoi underwent extensive renovation efforts. The city walls were heightened by 1.5 to 1.9 meters and thickened by 60 to 80 cm, while the gates were reconstructed using ironwood and fortified with earth bags. A variety of artillery, including stone-throwing guns, thunderbolt guns, and other types of firearms, were strategically stationed both within the city and atop its walls. The number of troops garrisoned in Hanoi was bolstered to 5,000 individuals, though certain sources indicate this figure to be closer to 2,000. Notably, Governor Hoang Dieu⁵² drew upon the lessons of the previous decade's unsuccessful conflict to not only concentrate a significant number of officials and soldiers within the city but also to station additional forces outside its borders in support of potential counterattacks⁵³. Furthermore, the leadership of Tonkin, including Governor Hoang Dieu and his court officials, formulated a defense strategy that relied upon the formidable terrain of the mountainous forests to safeguard the central

⁵¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, Vol XXXV, 1976, *op.cit*, p.98-101.

⁵² Hoang Dieu (1829-1882) was a high-ranking official in the Nguyen dynasty of Vietnam. He was born in Thanh Hoa province and served as the governor of Hà Nội during the reign of Emperor Tu Duc. In 1882, when the French colonial forces attacked and occupied Hà Nội, Hoang Dieu led a resistance movement to defend the city. Despite being vastly outnumbered and outgunned, Hoang Dieu and his soldiers fought fiercely for several days until they were ultimately defeated. Rather than surrendering to the French, Hoang Dieu chose to take his own life by swallowing poison, becoming a symbol of resistance and patriotism in Vietnamese history. (According to Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Times Publishing House, 2010, p.310).

⁵³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1998, p.292, Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược...*, *op.cit*, p.306.

region of the nation. Specifically, they petitioned for the mobilization of troops under the command of Hoang Ta Viem, who would establish a defensive position in Son Tay. Viem further advocated against stationing troops within the city itself, instead advocating for flexible migration as dictated by the evolving circumstances. In conjunction with a direct appeal to the monarch for reinforcement, Hoang Dieu undertook an urgent mission to adjacent provinces, imploring local officials to present their own requests to the royal court for additional soldiers and armaments to defend Hanoi.

According to the history of the Nguyen Dynasty: *"The provincial officials of Hanoi and Son Tay, including Hoang Dieu, Nguyen Dinh Nhuan, and Hoang Huu Xung, secretly made backup plans, saying that the situation in Tonkin, from Ninh Binh to My Duc, Son, Hung, and the neighboring provinces of Bac Ninh, Thai Nguyen, and Dong Trieu in Hai Duong Province, all had weak and dangerous mountainous terrain, which could be defended. We should focus on strategic locations and rely on the strength of the upper forests and mountains to defend the central region. They could only be stationed by the river and not in the mountains, as it would be difficult without taking any action.*

*They also requested that Governor Hoang Ta Viem be assigned to settle in Son Tay county and establish a garrison to ensure internal security. All defense work should be done by officials from various provinces and the mountainous department"*⁵⁴. Nevertheless, the defense strategy proposed by the Tonkin court officials failed to gain acceptance. The court in Hue displayed passivity and was unable to orchestrate a resistance battle as recommended. Despite their patriotic aspirations and eagerness to participate in the conflict, the Hue court sought to negotiate and reconcile with the French. Following the submission of the report, Tu Duc rebuked Viem, accusing him of being "confused" and admonishing him to "remain silent" to hasten the French departure by allowing them to reconsider their actions⁵⁵.

Upon Henri Laurent Rivière's arrival in Hanoi, he immediately ordered his troops to station at Don Thuy and visited Governor Hoang Dieu on April 4th. While the French army continued to pour into Hanoi, Governor Hoang Dieu hesitated to respond firmly, as he had not received orders from the court, despite France's clear violation of the Treaty

⁵⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VIII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.513.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p.514.

of 1874⁵⁶. Urgently, Governor Hoang Dieu ordered the localities to request additional troops from the court, and Hoang Ta Viem in Son Tay requested the mobilization of troops to concentrate in the central region in anticipation of a prompt response. However, Emperor Tu Duc twice rejected their requests, still insisting on negotiating with France. Meanwhile, Henri Laurent Rivière increasingly revealed his ambitions to invade, while claiming that the French troops were present only to "chase Liu Yongfu and protect trade" and that his mission was "peaceful and friendly". French soldiers carried weapons and roamed outside the city walls, spreading rumors that the troops would enter and occupy the city. Recognizing the strength of Hanoi's defenses, Henri Laurent Rivière boldly demanded that Governor Hoang Dieu withdraw his troops completely from the city and destroy the fortifications on the city walls. He argued that the defensive position of the court's army in Tonkin was undoubtedly hostile and provocative towards the French army⁵⁷.

In the epistolary communication directed towards Jaurégniberry, who served as Minister of the Navy during that temporal epoch, Henri Laurent Rivière attested to the aforementioned strategy: *"While I agree that it is necessary to gradually and calculatively occupy the North Delta, I still believe it is very dangerous if Hanoi remains in the hands of the Annamese. In their hands, it is a spiritual and material power, and someday we will have to count on it. If we take the city, we do not need to keep it, nor do we need to stay inside. We will defend outside our border relying on the river, which is easier to transport than this cumbersome machine (1,200 meters per side). Just render the fortress useless by breaking the doors, destroying and throwing the guns into the lake, and break-*

⁵⁶ The unexpected presence of Rivière in Hanoi on April 3, 1882, with a contingent of two battalions. The total number of French troops stationed outside Hanoi at this time was 600 infantry, including 450 marine infantry, 130 sailors, and 20 indigenous soldiers, while the 1874 Treaty only recognized France's right to a maximum of 100 soldiers. (Cao Huy Thuan, translated by Nguyen Thuan, *Giáo sĩ thừa sai và chính sách thuộc địa của Pháp tại Việt Nam (1857 – 1914) Les missionnaires et la politique coloniale française au Viet Nam (1857 - 1914)*, Hong Duc Publishing House, 2016, p.276 and A. Rambaud, *La France Coloniale*. Paris: Armand Colin et Cie, 1888, p.424).

⁵⁷ On April 25th, Rivière declared that he was "threatened by the belligerent preparations" of Vietnam. (Cao Huy Thuan, translated by Nguyen Thuan, *Giáo sĩ thừa sai và chính sách thuộc địa của Pháp tại Việt Nam (1857 – 1914)*..., *op.cit*, p.276 and P. Antonini, *L'Annam, le Tonkin et l'Intervention de la France en Extrême Orient*. Paris: Librairie Bloud et Barral, 1890, p.271).

ing through two or three places in the wall. We will dominate the whole province militarily. Then we will take Son Tay, Nam Dinh, Bac Ninh, and easily control a large area along the Red River. The benefits are great and cost us almost nothing"⁵⁸.

During the initial half of April in 1882, Henri Laurent Rivière undertook swift measures, including augmenting his military personnel, organizing armaments, and reaching out to conservative factions in Northern Vietnam. Specifically, on April 10th, Rivière communicated with Le Myre de Vilers in Saigon, urgently requesting the dispatch of an additional 100,000 rounds of ammunition and 150 pounds of explosives⁵⁹. Additionally, Rivière centralized the weaponry and ammunition of the French naval division, composed of seven warships and two steamships stationed in Haiphong, and deployed multiple battalions of troops from Haiphong⁶⁰. Furthermore, he commissioned a naval vessel to journey to Phat Diem (Ninh Binh) to liaise with covert French operatives posing as clergymen.

As of April 24th, 1882, the French military presence encamped in front of Hanoi consisted of a trio of warships and a complement of 600 soldiers⁶¹. In the early morning of April 25th, 1882, H. Rivière sent a final ultimatum to Governor Hoang Dieu, At dawn on April 25th, Henri Laurent Rivière issued a final ultimatum to Governor Hoang Dieu, stipulating that the royal army relinquish their weaponry, vacate the city, unseal the citadel gates, and surrender control of the fortress to French command within a three-hour

⁵⁸ *"Je suis d'accord qu'il est nécessaire d'occuper graduellement et calculativement le Delta du Nord, mais je crois toujours que c'est très dangereux si Hanoi reste entre les mains des Annamites. Entre leurs mains, c'est un pouvoir spirituel et matériel, et un jour nous devrons compter sur lui. Si nous prenons la ville, nous n'avons pas besoin de la garder, ni de rester à l'intérieur. Nous défendrons à l'extérieur de nos frontières en nous appuyant sur la rivière, qui est plus facile à transporter que cette machine encombrante (1 200 mètres de côté). Il suffit de rendre la forteresse inutile en brisant les portes, en détruisant et en jetant les canons dans le lac, et en perçant deux ou trois endroits dans le mur. Nous dominerons toute la province sur le plan militaire. Ensuite, nous prendrons Son Tay, Nam Dinh, Bac Ninh, et contrôlerons facilement une grande partie de la région le long du fleuve Rouge. Les avantages sont grands et ne nous coûtent presque rien".* (Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 2, 1959, *op.cit.*, p.52).

⁵⁹ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit.*, p.483.

⁶⁰ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884* (Vietnam in the 19th century (1802-1884)), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 1999, p.328.

⁶¹ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit.*, p.484.

window⁶². To ensure the enforcement of these conditions, Hoang Dieu and Hanoi's civil and military functionaries were required to present themselves to the French at precisely eight o'clock in the morning. This demand, perceived as ignominious, failed to elicit a response from Governor Hoang Dieu, as documented by various French and Vietnamese scholars.

As the ultimatum's time limit lapsed, the French unleashed their artillery. Between the hours of 8 am and 10:30 am on April 25th, the warships of the French fleet bombarded Hanoi from the river's exterior and breached the North Gate while their infantry assaulted the city walls. From the outset, they confronted the resolute resistance of Hanoi's populace and military personnel. *"The primary objective of the adversary was the North Gate, as well as the West and Northeast's gun placements and fortifications, all the while feigning an assault on the East Gate to fragment our own military forces. Internally, our troops engaged the enemy in combat, while the citizenry ignited thatched and wooden dwellings, generating a fiery barrier impeding the adversary's progression and compelling their repeated withdrawal. Subsequently, by 10:30 am, the fiery barrier was quenched, and the enemy navigated the inundated trenches. Governor Hoang Dieu and Prime Minister Hoang Huu Xung independently undertook leadership roles in the counteroffensive"*⁶³.

Upon the commencement of the French colonizers' gunfire, Hoang Dieu expeditiously assumed command of the battle by guiding the generals towards the fortress. Regrettably, during the tumultuous fray, the gunpowder within the stronghold detonated, creating a resounding echo in the heavens. The precise cause of this event was uncertain, whether a consequence of the adversary's artillery or saboteurs who infiltrated the fortress to ignite it, leading to the soldiers' morale faltering and confusion ensuing. The French military capitalized on the resulting turmoil within the fortress by initiating an all-out offensive on the West and North gates. *"Using 40 ladders from the North gate, the adversary ascended the fortress, successfully penetrating its defenses. However, the North gate's obstructions, comprising numerous earthen walls, impeded the enemy's progress, necessitating their extensive utilization of gunpowder to breach the barriers"*⁶⁴.

As the fortress defenders engaged the foe, the populace of Hanoi assembled into armed groups and rushed to the city gates to support the officials in their resistance. In a

⁶² P. Antonini, *op.cit.*, p.271.

⁶³ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, vol 2, 1959, *op.cit.*, p.53.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*

collective show of solidarity and determination, families resorted to playing traditional musical instruments such as drums, gongs, and bells to boost morale. Regrettably, the gunpowder stores in the fortress detonated, causing the imperial army to disintegrate before reinforcements could arrive. Upon witnessing the fortress gate being breached and the soldiers losing their resolve to continue fighting, Governor Hoang Dieu returned to his palace, donning his court attire, and proceeded Palace to express his regret to the court⁶⁵ before finally hanging himself in Vo Mieu garden. Other officials took different courses of action: some fled, some were captured by the enemy, while some perished⁶⁶.

In the aftermath of the seizure of Hanoi, Rivière directed his forces to dismantle the city gates, gun emplacements, and fortresses, and to discard weapons and ammunition into the moat. Additionally, he authorized the apprehension of Ton That Ba, the commander responsible for the defense of the city with a contingent of 200 soldiers⁶⁷. Rivière established his command post in the Royal step-over place⁶⁸ and fortified the concession area on the riverbank to forestall any potential attack by Vietnamese troops. He also asserted control over the principal economic centers of Hanoi and Haiphong, allowing for the collection of taxes and seizure of substantial sums of money.

During that period, the French colonial policy was aimed at coercing Emperor Tu Duc to sign a treaty within a limited timeframe of three days. The treaty would recognize France's right to deploy 600 troops in Hanoi, permit unrestricted movement of French warships, and grant France exclusive trade privileges⁶⁹. The French authorities deemed *"this to be sufficient to establish their complete dominance over Vietnam, at least in the*

⁶⁵ He bit his finger to draw blood and wrote a confession for King Tu Duc: *"The city is lost and cannot be saved, it is a shame for the people of the North who contributed to its construction. As for my own death, it does not matter. I wish to follow Nguyen Tri Phuong to the ground. The king's army marches a thousand miles, with blood and tears flowing in parallel"*. (Pham Van Son, 1961, *op.cit*, p.658).

⁶⁶ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VIII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.518.

⁶⁷ During the siege of Hanoi in 1882, Provincial judge Ton That Ba was known as one of the officials who swore an oath with Governor Hoang Dieu to defend the city, but abandoned the city and fled to Nhan Muc village in Ha Dong province. After the battle, he was invited by the French to surrender the province. (Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), Youth Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2001, p.520).

⁶⁸ P. Vial. *Nos Premières Années au Tonkin...*, *op.cit*, p.99.

⁶⁹ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 2, 1959, *op.cit*, p.54-55.

North. Notably, although the initial orders were to only use force as a last resort”⁷⁰. Rivière's actions were condoned by the Governor of Cochinchina, and Rivière was even decorated with a medal in recognition of his accomplishments⁷¹.

4.1.3 *The response of the Nguyen Dynasty and the attitude of France following the conquest of Hanoi*

Upon receiving news of Hanoi's conquest by H. Rivière's forces, the French colonial authorities in both Saigon and France expressed their elation. However, this triumph failed to satisfy all colonial powers as they apprehended potential complications should the court call for a general uprising of the populace against the invaders, or if the Qing (China) troops intervened at the request of the Nguyen Dynasty. These complications would only add to the already existing difficulties of budget and military forces faced by the colonial powers, causing them to hesitate in engaging in a prolonged and costly guerilla war that could not ensure victory. In Saigon, Le Myre de Vilers advised H. Rivière to exercise caution while awaiting reinforcements, and to initiate negotiations with the Hue court to restore Hanoi to Vietnamese authorities under specific conditions. These conditions included securing control over trade and security, setting up a post on the Red River, eliminating the Black Flag army, opening a port in Nam Dinh, and connecting the telegraph line between Hanoi and Haiphong⁷².

Simultaneously, the bellicose colonial faction in France employed various tactics to garner public support, petition the French National Assembly and Government for increased financial aid and military reinforcements to be deployed to the Tonkin battlefield. Additionally, they resorted to diplomatic channels to assuage the Qing dynasty and prevent any interference in Tonkin affairs⁷³.

Regarding the Hue court's response, upon learning of the French occupation of Hanoi, the king and his officials were stricken with fear and bewilderment, unable to devise a viable solution to the situation. Subsequently, a French warship arrived from the north, offering to restore the city to Vietnamese authorities. Believing the situation to be similar to that of 1874, King Tu Duc hastily dispatched Tran Dinh Tuc and Nguyen Huu Do to

⁷⁰ P. Antonini, *op.cit*, p.269.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p.271.

⁷² A. Masson, *Correspondance politique du Commandant Henri Rivière au Tonkin*, Paris et Hanoi, 1933, p.131-132.

⁷³ Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)...*, *op.cit*, p.356-357.

negotiate with the French and reclaim the city. Upon their arrival in Hanoi, the court officials were able to directly engage with the enemy and gain a clear understanding of their intentions. Additionally, they witnessed the burgeoning patriotic spirit of the populace in Tonkin against the French. Consequently, they were faced with a decision between mobilizing the entire country to resist the invaders or sending envoys to negotiate with the French in Saigon.

As for the officials of the imperial court in Tonkin, upon realizing the plot and actions of the French colonizers after the fall of Hanoi, "*Governor Hoang Ta Viem, Viceroy Nguyen Chinh, and Bui An Nien presented a request for a massive attack*"⁷⁴ and the court officials also "*requested the entire country to launch an attack*"⁷⁵.

Nonetheless, Tu Duc persisted in his refusal to authorize an attack and even castigated the court officials, alleging that: "*You want to advance the troops, not only obstructing the situation but also blaming the court for it*"⁷⁶. Concurrently, Tu Duc remained steadfast in advocating for negotiations with the French in Hanoi, despite being in a comparatively disadvantaged position.

In order to promptly accede to France's requests, Tu Duc issued a command to Hoang Ta Viem to swiftly expel Liu Yongfu's forces and disband the valiant soldiers from numerous provinces: "*At present, the governor must adhere to the prescribed guidelines and dispatch Liu Yongfu's troops to Thai Nguyen to preclude any pretext for reproach from the foreign country. Furthermore, all court and district officials shall conform to the plan to satisfy the populace*"⁷⁷.

Evidently, the prevailing stance of the court at this juncture was to placate France at all costs, as manifested by its directives for negotiators to initiate discussions in Hanoi and its acquiescence to unimpeded French naval inspections and searches of numerous locations. In Hue, the court, in essence, conceded to the French envoy the necessity of appending an addendum to the 1874 treaty that would officially incorporate the term "Protectorate".

⁷⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VIII, 2006, *op.cit*, p.519.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p.520.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

During this period of extreme compromise by the court, some officials, both in Tonkin and the Hue court, refused to submit and demanded to fight against France. Despite the court's order to lead Liu Yongfu's troops upstream, Hoang Ta Viem stationed his army in Son Tay and prepared to resist France, taking advantage of the terrain. The Governor and the Commander of Hai Duong also submitted a letter requesting a decisive battle against the French colonialists. Meanwhile, the people of Hanoi and other areas unanimously agreed to fight, and the people around Hanoi refused to sell food to French soldiers. Brave civilian teams were formed in all provinces, disregarding the court's order to disband and automatically barricading villages and blocking traffic lines. This situation made the enemy very frightened⁷⁸. At the same time, the two large armies of Hoang Ta Viem and Truong Quang Dan were firmly stationed in Son Tay and Bac Ninh, forming two large clamps to tighten the encirclement around Hanoi, making it possible to quickly eliminate the entire French army stationed in Hanoi. However, the court always hesitated and clung to the "peaceful negotiation" card, so it tried every way to obstruct and limit the civilian teams and the regular army's operations. Despite this, the trend among some officials and the people was to resist France at any cost.

Following the fall of Hanoi in 1882, there was a noticeable shift within the Hue court towards seeking support from the Qing dynasty of China. The court dispatched a letter to the Governor of Guangdong, seeking assistance in addressing the situation in Tonkin. Recognizing the court's intentions, French colonists ramped up their diplomatic efforts with the Qing court, while also endeavoring to prevent the court of Hue's envoys from reaching Beijing. Furthermore, they applied pressure to coerce the Hue court into signing a new treaty confirming France's protectorate. Despite these developments, the French authorities in Cochinchina and France proper remained committed to occupying all of Tonkin. They continued to prepare strong military forces to guard against possible Qing intervention and suppress Vietnamese uprisings against foreign aggression.

In light of the French plan to occupy Tonkin and its potential threat to the southern and central border regions of China, as well as the potential loss of Annam as a "vassal state", the Qing dynasty responded by sending troops to invade Tonkin from the fall of 1882. These troops were stationed at various points along a line stretching from Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, Hung Hoa to Cao Bang, Lang Son, and then down to Bac Ninh. Meanwhile, negotiations between the French and Qing sides were taking place intensively

⁷⁸ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), *op.cit.*, p.217.

in Paris and Tianjin. Ultimately, a compromise was reached in which Tonkin would be split in half⁷⁹, on the condition that Qing troops would withdraw and France would not increase its troop presence. However, once the Qing troops withdrew, French colonists, driven by their policy of expanding overseas territories, quickly dispatched more troops from Saigon to Hanoi, thereby revealing their ambition to monopolize all of Tonkin. This was confirmed by French documents: "*The goal of France in opening the Red River is not only to exploit resources in Northern Vietnam, but also to penetrate Southern China*"⁸⁰. French Prime Minister Gambetta also emphasized, "*Tonkin is the real future of France*"⁸¹. Therefore, France would never allow the Qing dynasty, along with other Western powers such as Britain, Germany, and the United States, to share the "fat piece of cake" from the Tonkin market.

The military actions of France in Tonkin engendered a growing proclivity towards seeking support from the Qing dynasty within the internal court of Hue. To counteract this trend, France obstructed the delegations of the court from proceeding to Beijing and exerted pressure on the court to ratify a new treaty, while concurrently fortifying its military presence in Tonkin to prepare for eventualities. Beginning in the autumn of 1882, the Qing dynasty dispatched troops to invade Tonkin, deploying them intermittently along a line spanning Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, Hung Hoa, Cao Bang, Lang Son, and Bac Ninh. Meanwhile, the French government engaged in negotiations with Beijing, conducting discussions both in Tianjin and Paris. Subsequently, France and the Qing dynasty arrived at a mutually acceptable agreement to partition the territory of Tonkin, stipulating that the Qing dynasty's troops were to withdraw to their country, while France would refrain from augmenting its troop numbers⁸². Nonetheless, soon after the Qing troops

⁷⁹ On December 20th, 1882, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Beijing, Bourée, presented the fundamental provisions of a treaty to Governor Li Hongzhang, acting on behalf of the Qing dynasty, for the partitioning of Tonkin between France and China, using the Red River as the dividing line. (according to Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 – 1896* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896), ed. Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Manh Dung and Le Thi Thu Hang, vol 6, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2017, p.197).

⁸⁰ Nguyen Khanh Toan, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 đến 1945* (Vietnamese History from 1858 to 1945), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2004, p.82.

⁸¹ G. Taboulet, t. 2, 1956, *op.cit.*, p.757.

⁸² In the autumn of 1882, as the Qing troops entered Vietnam, the negotiating delegations from Beijing and Paris convened. By the end of that year, Li Hongzhang, representing the Manchu court, and Bourré, the

withdrew, France dispatched additional forces from Saigon to the north and promptly seized strategic objectives, including Hong Gai (March 1883), Quang Yen, and Nam Dinh (27 March). French documents corroborated the French government's aspiration to monopolize the entirety of Tonkin.

The French colonial aggression towards Vietnam elicited varied reactions within the Hue court. While Tu Duc and some officials preferred to negotiate, others took a hawkish stance and advocated for war. Regrettably, this attitude only emboldened the unbridled avarice of the French. Beginning in March 1883, they further expanded their occupation of many provinces and cities in the North, taking Nam Dinh and marking a new stage in their invasion of Tonkin and Central Vietnam (Annam). With the capture of Nam Dinh, the French obtained control over the entire Red River Delta and established communication with Saigon.

Subsequently, the French set up a commercial agency and took over the opium trade and gambling houses previously auctioned to private individuals by the court. Moreover, invoking the names of deceased fathers, they established sham armies and fabricated officials to serve their interests in the upcoming war. News of these events reached Paris, where the war-loving colonial faction became excited, lauding the conquest of Nam Dinh, criticizing Saigon for acting too soon, and demanding that Rivière halt at Nam Dinh to wait for reinforcements⁸³. Perceiving the Vietnamese's mistrust, Rivière left the embassy in Hue for Saigon on March 30, 1883, while the French fleet in the East Sea was instructed to move to Ha Long Bay, prepared to respond to any eventuality.

4.2 Diplomatic Responses of the Vietnamese Feudal Government to French Colonial Advancements

Minister and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of France in Beijing, reached an agreement to partition the Vietnamese sphere of influence. On December 20, 1882, a framework for the Sino-French Treaty was proposed, under which Tonkin would be divided along the Red River, with the northern half under Qing Empire control and the southern half under French control. Nevertheless, this plan faced vehement opposition from the colonial authorities in Hue, Hanoi, and Saigon, and was ultimately never implemented. (Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.146).

⁸³ C. B. de Maurceley, *Le Commandant Rivière et l'expédition du Tonkin*, Paris: Michaud, 1884, p.137.

4.2.1 The Thuan An Incident: French Military Action and the Diplomatic Implications in the Harmand Treaty of 1883

The demise of the French enemy's Prime Minister, H. Rivière⁸⁴, in combat had a galvanizing effect on the Vietnamese people. Despite preparations by the French army to launch a significant military offensive to quash the resistance of the Hue court, Emperor Tu Duc and court officials lacked viable strategies to confront the situation. On July 17, 1883, Tu Duc passed away at the Can Chanh Palace, leaving the court in a dire state of crisis due to the absence of a royal heir⁸⁵. Author Wieslaw Olszewski in *Historia Wietnamu* described the situation following Emperor Tu Duc's death as follows: "In July 1883, Emperor Tu Duc passed away. His reign marked the end of the unified power of the Nguyen dynasty. From then on, the Dragon Throne would become the seat of figure-heads and the subject of courtly factional struggles. The appointed regents Nguyen Van Tuong, Ton That Thuyet, and Nguyen Trong Hiep upheld the will of the reigning emperor in transferring power"⁸⁶. The ensuing power struggle among factions within the royal family intensified, with Duc Duc's⁸⁷ brief reign being abruptly terminated by Nguyen Van

⁸⁴ On May 19, 1883, the Battle of Cau Giay occurred in the Cau Giay suburb of Hanoi, marking a significant clash between the French army and the Black Flag Army during the early phase of the Tonkin Campaign. The Black Flag Army launched a surprise attack on the French forces, led by Henri Rivière, while they were in transit from Hanoi to Hoai Duc district. The ensuing battle, lasting less than three hours, proved costly for the French, with a heavy loss of lives, including the death of Rivière. Following the ambush, the French survivors retreated to Hanoi, only to be pursued relentlessly by the Black Flag Army. Faced with the ongoing siege, the French forces in the city were compelled to defend themselves and call for additional reinforcements from Hai Phong. (According P. Antonini, *op.cit*, p.274-275).

⁸⁵ Tu Duc, who reigned from 1847 to 1883, was the longest-serving emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnam. Despite having a sizable harem of 103 wives, he remained childless due to having contracted smallpox in his youth, which caused long-term health complications. To secure his dynasty's succession, Tu Duc adopted three of his nephews, namely Ung Chan, Ung Duong, and Ung Dang, as his sons and heirs. This adoption practice was not uncommon among the Vietnamese royal family, as it aimed to maintain dynastic stability and ensure an unbroken line of succession. (Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược...*, *op.cit*, p.239-242)

⁸⁶ W. Olszewski, *Historia Wietnamu*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1991, p.241.

⁸⁷ Duc Duc, or Nguyen Cung Tong or Nguyen Phuc Ung Chan (1852-1883), was the fifth emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, ascending to the throne on July 19, 1883. However, his reign was short-lived, lasting only five days (according to Quốc Sử Quán Triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty). *Đại Nam liệt truyện* (Imperial biographies). vol 4. Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Institute of Vietnamese History, 2006, p.86), making it the briefest among the 13 emperors of the Nguyen Dynasty. Duc Duc was

Tuong and Ton That Thuyet. Hiep Hoa⁸⁸ was subsequently crowned, promoting a conciliatory approach towards France, which led to covert conflicts and the emergence of two opposing court factions: the pro-war faction led by Ton That Thuyet and the pro-compromise faction spearheaded by Hiep Hoa and some of the king's close confidants⁸⁹.

Amidst these developments, the French military was diligently making preparations to launch a full-scale assault on Vietnam with the aim of establishing it as a colony. By August of 1883, Admiral Courbet⁹⁰ arrived at the Northern Fleet from Saigon, with a considerable number of warships in tow, further augmenting their already robust military presence. Subsequently, the French forces made swift advances towards Thuan An⁹¹, which served as the gateway to the capital city of Hue and a crucial stronghold in the region.

the fourth son of Emperor Thieu Tri and was adopted by Emperor Tu Duc in 1869 at the age of 17. During this period, he maintained close ties with the French, who were involved in invading Vietnam. In preparation for the French attack on the North in 1881, Duc Duc entrusted numerous essential documents to the French envoy, Rheinart. The interim representative (Chargé d'affaires) to the Hue court, who held equal rank with the Hue court's minister, was Pierre Paul Rheinart, the first person appointed to the position on July 28, 1875. Rheinart served as interim representative three times and was involved in several political events in Hue during his tenure (According to Pham Van Son, 1961, *op.cit.*, p.433).

⁸⁸ Hiep Hoa (1847-1883), or Nguyen Phuc Hong Dat, was the sixth emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty in Vietnamese history. In the 18th year of Emperor Tu Duc's reign (1865), Hong Dat was appointed as the Lang Quoc cong (朗國公) by the King. His reign lasted 4 months and 10 days, for a total of 130 days. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. VII, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.926).

⁸⁹ In 1883, King Tu Duc passed away without a biological heir. According to his will, his adopted son, Nguyen Phuc Ung Chan (later known as Emperor Duc Duc), succeeded him but only reigned for three days. At the same time, Ton That Thuyet and Nguyen Van Tuong deposed Duc Duc and installed Hiep Hoa as the new emperor. While Hiep Hoa desired to seek a policy of protection to maintain his reign, many court officials opposed this. Ton That Thuyet and Nguyen Van Tuong became overly anxious, and Hiep Hoa decided to remove them from power in order to decrease their military influence. The two officials, seeing that the emperor suspected them, feared being punished and decided to poison him. Hiep Hoa's reign lasted only four months. (Pham Van Son, 1961, *op.cit.*, p.434 and Phan Phat Huon, *Việt Nam giáo sử* (History of Vietnamese Catholicism), vol I, Saigon: Cứu Thế Tùng Thư, 1958, p.510-512).

⁹⁰ Anatole-Amédée-Prosper Courbet (1827 - 1885) was a French admiral who commanded the French expeditionary forces in East Asia. He participated in the Tonkin Campaign (1883–86) and the Sino-French War (1884-1885). (Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), *op.cit.*, p.489-490; Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *op.cit.*, p.43).

⁹¹ It is an area located in the northeast of the Imperial City of Hue.

In early August 1883, the imperial forces guarding the Thuan An defense system consisted of 13 forts, including 2 key forts blocking the sea, as well as numerous heavy guns deployed on the Huong River and barricades on the river. The naval force outside the forts comprised almost 200 wooden boats, each equipped with 6-7 heavy guns and with a capacity of 12 tons⁹². On August 18, 1883, Admiral Courbet, commanding a reinforced French Northern Fleet, delivered an ultimatum demanding the surrender of the forts within two hours. By 4 p.m. that day, French warships began attacking the Vietnamese army's camps on the shore for several days, with the imperial artillery firing back but unable to reach the French ships⁹³. On August 19, both sides exchanged artillery fire but ceased shortly after. On August 20, 1883, the French army launched a bombardment and began landing, successfully taking over the Thuan An area by evening, with the defending officials sacrificing themselves in the fighting⁹⁴.

The imperial court in Hue was gravely concerned by the sound of heavy guns from Thuan An for several consecutive days. Emperor Tu Duc had passed away the day before the attack began, and the news of the French victory only added to the court's anxiety. In response, the imperial court dispatched Nguyen Trong Hop⁹⁵ to Thuan An⁹⁶ to request a ceasefire from Admiral Courbet. French commander J. Harmand subsequently traveled to Hue and laid down conditions for a new treaty. The imperial court sent Tran Dinh Tuc and Nguyen Trong Hop to negotiate⁹⁷, but in reality, they accepted the conditions set by J. Harmand.

On August 25th, 1883, the Nguyen dynasty's Hue court ratified the "Treaty of Peace" ("Hòa ước Quý Mùi" or "Harmand Treaty" as the French commonly refer to it), which was signed with J. Harmand, the French commissaire general representing the French government (*Commissaire général*). This treaty, which comprised 27 provisions

⁹² Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.542.

⁹³ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.533.

⁹⁴ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VIII, *op.cit*, p.589-590.

⁹⁵ Nguyen Trong Hop (1834 - 1902) was a high-ranking official in the Nguyen Dynasty. Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol VII, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.915.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

put forth by France⁹⁸, signaled a significant step towards the surrender of Vietnam and its transfer to French control. It essentially abolished Vietnam's autonomy throughout the country and formalized the Hue court's recognition of French protection. All of Vietnam's political, economic, and diplomatic affairs were brought under French control, and the French government was tasked with protecting the court against foreign invasions and suppressing internal rebellions⁹⁹.

In Hue, the appointment of the French Resident Superior served as a representative of the French government, with the privilege of meeting with the king whenever deemed appropriate (as per clause 11). For locations such as Hanoi, Haiphong, coastal ports, and major provinces, France would appoint a Resident. In contrast, smaller provinces would be overseen by French officials and soldiers to safeguard and regulate tax collection, as well as manage all income and expenses (as outlined in clauses 12, 13, 17, 18, and 19).

The regions spanning from Khanh Hoa to Deo Ngang (with Binh Thuan province being absorbed into Cochinchina to offset the Nguyen dynasty's debt to France), along with the three provinces of Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, and Ha Tinh, were combined to form Tonkin¹⁰⁰. Despite court officials continuing to govern in the customary manner, this region's commercial and administrative affairs were under French management and control (per clauses 2 and 6). Thuan An and Hue were promptly occupied by French troops (as per clause 3), while all of Vietnam's interactions with foreign countries, including its dealings with the Qing Dynasty, were subject to France's authority (per clause 1).

Concerning military matters, in addition to receiving instruction and guidance from French trainers and officers (as stated in clause 23), the court had to withdraw troops dispatched to Tonkin (as per clause 4). French troops were positioned, and barracks were constructed along the Red River and wherever deemed necessary, such as Deo Ngang, to protect the king of An Nam from foreign invasions and uprisings (as per clause 21).

⁹⁸ Historian Tran Trong Kim summarized the 27 clauses of the Treaty of Hue in *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), *op.cit.*, p.221.

⁹⁹ Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược...*, *op.cit.*, p.221.

¹⁰⁰ According to this treaty, Vietnam was divided into 3 regions and had 3 different forms of governance: from Binh Thuan to the South was called Cochinchina (Southern Region), which was a French colony; from Khanh Hoa to Deo Ngang (the border between Quang Binh and Ha Tinh today) was called Annam (Central Region), under a semi-protectorate regime; from Deo Ngang to the North was called Tonkin (Northern Region), under the protectorate regime of France. (P. Brocheux, D. Hémery, *Indochina, An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858-1954*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009, p.15-69).

France had complete jurisdiction over the Black Flag Army (as stated in clause 22)¹⁰¹. The overarching content was: The Hue court acknowledged and accepted that Southern Vietnam was a colony of France; it acknowledged and accepted French protectorate over Central Vietnam and Northern Vietnam¹⁰².

The signing of the Harmand Treaty was perceived as a perfidious act by the Hue court, which engendered a sense of disillusionment and treachery among the populace. Despite the capitulation of the court, the people of Tonkin remained steadfast in their determination to resist to the bitter end. The court's decree to disarm, which was implemented by Harmand and the King's emissary, was not complied with by any of the inhabitants of Tonkin. The Vietnamese people's blockade of Hanoi persisted, with Hoang Ta Viem's and Liu Yongfu's troops maintaining their defensive line at the Day River, while Truong Quang Dan's forces continued to hold Bac Ninh. At the same time, the opposition movement against the court's disarmament order spread throughout the provinces. Many local officials refused to comply with the court's summons to Hue and chose instead to fight valiantly against the enemy. During this period, patriotic organizations in Tonkin typically consisted of 200 to 500 members, with some groups able to muster thousands of courageous soldiers to launch repeated assaults on military outposts, block the enemy along the river, infiltrate the city, and demolish the enemy's depots¹⁰³.

Given these circumstances, Courbet, who had assumed command from Harmand at the end of October 1883, was compelled to declare martial law in several areas, including Hanoi, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, Hai Duong, and Quang Yen. In early December of that year, Courbet was reinforced with an additional 4,000 troops from France, bringing the total number of French soldiers in Tonkin to nearly 9,000 infantry and one naval division. With the increased strength of his forces, Courbet decided to launch a second assault on Son Tay. The selection of Son Tay as the focal point of this campaign was due to its status as Governor Hoang Ta Viem's primary stronghold and the court's most formidable center of resistance¹⁰⁴. Additionally, previous campaigns by the French army in the course of

¹⁰¹ Tran Van Giau, Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Su, *Lịch sử Cận đại Việt Nam* (Modern Vietnam History), vol 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1959, p.89-90.

¹⁰² Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược...*, *op.cit*, p.221.

¹⁰³ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.332.

¹⁰⁴ Son Tay was a prominent stronghold for resistance against the Nguyen Dynasty. The fortress was built in a rectangular shape, enclosed by a 3.5-meter-high wall and an outer moat. Further defensive structures were also established outside the fortress. Inside, the fortress comprised a flagpole tower that rose to a

their invasion of Tonkin had left indelible scars on the Son Tay front, resulting in significant "karmic debts" for the French expeditionary forces. Victory in Son Tay was seen as a means of exorcising the "ghosts of defeat" and restoring the French army's morale.

Given the strategic importance of Son Tay and the recent reinforcement of troops, Courbet marshaled a significant force for the impending military campaign. His mobilization comprised almost 6,000 troops, comprising French and native soldiers, as well as numerous artillery and battleships for support. On December 11-12, 1883, the French troops, led by Courbet, commenced their attack on the Phu Xa outpost, which defended the eastern front of Son Tay. The Vietnamese defenders fought valiantly and successfully repulsed several successive waves of assault by the French army. According to historical accounts by Nguyen Dynasty chroniclers, *"the French infantry and naval units encircled the dike of Son Tay...the army emerged victorious, inflicting casualties of over 300 and confiscating firearms and artillery from the enemy"*¹⁰⁵.

By the afternoon of December 14, 1883, the French, leveraging their artillery, had successfully captured the Phu Xa outpost, paving the way for their subsequent advance on the Son Tay fortress two days later. In the ensuing attack, the French relentlessly bombarded the fortress from both sea and land, yet the Vietnamese defenders, despite facing overwhelming force, fiercely held their ground. Even as the sun set on December 16, the fortress remained impregnable. However, the French managed to gain entry to the fortress by underhanded means, namely by dispatching spies who raised the French flag on the fortress' flagpole during the night, inducing confusion and panic among the Vietnamese troops¹⁰⁶. In the ensuing chaos, the French exploited the opportunity to storm the fortress and succeeded in breaking down the western gate. While the French captured the Son Tay fortress, they suffered significant losses in terms of manpower. As per French accounts,

height of 18 meters, as well as barracks and warehouses. The fortress boasted an armament of 30 large guns and housed an estimated 5,000 soldiers, although French documents suggest the number was closer to 8,000-9,000, including 2,000 troops under Liu Yongfu). (According to Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.213).

¹⁰⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol IX, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.34.

¹⁰⁶ See Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.567.

83 soldiers (including 5 officers) were killed, and 320 were wounded (including 22 officers)¹⁰⁷.

Following the successful capture of Son Tay, a significant bastion of the imperial court's hold over Hanoi, the French colonial forces expediently advanced towards Bac Ninh, which was already under the command of Hoang Ta Viem. Subsequent to the engagement in Son Tay, the court troops dispersed and withdrew to various locations, while Bac Ninh was entirely occupied by the Qing Dynasty's forces. Notably, a considerable number of Qing troops were stationed within the city walls and strategically placed at all vital locations, which had been fortified earlier by the Nguyen dynasty troops.

On December 12, 1883, General Millot¹⁰⁸ was appointed by the Ferry government as the overall commander of the French military forces in Indochina, replacing Amédée Courbet. Before heading to Indochina, the French government allocated additional funding from the Assembly, totaling over 30 million francs¹⁰⁹, to support the expeditionary force, which amounted to 6,500 troops. Upon arriving in Vietnam, these troops joined the French forces in Northern Vietnam (comprising 9,300 land troops and 1,000 naval infantry), along with 1,500 troops from the Southern court (the Hue court) and 488 officers, bringing the total to 17,554 personnel¹¹⁰. With this combined force, Millot began his offensive against the strongest resistance center of the Vietnamese forces in Bac Ninh.

On March 7, 1884, the French army used warships to survey the fortifications, resulting in minor skirmishes. By the evening of March 12, 1884, the two wings of the French army had besieged and attacked the city. Despite the Qing army's considerable strength at that time, numbering tens of thousands of soldiers inside and outside the city, “*they were unable to resist the French army*”¹¹¹. The Qing army inside and outside the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁸ Charles-Théodore Millot (1829 – 1889), was a French general and simultaneously the commander of the French expeditionary forces in Northern Vietnam. (Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), *op.cit*, p.516).

¹⁰⁹ The data is recorded from Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam) quoted from Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858 - 1896* (Vietnamese History 1858 – 1896), ed. Pham Quang Trung, Nguyen Ngoc Co, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi 2003, p.567.

¹¹⁰ These figures are quoted from Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit.*, p568. Part of the military force data is excerpted from a passage by Professor Tran Van Giau in *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), Youth Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2001, p.516.

¹¹¹ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol IX, 2006, *op.cit*, p.61.

city collapsed and fled in all directions as the French army advanced towards Thai Nguyen and Lang Son. The court officials, led by Truong Quang Dan, observed the confrontation between the French and Qing armies without engaging.

In the meantime, Liu Yongfu expeditiously summoned his troops to reinforce the defense. Regrettably, upon their arrival, Bac Ninh had already succumbed to the enemy. Liu then withdrew his troops to Hung Hoa¹¹². In response to the French colonizers' aggression, the populace in the province revolted in various locations, rendering the district officials powerless. The second and final encirclement of the imperial court's army, aimed at subduing the French colonizers in Hanoi, was also thwarted. Subsequent to their conquest of Bac Ninh, the French capitalized on their triumph by extending their occupation. They dispatched troops to seize Thai Nguyen on March 19th, Hung Hoa on April 12th, and Tuyen Quang on May 31st. Despite encountering fierce resistance from the patriotic army and suffering significant losses, the anti-French movement encountered numerous difficulties. The primary concern for the French on the Tonkin battlefield at that moment was Liu Yongfu's Black Flag Army, which had besieged and relentlessly attacked Tuyen Quang for nine months, from June to December 1884, organizing one or two battles every month, and even as many as four or five battles in some months. The army managed to trap an enemy battalion in the city and sever all communication with the outside world. *"The French army, for their part, endeavored to persevere and await reinforcements"*¹¹³. However, the Qing army's retreat to conserve their strength and the Hue court's willingness to dispatch officials to negotiate with the French had significantly impeded the anti-French movement's progress.

In the interim, numerous impromptu uprisings against the French erupted in various parts of Vietnam. Shortly after the fall of Son Tay on December 27, 1883, Vietnamese troops and civilians incinerated the enemy's ammunition depot in Hanoi. The populace in the Northeastern region mobilized their own troops and established a stronghold on Dong Trieu Mountain to launch resistance efforts. On March 15, 1884, the troops fearlessly set fire to a French warship traveling through Lac Son. The resistance forces escalated their activities by ambushing and assaulting French troops over a wide expanse in Haiphong

¹¹² *Ibidem*.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p.73.

and Dong Trieu. On April 30, 1884, a French warship fell prey to an ambush launched by 1,000 resistance fighters on the Luc Ngan River¹¹⁴...

Since the beginning of 1884, the war became increasingly fierce on the Tonkin front due to France's opportunistic expansion of invasion. Some units of the Qing army also joined the fight at this time. In the face of this situation, to avoid a conflict with the Qing army on the Tonkin front, the French government advocated persuading the Beijing court to resume negotiations on the Vietnamese issue. As in previous times, France and the Qing had negotiations in Shanghai and Paris, and the result was that France recognized the Qing's "heavenly sovereignty" over the Hue court, in exchange for the Qing recognizing the 6 provinces of Cochinchina as belonging to France¹¹⁵. At this point, both sides once again joined hands for their own interests. France was determined to occupy Tonkin without causing conflict with the Qing, while the Qing still wanted to gain some benefits in Vietnam but did not dare to take decisive action.

The discussion between France and the Qing Dynasty led to the signing of a convention on May 11, 1884¹¹⁶, in Tientsin (China) known as the "*Preliminary Convention of Friendship and Alliance between France and China*" (Tientsin Accord - Accord de Tientsin in French). This convention consisted of five articles aimed at resolving the unofficial war between France and the Qing Dynasty over the sovereignty of Northern Vietnam and laying the foundation for a future long-term treaty. The main content of the convention was as follows:

France agreed to recognize the sovereignty of the Qing Dynasty in the bordering provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guangdong and pledged not to support forces against the Qing Dynasty on the territory of Northern Vietnam (Tonkin).

Furthermore, France waived the war indemnity, relieving the Qing Dynasty of the obligation to pay for the war.

In return, the Qing Dynasty was required to:

Withdraw its troops from Vietnam.

Recognize all agreements between the Huế court and France, acknowledging France's protectorate rights.

¹¹⁴ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.216.

¹¹⁵ Phan Khoang, *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử* (History of Vietnam during the French colonial period), Khai Tri Publishing House, Saigon, 1960, p.134.

¹¹⁶ R. Geoffrey, *Road to Mandalay*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1967, p.125.

Open border trade and commercial relations¹¹⁷.

Although the treaty was signed, when it came time to implement it, there were many disagreements. The most critical issue was the timing of the Qing Dynasty's withdrawal from Northern Vietnam (Tonkin). The document stated that the withdrawal would take place "immediately," and the French army had scheduled to take over Lang Son and the border posts on June 9, 1884. However, it wasn't until the 19th that a French contingent of 350 soldiers advanced, but they were met with resistance by Chinese forces in Bac Le. This was followed by clashes in Lang Son¹¹⁸. It was only after these events that the French government accused the Qing Dynasty of insincerity, and both sides declared war in August, rendering the Tientsin Accord of 1884 a failure.

4.2.2 *The Patenôtre Treaty, signed on June 6th, 1884*

On June 6, 1884, the French colonial government, having recently signed the Tianjin Convention with the Qing dynasty, sought to amend certain provisions of the Harmand Treaty, which had been signed with the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnam in 1883. To achieve this, the French government dispatched Jules Patenôtre¹¹⁹ to negotiate a new treaty with the Vietnamese court. The resulting agreement, known as the Patenôtre Treaty, was swiftly concluded on the same day between France and the Hue court. The Nguyen dynasty was represented in the negotiations by Pham Thuan Duat, the Grand Minister Plenipotentiary, Ton That Phan, the Deputy Grand Minister Plenipotentiary, and Nguyen Van Tuong, the Assistant Grand Minister. France was represented by Jules Patenôtre, the Ambassador of the French Republic. The treaty comprised 19 articles¹²⁰, largely based on the Harmand Treaty, but with certain modifications intended to avoid adverse reactions from the Beijing court, while also seeking to further co-opt the feudal class in Vietnam.

¹¹⁷ A. Thomazi, *La conquête de l'Indochine*, Payot, Paris, 1934, p.189-192.

¹¹⁸ R. Geoffrey, *op.cit.*, p.125-128.

¹¹⁹ Jules Patenôtre des Noyers (1845 – 1925) was a French diplomat. He received additional instructions from Paris and arrived in Hue on May 30th, starting negotiations with the Vietnamese Envoy Nguyen Van Tuong. Later, he proceeded to Shanghai to negotiate with China regarding the withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam. (P. Devillers, *Người Pháp và người An-nam: bạn hay thù?* (French and Annamese - friend or enemy?) Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 2006, p.271).

¹²⁰ Specific content of the Treaty in French can be found in G. Taboulet, t.2, p.809-812. The Vietnamese translation of the Treaty from Classical Chinese can be found in Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXXVI, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1976, p.115-119.

In accordance with the principles of the Patenôtre Treaty, Vietnam acknowledged the protection of France, and France was granted the authority to act as Vietnam's representative in all international affairs and safeguard the interests of Vietnamese citizens abroad (Article 1). With regards to the territories encompassing Cochinchina to Ninh Binh, the local officials of the court were permitted to maintain their administrative responsibilities, subject to certain exceptions pertaining to commercial and public affairs, which necessitated mutual consent or the involvement of French or European engineers (Article 3).

The Patenôtre Treaty of June 6, 1884 represents a critical and enduring cornerstone of France's colonial governance of Vietnam. The treaty effectively partitioned Vietnam into three distinct regions with varying degrees of sovereignty: Cochinchina, which was recognized as a French colony, and Annam and Tonkin, which were placed under French protection. The redefined territories entailed the return of Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh in the North, and Binh Thuan province in the South to the Nguyen Dynasty, which had been previously annexed to Cochinchina and Tonkin under the Harmand Treaty of August 25, 1883.

Despite the formal recognition of Vietnamese sovereignty, the reality was that all three regions, North (Tonkin), Central (Annam), and South (Cochinchina), were effectively under French control, rendering the Hue court's nominal authority largely symbolic. This arrangement was a central tenet of France's divide-and-rule policy in Vietnam, with the treaty affording France exclusive control over the country's economic and political affairs. Additionally, the treaty provided for the Hue court to maintain its own military force, but in practice, the French retained ultimate authority over matters of national security. Although the Patenôtre Agreement may have had milder terms than the Harmand Treaty, it formally and, until the mid-20th century, conclusively reaffirmed French colonial dominance in various political shades over the entire territory of Vietnam. For the Hue court, it could not be seen as anything other than a failure and surrender. We concur with the astute observation made by Nguyen Phan Quang, who asserts that “*the Patenôtre Treaty played a pivotal role in solidifying Vietnam's status as a French colony. The treaty effectively relegated the Nguyen Dynasty to a subservient and dependent vassal of the French colonial regime, both domestically and in the international arena*”¹²¹.

¹²¹ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX (1802 – 1884)...*, *op.cit*, p.334.

After the signing of the Patenôtre Agreement, with the aim of completely and permanently severing all ties between the Vietnamese feudal class and China, the French colonialists even compelled the Hue court to melt down the seal given by the Chinese feudal class to the Vietnamese feudal class, thus marking the end of its existence¹²². According to the Nguyen dynasty's records, Jules Patenôtre had stated that “*the old seal of the Qing dynasty was only necessary for correspondence with the Qing dynasty and since Dai Nam had received French protection and no longer had dealings with the Qing, the seal should be returned on the exchange day*”¹²³. Despite repeated requests, Nguyen Van Tuong responded by suggesting “*the seal be broken and replaced*”¹²⁴. The French envoy acquiesced, but demanded that the seal be destroyed immediately, or else the agreement would be suspended. Thus, the imperial court and the French envoy “*jointly pressed the seal onto the ink pad and quickly transported it to the French embassy, where it was smashed and cast into a silver block*”¹²⁵.

The Patenôtre Treaty was approved by the French Parliament on May 7, 1885, and ratified by the President of France on June 15, 1885. It was formally exchanged between the parties in Hue on February 20, 1886, and the French President issued a decree for its implementation on March 2, 1886, but it was not announced in Northern Vietnam¹²⁶. At this point, the Vietnamese feudal class had completely surrendered to France. The independent and sovereign state of Vietnam had completely collapsed. Vietnam had become entirely subject to French colonialism.

¹²² B. Albert, *L'affaire du Tonkin. Histoire diplomatique de l'établissement de notre protectorat sur l'Annam et de notre conflit avec la Chine, 1882-1885, par un diplomate*, J. Hetzel et Cie, éditeurs, Paris, 1886, p.172-175 and P. Devillers, *op.cit.*, p.271-272.

¹²³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol IX, 2006, *op.cit.*, p.72.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁵ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol XXXVI, *op.cit.*, p.119.

¹²⁶ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit.*, p.579.

CHAPTER 5

FRENCH COLONIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLICIES IN VIETNAM AFTER 1884

5.1 The structural arrangement of the colonial governmental apparatus

5.1.1 *Organization of the government apparatus and administrative units of the Nguyen Dynasty*

During the period spanning from 1858 to before 1862, the organizational structure of the Nguyen dynasty's provincial and district level government remained largely unchanged. Typically, a General-governor was appointed to oversee two provinces, while directly governing one of them. Medium-sized provinces were governed by a Province Chief under the purview of French colonial domination, in addition to a Province Finance Administrator and a Surveillance Commissioner. Smaller provinces, on the other hand, were governed by a Governor, Province Finance Administrator, or Surveillance Commissioner, all of whom were under the jurisdiction of the General-governor¹.

The provincial apparatus during the Nguyen dynasty comprised several key roles. The Province Finance Administrator was responsible for tax collection, as well as the management of land and population. The Royal Censorate, on the other hand, oversaw the sentencing process and was in charge of the Sentencing Officer. Military affairs were managed by a range of officials, including the Admiral, Vice Admiral, Warlord (for larger provinces), and Deputy Commander (for small and medium provinces). Provinces located along the coast or with large rivers flowing through them placed greater emphasis on naval control and appointed officials to oversee this aspect of governance. In provinces with a relatively developed school network, a ligature was appointed to oversee education. The entire provincial administrative apparatus was directly controlled by the imperial court and subject to supervision by the Royal Censorate².

¹ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 – 1896* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896), ed. Ha Manh Khoa, Nguyen Manh Dung and Le Thi Thu Hang, vol 6, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2017, p.347.

² See P. Emmanuel, *Quan và lại miền Bắc Việt Nam – Một bộ máy hành chính trước thử thách (1820 – 1918)* (Mandarins and subordinates in northern Viet Nam – A bureaucracy put to the test (1820-1918)), Dao Hung and Nguyen Van Su translated from the original French *Mandarins et subalternes au nord du Vietnam – Une bureaucratie à l'épreuve (1820-1918)*, Danang Publishing house, 2006, p.125.

Beneath the provincial level, there existed a hierarchy of prefectures, districts, and military prefectures. Each of these administrative units was overseen by a prefecture magistrate and a district magistrate, with an additional prefecture magistrate appointed by the court only when deemed necessary. Additionally, each prefecture and district had an official in charge of education.

The Canton served as an intermediate administrative unit between the prefectures and districts, and the villages and communes that fell under its jurisdiction. Typically, each prefecture and district had approximately ten cantons, each of which was headed by a Canton Head. Canton Heads were required to choose from among the Village Heads, with the approval of both the Protectorate (Military Prefecture) and Province. At the grassroots level of state government administration, the Village was the primary unit of governance. Each Canton oversaw the management of more than ten villages, each of which was headed by a Village Head³.

Following the French colonial division of Vietnam into three regions in 1883, the Nguyen court continued to exist in Annam, albeit in a largely symbolic capacity devoid of real power. Consequently, two distinct French governmental systems coexisted in Annam. As for the Nguyen Dynasty's system of government, the king was aided by a range of councils and bodies, including the Main Sub-Council, the Court of the Imperial Clan, the Secret Council, the Council of Ministers, and the Royal Censorate⁴.

As per the terms of the Treaty of Harmand, the French Embassy in Hue served as the official representative of the French colonial government in Central Vietnam. Although the Embassy did not directly intervene in the internal affairs of the Southern Dynasty, the French Ambassador was empowered with the personal right to negotiate with the king's government in secret as and when deemed necessary. Moreover, the Commissioner-General may grant authorization to the Ambassador to carry out certain tasks under their jurisdiction or to temporarily assume the role of Acting Commissioner-General of the French Government in Vietnam⁵.

³ Tran Thanh Tam, *Tìm hiểu quan chức nhà Nguyễn* (Understanding Nguyen Dynasty officials), Hue: Thuan Hoa Publishing House, 1996, p.32-33.

⁴ P. Emmanuel, *op.cit*, p. 348.

⁵ Tran Thanh Tam, *op.cit*, p.32-33.

Since 1897, *the Main Sub-Council, Court of the Imperial Clan, the Secret Council, The Council of Ministers, and The Royal censorate* were abolished, leaving only *the Secret Council*, consisting of six ministers, operating as a Council. The cabinet in which meetings are held is chaired by Résident supérieur de l'Annam (The French Resident Superior). In the case of a young king, *the Secret Council* became *the Main Sub-Council* and handled all the affairs of the court on behalf of the king⁶. Résident supérieur de l'Annam (The Ambassador to Annam) is the person on behalf of the Governor General to manage all aspects of Annam. Résident supérieur de l'Annam has the building of the embassy of Annam that monitor and direct all activities of the country. The Protectorate Council consisted of a number of French officials, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture and two delegates from the Secret Council⁷.

In Annam, which is divided into 14 provinces, the French Ambassador leads the province with the support of auxiliary departments such as Cochinchina. Despite the existence of the old mandarin organization system of the Nguyen Dynasty in Annam and Tonkin, these mandarins only acted as implementers of the decisions made by the French Embassy⁸.

Following the reforms of 1897, the administrative structure of French-controlled Annam differed from that of Tonkin. In Annam, two parallel systems of governance existed, namely the Nguyen Dynasty government under the King and the French colonial government under the French Ambassador. The governing bodies in Annam were organized as follows: The French Resident Superior served as the head of Annam. While the administrative apparatus of the Hue court remained unchanged, all matters were required to pass through the embassy building under the purview of the French Resident Superior. At the central level, the King held significant power, supported by the Main Sub-Council, Court of the Imperial Clan, Secret Council, Royal Censorate, and Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers consisted of six senior ministers, each heading a ministry,

⁶ Phan Huy Chu, *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (The rule of the dynasties copied by classification), vol 3 - *Quan chức chí – Lễ nghi chí* (Official, ritual), Youth Publishing house, 2014, p.466.

⁷ According to Nguyen The Anh, *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ* (Vietnam under French domination), Saigon: Lua Thieng Publishing House, 1970, p.89.

⁸ Also see Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.349.

namely the Board of Works, Board of Punishments, Board of Appointments, Board of Rites, Board of Infantry, and Board of Finance⁹.

At the provincial level, the French Ambassador, acting on behalf of the French Resident Superior, headed the administrative apparatus. He was responsible for managing and overseeing all activities at the provincial level and below. The Ambassador had several auxiliary organizations at his disposal, including the Legation and the Provincial Council.

With this system of governance in place, it is evident that ultimate state power in Vietnam was centralized within the French ruling apparatus¹⁰.

5.1.2 The organization of the government apparatus and administrative units established by French colonizers

The structure of the government apparatus and administrative units in the Cochinchina

Following the capture of the three eastern provinces of Cochinchina, namely Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, and Bien Hoa, and the signing of the Nham Tuat Treaty on June 5, 1862, the French colonial authorities initiated the establishment of a ruling apparatus and the division of administrative units. The aforementioned provinces were designated as colonies and placed under the jurisdiction of a French official with the title of General-Governor, commonly referred to as the Governor. The Governor was assisted by a group of officers holding the position of counselor. Concurrently, the French colonial authorities utilized the ranks of Canton chief, Vice-Canton chief, village chief, and deputy village headman to organize the governing apparatus at the grassroots level¹¹.

Following the replacement of Bonard by Admiral De La Grandière as Governor-General of Cochinchina in May 1863, the latter initiated the "direct rule" strategy in the conquered territories. The success of this approach led to its extension to the whole of Cochinchina after the French occupation of the six provinces in 1867. On June 25 of the same year, Major General of the Navy and Commander-in-Chief of the French Expeditionary Army in Cochinchina, Lafont, declared: "The complete annexation of the six

⁹ A. B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, Cambridge, MA: the Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988, p.69.

¹⁰ See Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.350.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p.351.

provinces of Cochinchina (Basse – Cochinchina) by France rendered the Hue court devoid of any power or influence over these territories. As such, the French colonial administration emerged as the singular government authority in Cochinchina"¹².

From 1862 to 1879, the people appointed by the French government as General - governor of Cochinchina were all military generals¹³. On May 13, 1879, the French President signed a decree appointing Le Myre de Viler to be General - governor of Cochinchina, replacing Major General Lafont. This was the first civilian plenipotentiary to replace the military rank as General - governor of Cochinchina.

Similar to the previous colonialist governors who headed the ruling apparatus of Cochinchina, the governor-general of Cochinchina was also referred to as the Governor (Lieutenant-Gouverneur de la Cochinchine). All officials in the French colonial administration in Cochinchina were under the authority of the governor-general of Cochinchina.

The Governor of Cochinchina was aided by two councils: the Cochinchina Confidentiality Council and the Cochinchina Colonial Council (Conseil colonial). The Confidentiality Council was formed on April 21, 1869, and was composed of four members. The Governor of Cochinchina served as the Chairman of the Council, while the Chairperson oversaw matters concerning the country. The Director of the Department of Internal Affairs was responsible for colony-related work, and the Attorney General served as the specialist in charge of legal and judicial affairs.

After the elimination of the positions of chairperson (1882) and Director of the Department of Internal Affairs (1887), the Cochinchina Confidentiality Council underwent a reorganization. Presently, the Council is led by the Governor of Cochinchina as Chairman, and its members comprise the Commander-in-Chief of the French army in Cochinchina, the Attorney General, who has legal responsibility, and the Director of Internal Affairs, who is in charge of finance and national affairs. The Council's role is to deliberate and make decisions on all matters concerning legislation, internal politics, fi-

¹² Duong Kinh Quoc, *Việt Nam – Những sự kiện lịch sử 1858 - 1918* (Vietnam historical events (1858-1918), Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1999, p.67.

¹³ Cục Văn thư và Lưu trữ nhà nước (State records management and archives department of Vietnam): <http://www.archives.gov.vn/Pages/Tin%20chi%20ti%E1%BA%Bft.aspx?itemid=243&listId=c2d480fb-e285-4961-b9cd-b018b58b22d0&ws=content> (accessed on May 6, 2024).

nance, and national affairs. In addition, the Cochinchina Colonial Council (Conseil colonial) or The Cochinchina Presidency Council, consisting of 18 members, 12 of whom are French, is responsible for matters concerning the colonial administration¹⁴.

The Cochinchina Colonial Council, established by decree of the French President on February 8, 1880¹⁵, comprised both French and Vietnamese members. The council was structured such that incumbent officials were prohibited from participating, and councilors were elected through a rigorous electoral process. Notably, the French commissioner and Vietnamese member were elected separately and by distinct means: the former by a distinct process, and the latter by flags of administrative regions. The council was designed to provide recommendations to the government on a range of matters, including fiscal policy, budgetary allocation, and administrative division. However, political issues were beyond the scope of its mandate¹⁶.

The Colonial Council convened annually for a maximum of 20 days, called by the Governor of Cochinchina. However, the Governor held discretionary power to convene an extraordinary session, extend the meeting, or dissolve the council altogether, as necessary. Matters brought to the council were subject to vote, and opinions approved with certainty were recorded in the minutes and held reporting significance. The proceedings of the council were deemed valid only through the Confidentiality Council, and reports were required to be submitted to the Governor. Attendance by the Governor at every session of the Colonial Council was permitted¹⁷.

At the zone level, Cochinchina was subdivided into administrative regions by decree of the French President on February 10, 1873¹⁸. Each region was entrusted to three officials who operated jointly, with the first-class officer responsible for justice and subordinate to the Attorney General, the second-class officer responsible for administration and reporting directly to the Director of Internal Affairs, and the third-class officer being

¹⁴ P. Brocheur, D. Hémery, *Indochina, An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858-1954*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009, p.77.

¹⁵ Thư viện Lịch sử - History Library: <https://thuvienlichsu.com/su-kien/tong-thong-phap-ky-sac-lenh-thanh-lap-hoi-dong-thuoc-dia-nam-ky-195> (accessed on September 28, 2023).

¹⁶ J. Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p.434.

¹⁷ P. Brocheur, D. Hémery, p.385.

¹⁸ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.353.

a graduate of the School of Counseling¹⁹ and assisting with general duties. This organizational framework clearly demarcated the executive and judicial functions and avoided the concentration of power in a single individual, in contrast to the Nguyen dynasty's historical governance approach, which assigned titles such as Governor General, Surveillance Commissioner, and Province Finance Administrator to address related duties²⁰.

The sub-zone level was created under the May 15, 1882 decree of the Governor of Cochinchina²¹, which provided for the establishment of administrative centers within each sub-zone. These administrative centers were managed by a French administrator, with each center further divided into various units. A Vietnamese official headed each administrative center, which was categorized into three types based on size: large, medium, and small²².

In this period, the French colonial administration accomplished the establishment of two major cities in Cochinchina, namely Saigon and Cho Lon. On January 8, 1877, the French President promulgated a decree that officially established Saigon City as a Big City, also known as a Level I City (*Municipalité de première classe*)²³. At the helm of the city was a *Maire*, who could appoint two Assistant Deputy *Maires* (*Maire-Adjoint*). The *Maire* was elected through a democratic process, and wielded powers equivalent to that of the chief ruler of the subdivision. Additionally, the *Maire* had the authority to issue decrees on issues pertinent to the city. The Assistant to the *Maire* was supported by the City Council (*Conseil Municipal*)²⁴, whose members were elected through a similar democratic process. The City Council had three functions: Firstly, to discuss, vote on, and make decisions on issues pertaining to the city, subject to the approval of the Governor of Cochinchina. Secondly, to provide opinions on issues raised by superiors. Thirdly, to refer all proposals related to the city's interests to higher authorities, with the exception

¹⁹ The School of Counseling was established on February 20, 1873 to train staff for the administrative apparatus of the French government in Cochinchina. (See Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.353).

²⁰ Also see Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.354.

²¹ (Lưu trữ Việt Nam - Vietnam Archives) <http://luutruvn.com/index.php/2015/10/11/gioi-thieu-phong-phu-thong-doc-nam-ky-dang-bao-quan-tai-trung-tam-luu-tru-quoc-gia-ii/> (accessed on October 15, 2023).

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ (Thư viện Lịch sử - History Library) <https://thuvienlichsu.com/su-kien/tong-thong-phap-ra-sac-lenh-chinh-thuc-thanh-lap-thanh-pho-sai-gon-194> (accessed on October 16, 2023).

²⁴ (Ho Chi Minh City Department of Construction) <https://virtual-saigon.net/Texts/Articles?ID=95> (accessed on October 16, 2023).

of political matters or general governance affairs²⁵. The Governor of Cochinchina was empowered to dissolve the City Council, thereby rendering this organization the foremost governing body established by the French colonialists in Vietnam²⁶.

On October 20, 1879, the Governor of Cochinchina, Le Myre de Vilers, issued a decree establishing the city of Cho Lon (Municipalité de Chợ Lớn)²⁷. This city was classified as a second-class city (Municipalité de deuxième classe), with the Maire as its head and possessing the same authority as the Maire of the first-class Saigon city. However, the organizational structure supporting the Maire of the second-class city was called only the City Committee (Commission Municipale), unlike the Saigon City Council. The members of the committee were mainly appointed by the Governor, with the remaining members approved by election. The functions of the City Committee were similar to those of the first-class City Council. The Governor of Cochinchina had the power to issue a decree to dissolve the City Committee if necessary²⁸.

Regarding the canton, each sub-zone is divided into several cantons. At the head of each canton are the Canton chief and the Vice - Canton chief. In Cochinchina, the Canton chief and the Vice - Canton chief were actually classified as administrative staff, salaried and ranked. The Canton chief consisted of three classes, the Vice - Canton chief consisted of two classes. They had to stay in a lower rank for a while (from 2 years or more) to be considered for a higher rank. During this period, the Canton chief and the Vice - Canton chief were appointed by inspectors²⁹.

During this period, the French colonial administration refrained from directly intervening in the village-level administrative structure. Instead, each canton was subdivided

²⁵ Also see Vo Kim Cuong, *op.cit*, p.356.

²⁶(Thư viện Lịch sử - History Library) <https://thuvienlichsu.com/su-kien/tong-thong-phap-ra-sac-lenh-chinh-thuc-thanh-lap-thanh-pho-sai-gon-194> (accessed on October 16, 2023).

²⁷ Bảo tàng Lịch sử quốc gia (Vietnam National Museum of History): <https://baotanglichsu.vn/vi/Articles/2001/65574/cho-lon-lich-su-dja-ly-kinh-te-va-van-hoa-phan-1.html> (accessed on May 15, 2024).

²⁸ On December 13, 1880, the two cities of Saigon and Cho Lon merged into the Saigon - Cho Lon area. On January 12, 1888, the Saigon - Cho Lon area was removed, and the two cities were re-established. (According to Duong Kinh Quoc, *Việt Nam – Những sự kiện lịch sử 1858 – 1918...*, *op.cit*, p.115.

²⁹ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Hệ thống chính quyền của Thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam thời kỳ trước Cách mạng tháng Tám năm 1945 (Quá trình thiết lập cơ cấu tổ chức)* (The system of government of the French colonialists in Vietnam in the period before the August Revolution, 1945 (The process of establishing the organizational structure), “Journal of Historical Research”, 1982, no. 2, p.40.

into multiple villages, and the village chief and deputy village headman assumed the responsibility of representing the interests of the villagers, and acted as intermediaries in communicating with higher administrative organizations. Nevertheless, as part of their efforts to refine their governance framework, the French colonial authorities progressively expanded their control from the village level by means of legal instruments, prior to implementing a patchwork of "administrative reforms" across Tonkin³⁰.

Administrative units:

+ Circonscription: On January 5, 1876, the Governor of Cochinchina issued a decree dividing it into a number of units called Circonscription administrative³¹. At the head of each Circonscription administrative was a Vietnamese official. The top officials of the Circonscription administrative were all subordinate to the French rulers (administrateur).

Sub-areas (Arrondissement): The six provinces of Cochinchina (Basse – Cochinchine) in the early years of the French colonial period was divided into the following 21 sub-areas³² (Arrondissement):

+ Bien Hoa province is divided into 3 sub-areas (Arrondissement): Thu Dau Mot, Bien Hoa, and Ba Ria.

+ Gia Dinh province is divided into 4 sub-areas (Arrondissement): Tay Ninh, Tan An, Cho Lon, and Gia Dinh.

+ Dinh Tuong province is divided into 2 sub-areas (Arrondissement): My Tho, Go Cong.

+ Vinh Long province is divided into 3 sub-areas (Arrondissement): Vinh Long, Ben Tre, Tra Vinh.

³⁰ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.357.

³¹ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Hệ thống chính quyền của Thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam thời kỳ trước Cách mạng tháng Tám năm 1945 (Quá trình thiết lập cơ cấu tổ chức)...*, *op.cit*, p.39.

³² From January 1 to 1900, the 21 sub-areas (Arrondissement) were called provinces. The provinces that existed during the reign of King Minh Mang were divided by the French as follows:

- Gia Dinh province is divided into 3 provinces: Cho Lon, Tan An, Tay Ninh
- Bien Hoa province is divided into 3 provinces: Bien Hoa, Ba Ria, Thu Dau Mot.
- Dinh Tuong province is divided into 3 provinces: My Tho, Go Cong, Sa Dec.
- Vinh Long province is divided into 3 provinces: Vinh Long, Tra Vinh, and Ben Tre.
- An Giang province is divided into 3 provinces: Chau Doc, Can Tho, Soc Trang.

Ha Tien province is divided into 4 provinces: Ha Tien, Rach Gia, Long Xuyen, Bac Lieu. (According to Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.358).

+ An Giang province is divided into 6 sub-areas (Arrondissement): Chau Doc, Long Xuyen, Can Tho, Soc Trang, Sa Dec and Bac Lieu (including the land of the old Ha Tien). Then, on December 18, 1882, two cantons of Thanh Hoa and Thanh Hung of Soc Trang were separated and three cantons of Long Thuy, Quang Long and Quang Xuyen of Rach Gia were split to establish more Bac Lieu sub-areas (Arrondissement).

+ Ha Tien province is divided into 2 sub-areas (Arrondissement): Ha Tien and Rach Gia³³.

Organization of the central government apparatus and administrative units in Tonkin and Annam

With regard to the organizational structure of the central government apparatus, it is notable that the Treaty of Harmand, executed on March 25, 1883, validated the Commissioner General (Commissaire general de la République Française) as the representative of the French government in Tonkin and Annam, responsible for supervising all foreign affairs pertaining to the Nguyen Dynasty³⁴. Subsequently, on May 31, 1883, François Jules Harmand was appointed by the French Government as the Commissioner General of the French Republic in Tonkin³⁵. Below the Commissioner General were the French Résidents, who were appointed to oversee each province in Tonkin, as well as the capital of Hue³⁶.

Subsequent to the Treaty of Patenôtre (1884), the Commissioner General was succeeded by the Resident General (Résident Général), colloquially recognized as the Governor of Annam-Tonkin (Résident général de l'Annam et du Tonkin). From June 1884 to April 1886, individuals serving in the French army, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War (Ministère de la Guerre), were appointed to this post. However, as per the decree

³³ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Hệ thống chính quyền của Thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam thời kỳ trước Cách mạng tháng Tám năm 1945 (Quá trình thiết lập cơ cấu tổ chức)...*, op.cit, p.39-40.

³⁴ Officiers de l'État – Major: “Histoire militaire de L'Indochine des débuts à nos jours (11-1922)”, IDEO (Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient), Hanoi, 1922, p.46.

³⁵ Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Times Publishing House, 2010, p.221.

³⁶ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Hệ thống chính quyền của Thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam thời kỳ trước Cách mạng tháng Tám năm 1945 (Quá trình thiết lập cơ cấu tổ chức)...*, op.cit, p.44.

of May 10, 1889, promulgated by the President of France³⁷, the role of the Resident General was required to be filled by a non-military officer. Subsequently, Paul Bert³⁸ became the first civilian Resident General to be designated to this position.

Regarding the organization of the government apparatus in Tonkin, the French colonialists placed the position *Résident supérieur du Tonkin* in order to closely supervise the native mandarin apparatus³⁹. On June 3, 1886, under the pressure of the French, King Dong Khanh⁴⁰ issued an edict establishing the position of Viceroy, having full power on behalf of the Hue court to govern Tonkin. The first Viceroy was Nguyen Huu Do. In order to separate Tonkin from the control of the Hue court, the French colonialists stipulated that all activities of Viceroy must be under the control and direction of the *Résident supérieur du Tonkin*⁴¹. The role of the Viceroy lasted until August 13, 1897 with the Decree of Governor-General of Indochina Paul Doumer approving the edict of King Thanh Thai⁴²

³⁷ (Trung tâm lưu trữ quốc gia I – National Archive Centre N1) <https://www.archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiep-vu/vai-net-ve-che-do-toan-quyen-cua-thuc-dan-phap-o-dong-duong.htm> (accessed on October 17, 2023).

³⁸ Paul Bert (1833 – 1886) was a distinguished French zoologist, physiologist, and politician. While he excelled in the field of science, his performance in politics and management fell short of his scientific achievements. (W. Rostène. “Paul Bert, scientist and politician”. *Journal de la Société de Biologie*. 2006, 200 (3): p.245–50).

³⁹ A. Baratier, *L'administration militaire au Tonkin*, Paris, 1889, p.34.

⁴⁰ King Dong Khanh (1864-1889), also known as Nguyen Phuc Ung Thi, ascended to the throne as Nguyen Phuc Bien, becoming the ninth emperor of the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnamese history, reigning from 1885 to 1889. Originally the adopted son of King Tu Duc, he was proclaimed king by the French after the Hue court was defeated by the French army in 1885. A Nguyen dynasty government was then established under French protection. (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*. vol IX, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, p.170 – 172) and also see Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đồng Khánh Khải Định chính yếu*, Nguyen Van Nguyen translated, Times Publishing House, 2010, p.51.

⁴¹ A. J. Dommen, *The Indochinese Experience of the French, and the Americans, Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001, p.23.

⁴² Thanh Thai, born as Nguyen Phuc Buu Lan (阮福寶麟) in 1879, passed away in 1954, ascended to the throne as the tenth emperor of the Nguyen dynasty, which was one of the last ruling dynasties of Vietnam. His reign spanned from 1889 to 1907, during which he undertook efforts to reform the political and social landscape of Vietnam. (According to Trung tâm lưu trữ quốc gia I – National Archive Centre N1: http://luut-quocgia1.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiep-vu/vua-thanh-thai-va-nhung-uan-uc-cua-mot-ong-vua-yeu-nuoc#_ftn2). (accessed on October 19, 2023).

on the abolition of the viceroy position, transferring all the power of the Viceroy into the hands of the Résident supérieur du Tonkin⁴³.

Accordingly, the French colonial authorities endeavored to eradicate the influence of the Nguyen court in Tonkin. With the dissolution of the Viceroy, the court's dominion over Tonkin also dissipated. The apex of authority in Tonkin was held by the Résident supérieur du Tonkin. All administrative power was centralized in the Palais du Résident Supérieur, where the Résident exercised full control over all provincial affairs. The Southern dynastic mandarins, from the provincial level to the prefecture, districts, and mountain districts, were compelled to conform to the Résident's directives.

According to the provisions of the Treaty of Harmand (August 25, 1883), the head of the province was the French Résident, who held the customs service and civil engineering in the province. Regulations on the functions and duties of the Résident in Tonkin were more specific than those of Annam in the period before the establishment of the Indochina Federation (Fédération indochinoise). In Tonkin, administratively, the Résident only controlled the affairs of the local mandarins in the province, but did not directly participate and did not have the right to request the Hue court to transfer the mandarins to another place if not satisfied. Until the Treaty of Patenôtre (June 6, 1884), Résident in Tonkin also had the power to force the court to dismiss those mandarins. Financially, the Résident was in charge of and controls the collection and use of tax proceeds. Legally, the Résident was responsible for adjudicating civil, commercial and criminal cases involving Europeans as well as between Asians and Vietnamese. On February 8, 1886, the French President signed a decree allowing Résident in Tonkin and Résident in Annam to exercise consular functions⁴⁴. In accordance with the provisions set forth in the June 6, 1884 treaty, the Résident Général remained the designated agent of the French government, empowered to govern and regulate the French protectorates in Annam and Tonkin. He possessed full civil and military authority, presiding over all foreign affairs pertaining to the Nguyen dynasty, as well as all interactions between the French and Vietnamese authorities. The Résident Général operated independently of the Governor of

⁴³ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Hệ thống chính quyền của Thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam thời kỳ trước Cách mạng tháng Tám năm 1945 (Quá trình thiết lập cơ cấu tổ chức)...*, op.cit, p.44.

⁴⁴ Vu Ngu Chieu, *Political and Social Change in Viet-Nam between 1940 and 1946*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin, 1984, p.67-116.

Cochinchina⁴⁵. The Vietnamese mandarin system at the provincial level was overseen by the General-Governor or the Province Chief, with the support of a Province Finance Administrator and a Surveillance Commissioner. These officials assisted the Résident in the governance of the province. At the city level, both Hanoi and Hai Phong cities were established on July 19, 1888⁴⁶. At the city level, both Hanoi and Hai Phong cities were established on July 19, 1888. A French Governor was appointed to serve as the head of each city council, nominated by the Résident supérieur du Tonkin and appointed by the Gouverneur-général de l'Indochine française⁴⁷. A restructuring of the governmental system in Tonkin was undertaken, separating it from the Southern Dynasty and establishing a formalized organizational framework for governance. The scope of operational authority at each level, as well as guidelines for the recruitment of mandarins, were clearly delineated. With regard to areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, the power to appoint mandarins was centralized at the Tonkin Ambassadorial Palace (Palais du Résident Supérieur), with all appointments subject to the discretion of the Résident supérieur du Tonkin and integrated into the new rank. Additionally, the French colonial administration expanded high-level professional agencies, intended to co-opt Vietnamese individuals into the system and to foster stability within the colonial government apparatus⁴⁸.

The French colonial administration undertook several political reforms, primarily centered on co-opting the upper echelons of Vietnamese society, including local officials, as a means of establishing a solid social foundation in the country. These measures were designed not only to achieve stability but also to leverage the colony's potential in support of the war effort in the metropole. The underlying strategy was to co-opt the local elite and to create a system of governance that would prioritize French interests while maintaining a measure of indigenous participation, thereby minimizing the likelihood of resistance or rebellion⁴⁹. By exploiting the existing power structures and incorporating Vi-

⁴⁵ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Hệ thống chính quyền của Thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam thời kỳ trước Cách mạng tháng Tám năm 1945 (Quá trình thiết lập cơ cấu tổ chức)...*, *op.cit*, p.44-45.

⁴⁶ (Cổng thông tin điện tử thành phố Hải Phòng - Hai Phong city portal), <https://haiphong.gov.vn/lich-su-thanh-pho-hai-phong/Lich-su-hinh-thanh-12947.html> (accessed on October 21, 2023).

⁴⁷ Tran Thanh Tam, *op.cit*, p.32.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p.34.

⁴⁹ A. Dumarest, *La formation des classes sociales en pays annamite*, Lion, 1935, p.168.

etnamese individuals into the colonial apparatus, the French sought to establish a sustainable and compliant colony that would facilitate their broader strategic objectives in the region⁵⁰.

5.2 French colonial policy in Vietnam

5.2.1 The establishment of a financial and taxation system by French colonialists to foster military pacification campaigns and organize colonial administration in Vietnam

After coercing the Hue court into signing the Treaty of Patenôtre on June 6, 1884, the French colonizers gradually established their dominance over the entirety of Vietnam. Concurrently, they developed economic and financial plans to address budgetary concerns associated with their ongoing military rule and pacification efforts, which persisted until the close of the 19th century. Furthermore, their intent was to enrich French oligarchs both domestically and in the colonies. Given the need to confront armed resistance from the Vietnamese populace, extensive mining operations were not viable. In the initial stages, the French colonial administration sought to perpetuate the tax policies of the former Vietnamese feudal state. Direct taxes, such as the head tax and land tax, as well as indirect taxes, levied on economic activities or basic necessities, were maintained and reinforced, with the latter becoming the primary source of revenue weakness for the Indochinese budget.

Prior to June 1867, the French colonial administration in Cochinchina implemented a lenient policy towards import taxes, with certain items such as alcohol, weapons, explosives, firecrackers, and oils being subject to taxation. Nevertheless, imported goods were frequently exempt from tax. This was partly due to the fact that the volume of goods imported by France into Indochina was relatively low. To maximize profits, the French colonialists sought to impose taxes on domestic trade instead. Conversely, since rice constituted a substantial export commodity in Cochinchina, an export tax of 0.15 VND per bag (60 kg) was imposed on it. Additionally, a tax of 0.20 VND per head was levied on the sale of cattle, while opium imports into Vietnam (Cochinchina) were exempt from taxation, while exports of opium were taxed at 3 VND per barrel⁵¹.

⁵⁰ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các triều vua nhà Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society under the Nguyen Dynasty kings), Literary Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, p.146.

⁵¹ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ 1858 đến 1918* (Vietnamese history from 1858 to 1918), ed. Duc Quang Tran, vol 4, Hanoi National University of Education Publishing House, Hanoi 2012, p.192.

In pre-1887 Vietnam, European and Australian ships enjoyed a tax exemption while Vietnamese and Chinese vessels were subject to high taxes. However, as the amount of goods imported to Vietnam increased, the French colonial administration began to impose tariff barriers, levying hefty taxes on imports from other countries. Specifically, all non-French goods entering Annam and Tonkin were taxed at 5%, while French goods from Saigon were only required to pay half of this rate. Copper and zinc coins were taxed at 20% of their value, and opium entering Annam and Tonkin was taxed between 550 and 780 francs per bag⁵². Exported goods faced the highest tax of 5%, but if goods were exported to France, they were only subject to a tax of 2.5%. Consequently, the inflow of goods from other countries into Vietnam declined, while French products became increasingly expensive and less suitable to consumers' needs and preferences, thus creating an opportunity for French goods to dominate the market⁵³.

The French colonialists' exploitative practices in the realm of domestic trade are exemplified by their tax policies and rates. For instance, consider the salt tax: Prior to 1886, Annam exported approximately 11 million bags of salt annually (each weighing 108 kg), primarily to Hong Kong. Governor-General Paul Bert, in his quest for increased revenue, imposed an export tax of 0.25 francs per bag of salt, despite the fact that the selling price per bag of salt was only 0.15 to 0.20 francs (a markup of 5-6 times). As a result, salt production stagnated, and the price of salt domestically skyrocketed by 3 to 4 times. This led to widespread misery among consumers, producers, and salt transporters alike⁵⁴.

Prior to December 1886, Vietnamese vessels transporting goods from one province to another were subject to taxation. However, after the French implemented the primary commercial tax in December 1886, vessels carrying goods from Thanh Hoa to Nghe An were required to pay an export tax, equal to that of voyages to Hong Kong or Manila.

⁵² During the period between 1894 and 1901, the revenue generated from opium sales experienced a significant increase. In 1894, the amount was reported to be \$3,783,734, equivalent to 10,102,570 francs. By 1898, this figure had increased to \$5,343,366, or 12,930,945 francs, and in 1901, it had reached \$6,290,000, or 15,785,000 francs. Governor-General Doumer took pride in announcing that these profits had increased by 50% during his four-year tenure, due to the aforementioned reforms. This growth in opium sales contributed to one-third of the total income of the colony. (According to P. Doumer, *Situation de l'Indochine*, Hanoi, 1902, p.163).

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 192 - 193.

⁵⁴ Nguyen The Anh, *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ...*, *op.cit*, p.181.

Consequently, a single vessel traveling from one province or town to another could be taxed three to four times. Additionally, there were unwarranted taxes such as the anchor tax, tonnage tax, headlight tax, and pilot tax, which were imposed even in areas where there were no pilots or headlights⁵⁵.

In the beginning of 1887, the French colonial authorities made revisions to the tariff regulations by imposing a 5% tax rate on imports from other countries that did not pose a threat to the sales of French products in Tonkin, whereas other goods were taxed at a higher rate of 10%. Subsequently, in the latter half of 1887, a more stringent commercial tax decree was enacted and enforced across the entire Vietnamese and Cambodian territories. This decree granted exemption of taxes on all French goods while imposing taxes ranging from 25% to 100% on goods originating from other countries, contingent upon their category⁵⁶.

Through the aforementioned policies, Vietnam had become an isolated market of French industry, reliant upon the French market. As a result, the French industrial and commercial bourgeoisie were able to benefit freely. In the late 19th century, French industrialists earned a profit of 3 million francs solely from the commercial tax regime in the Cochinchina market⁵⁷.

The French colonialists employed not only taxation but also monopolistic tactics to generate revenue, exemplified by their control over rice exports. Following the occupation of Gia Dinh in 1859, rice exports from Saigon port surged from 58,000 tons in 1860 to 98,000 tons in 1867 and 230,000 tons in 1870. In a mere decade, the volume of rice exports increased fourfold⁵⁸. In order to maximize their profits from rice exports, the French sought to drive down the price of rice from farmers and restricted the export of rice to paddy alone, which allowed for higher taxes on bags. The aforementioned policies implemented by the French have resulted in a severe crisis for the primary occupation of

⁵⁵ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng* (Anti-invasion), Youth Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 2001, p.20.

⁵⁶ Truong Huu Quynh, *Nhìn lại tình hình xã hội Việt Nam nửa sau thế kỷ XIX* (Looking back on the social situation of Vietnam in the second half of the nineteenth century), History Research Journal, 1998, No. 298, 1998, p.30.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.31.

⁵⁸ Nguyen The Anh, *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ...*, *op.cit*, p.150.

the people of Cochinchina, namely paddy farming, which has had a cascading effect leading to the decline of various other occupations⁵⁹.

The colonialists' harsh tactics have led to disruptions in the domestic market, creating significant hardship for the local population. Most concerning, while the French brought rice from Cochinchina to export to Hong Kong, Manila, and Singapore at a low cost, the people of Annam and Tonkin faced rice shortages and had to import rice from Hong Kong. Consequently, the Vietnamese were compelled to purchase their own rice at much higher prices than the rice shipped directly from Saigon⁶⁰.

The French colonialists adopted a similar strategy with regard to other vital commodities, such as salt. In 1897, France established a legal monopoly on table salt, which resulted in a tenfold increase in its price compared to a decade prior. This led to a shortage of salt, particularly among ethnic minorities. Many salt-producing villages along the coast became insolvent due to the harsh tax policies imposed by the colonizers⁶¹.

In relation to the production and sale of alcohol, the French colonialists initially allowed capitalist companies to manufacture and distribute wine. However, in 1897, France established a monopoly on alcohol sales, which led to the coercion of wine producers in Tonkin to sell their products for a mere 0.17 VND/liter of 100-degree wine. The French would then mix two liters of wine together and sell them to agents for 0.14 VND/liter or less. By 1910, the French colonialists had accrued a staggering 45 million francs in profits from the sale of alcohol⁶².

In regards to opium, the French colonialists initially implemented a tax collection regime by selling opium. Eventually, they monopolized the buying, processing, and selling of opium. Throughout Vietnam, there were agents who sold opium and alcohol under the tricolor flag, often labeled as R.A or R.O. It was estimated that for every 1,000 villages in Vietnam, there were 1,500 retailers of alcohol and opium⁶³. French historian Philippe Papin wrote in the book *Lịch sử Hà Nội* (History of Hanoi): "Taxes on salt, alcohol, and opium brought in 80% of the revenue for the all-powerful government's budget, of which

⁵⁹ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *Lịch sử Việt Nam 1858 - 1896* (Vietnamese History 1858 – 1896), ed. Pham Quang Trung, Nguyen Ngoc Co, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi 2003, p.639.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p.639 – 640.

⁶² Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng...*, *op.cit*, p.20.

⁶³ Vo Kim Cuong (editor), *op.cit*, p.104.

opium accounted for more than 50%. Opium consumers were mainly Chinese, comprising about 20%”⁶⁴.

In 1900, the French colonial administration derived significant revenue from indirect taxes, with the salt and opium taxes contributing 11,050,000 VND of the total 13,500,000 VND⁶⁵. Beyond their monopoly on alcohol and opium sales, the French also established numerous tobacco shops, pubs, and casinos⁶⁶. In the late 19th century, these enterprises in Cochinchina alone yielded profits of 2.5 million francs⁶⁷.

The direct tax, including head-money and land-tax, did not become a significant revenue source for the colonial government until the early 1900s⁶⁸. Nevertheless, the French colonialists resorted to harsh measures in the late 19th century to enforce their policy of financial exploitation through these two tariffs on the Vietnamese people.

The head-money tax, as it was called, was imposed on individuals aged 18 to 60. The Nguyen Dynasty previously collected a tax of 14 cents per person, which was then increased by the French colonialists to 30 cents in Annam and 50 cents in Tonkin. On October 12, 1886, the Hue court and the colonial government reached an agreement to impose an unpaid service requirement of 48 days in addition to the head-money tax for each family member. In 1897, Governor General of Indochina Paul Doumer made the decision to sell 20 of those 48 days of service for 2 dong, which was then added to the head-money tax. This caused a sudden surge in the head-money tax rate from 50 cents to 2.5 dong in Tonkin and from 30 cents to 2.3 dong in Annam. These rates were equivalent to the value of the first type of rice per quintal at that time⁶⁹. The Western scholar H.L. James described this tax rate as "prolonging the elastic tax rate on the rubber back of the Annamites"⁷⁰.

⁶⁴ P. Papin, *Lịch sử Hà Nội* (History of Hanoi), translated by Mac Thu Huong, World Publishing House, 2021, p. 221.

⁶⁵ J. Dumarest, *Các công ty độc quyền muối và thuốc phiện ở Đông Dương* (*Les monopoles de l'Opium et du sel en Indochine*), translated by Nguyen Thua Hy, Social Sciences Publishing House, 2020, p. 163.

⁶⁶ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Độc quyền thuốc phiện ở Nam Kỳ cuối thế kỷ XIX* (Opium monopoly in Cochinchina at the end of the 19th century), "Journal of Historical Research", 1994, No. 6, p.69-71.

⁶⁷ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.640.

⁶⁸ Ha Ngai, *Khúc tiêu đồng, hồi ký của một vị quan triều Nguyễn* (Khúc tiêu dong, memoir of a Nguyen Dynasty mandarin), Ho Chi Minh City Youth Publishing House, 2014. p.47.

⁶⁹ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.641.

⁷⁰ H. L. James, *Au pays Annamite*, Paris, 1898, p.9.

Numerous taxes, including land tax, transportation tax, consumption tax, mine tax, property tax, sidewalk tax, and cattle and poultry tax were introduced by the French colonialists. In addition, the people were subjected to various non-economic exploitations, such as the Indochinese silver speculation, in which the Indochina Bank played a crucial role. The bank was founded on January 21, 1875, in Paris, with its management board initially consisting of several prominent French bankers, such as real estate banks and the national discount bank in Paris. Its first branch was opened in Saigon on April 19, 1875, followed by branches in Hai Phong (1885), Hanoi (1886), Da Nang (1891), and other provinces⁷¹. The Indochina Bank had three functions: issuing banknotes, trading, and investing in finance. Capitalizing on the instability of white silver, Indochina Bank engaged in speculation for profit. Its capital grew rapidly, from 8 million francs at its establishment in 1875 to 24 million in 1900, 72 million in 1920, and 157.2 million in 1946⁷². Through its various financial activities, the Indochina Bank established a dominant position in the economic landscape of the late nineteenth century, exerting considerable influence over the operations of the Indochina government itself⁷³.

During the latter years of the 19th century, France faced the need for budgetary resources to support military pacification and suppress the Vietnamese people's resistance against its invasion. Consequently, in addition to transforming Vietnam into a vast tax repository, the French colonial administration was preoccupied with organizing its rule apparatus. As a result, commercial and industrial activities remained in their nascent stages and were of little significance. However, the French policy of expropriating land or facilitating Vietnamese landlords' land-grabbing practices in the agricultural sector caused considerable economic disruptions in Vietnam⁷⁴.

It is important to note that following the colonization of land, the colonizers did not focus on utilizing and exploiting it, but rather left it uncultivated. Even in the instances

⁷¹ (Trung tâm lưu trữ quốc gia I – National Archive Centre N1) <https://www.archives.org.vn/gioi-thieu-tai-lieu-nghiepvu/ngan-hang-dong-duong-%E2%80%93cong-cu-phat-trien-kinh-te-va-lam-giau-cua-thuoc-dia.htm> (accessed on October 24, 2023).

⁷² Institute for Economic, Financial, Monetary and Banking Research under the State Bank of Vietnam (1978), Historical documents of Indochinese money and Indochina Bank from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, Phan Ha Uyen collect, p.84-85.

⁷³ L. Marty, "Reources Economiques de l'Indochine". *L'Indochine Française*, Hanoi: Imprimerie G Taupin & C, 1938, p.214.

⁷⁴ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.642 – 643.

where land was used for plantations, the approach was predominantly reliant on leasing land and implementing feudal-based rent exploitation. The colonizers exhibited limited interest in incorporating agricultural technology and machinery, except for a small number of plantations in Cochinchina. Their primary focus remained on exploiting land and utilizing cheap labor. De Lanessan praised: “The most economically profitable and surest mode of farming for the cultivation of basic crops as well as cash crops is to rent land and get land rent. It greatly reduced the general and surveillance costs of the European colonists, which were much greater in the colony than in France”⁷⁵.

Consequently, the colonial administration has exacerbated poverty levels among the Vietnamese populace. The primary victims of the exploitative policies and deceptive practices implemented by French colonialists were Vietnamese laborers, the vast majority of whom were farmers⁷⁶.

5.2.2 *The French protectorate in Vietnam was formed*

On the 5th of July 1885, De Courcy's army successfully seized the Imperial Citadel in Hue, only to find it deserted by court officials. While en route to protect Ham Nghi⁷⁷, Nguyen Van Tuong surreptitiously surrendered to the French colonial forces at Kim Long church⁷⁸. De Courcy was puzzled by the absence of activity in the imperial city and recognized that immediate imposition of colonial rule could instigate a new Franco-Chinese conflict. Under the provisions of the Tianjin convention, France was only authorized to establish a protectorate in Vietnam, and if a new monarch was installed, there was a risk of opposition from the Vietnamese populace. Consequently, De Courcy was resolute in his determination to return Ham Nghi to the court⁷⁹.

⁷⁵ J. L. De Lanessan, *La colonisation Francaise en Indochine*, Félix Alcan, Editeur, Paris, 1895, p.226.

⁷⁶ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.644.

⁷⁷ Ham Nghi (1871 – 1943), whose real name was Nguyen Phuc Ung Lich (阮福膺籲), was the eighth emperor of the Nguyen dynasty, the last feudal dynasty in the history of Vietnam. In 1884, at the age of 13, Ham Nghi was crowned by Nguyen Van Tuong and Ton That Thuyet. After the failed counter-attack at the Hue Imperial City in 1885, Ton That Thuyet took him outside and proclaimed him as the leader of the Can Vương movement, which opposed French colonial rule. "The king was trained to become patient and faced the turbulent times with a very calm attitude, despite the various challenges he faced". (Phan Tran Chuc, *Vua Hàm Nghi* (King Ham Nghi), Chinh Ky Publishing House, Saigon, 1952, p.142).

⁷⁸ Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ năm 1858 đến cuối thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from 1858 to the end of the 19th century), vol.3, part 2, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 1979, p.402.

⁷⁹ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.184.

Following unsuccessful attempts to persuade Thuyet and Ham Nghi's supporters to surrender, Nguyen Van Tuong and De Courcy resorted to arresting Ton That Thuyet and taking him to the Hue Citadel. Despite Queen Mother Tu Du's efforts to locate and retrieve the king, both he and Thuyet had already fled a significant distance away. This situation prompted De Courcy to opt for a provisional solution, relying on the surrender of Nguyen Van Tuong and other high-ranking mandarins. The French colonialists gradually established a puppet feudal government, and on the 16th of July 1885, De Courcy summoned the princes to the Résident supérieur de l'Annam, appointing King Tu Duc's uncle as head of state and regent of the country. De Chanpeaux was tasked with serving as the minister of infantry, and Nguyen Van Tuong was appointed to lead the Secret Council⁸⁰.

In order to focus on resolving the imperial crisis in Hue, De Courcy called France Parliament and asked to postpone his work in Tonkin to take care of the Annam issue. He summoned Silvestre who was the foreman of Tonkin and the Governor of Hanoi, Nguyen Huu Do, to Hue as a consultant. After discussion, the colonists added to the 1884 Treaty a new annex, abolishing the power of the Vietnamese feudal state that the two previous treaties of Harmand and Patenôtre were still forced to leave⁸¹. Nguyen Van Tuong and Nguyen Huu Do signed this annex on behalf of the Hue court⁸².

However, the French Parliament expressed concerns regarding the upcoming September 1885 elections, which led to a restriction on De Courcy's use of military force and prohibited any reference to the Tonkin matter⁸³. As a result, De Courcy encountered further obstacles due to the prolonged situation. Meanwhile, the righteous movement among the Vietnamese people had spread throughout Annam and Tonkin. The constant marches in an unfamiliar environment with distinct terrain and climate, coupled with frequent epidemics, led to a significant decrease in the French army's numbers. By August 1885,

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p.185.

⁸¹ Article 7 of the Treaty of Patenôtre reads: "...Annamese officials of all ranks will continue to rule and run their affairs under the control of the legacies..." (According to Nguyen Xuan Tho, *op.cit*, p.610). Article 16 of the Treaty of Patenôtre states: "The King of Annam will continue to lead the country's internal affairs as before, except for the limitations set forth in this treaty". (According to *Ibidem*, p.611).

⁸² *Ibidem*, p.185.

⁸³ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.627.

after four months of marching, the death toll among French soldiers in Vietnam had reached 4,000⁸⁴.

Confronted with these circumstances, De Courcy advocated for a swift reorganization of the Hue court. Following the exile of Nguyen Van Tuong and Pham Than Duat (due to failure to complete their tasks)⁸⁵, De Courcy appointed Nguyen Huu Do as the head of the Secret Council, assigned Phan Dinh Binh⁸⁶ (General Governor of Nam Dinh) to the position of Minister of the Board of Finance to oversee government affairs, and directed Nguyen Trong Hop to serve as Viceroy in Tonkin. On September 19, 1885, at the Thai Hoa Palace, they enthroned Ung Ky (Ham Nghi's brother) as the new king, named Dong Khanh⁸⁷.

Following his ascension to the throne, Dong Khanh drafted a letter to the French Government, emphasizing the strong relationship between the Hue court and the French colonial authorities. Subsequently, Dong Khanh issued a decree calling for Ham Nghi to return to the court and reclaim his position as king, while also ordering the loyal nobles who had responded to Ham Nghi's Can Vuong decree to return to the court. He accused Ton That Thuyet of treason and abuse of power⁸⁸. As a means of financial support, the colonists provided a portion of the funds they had seized to the court, which were allocated on a monthly basis to pay the salaries of the kings and mandarins as government employees⁸⁹. In January of 1886, De Courcy was called back to France, and the military

⁸⁴ Nguyen Xuan Tho, *Les début de l'installation du système colonial française au Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)* (The beginning of the installation of the French colonial system in Viet Nam (1858 – 1897)), Hong Duc Publishing House, 2018, p.504.

⁸⁵ Pham Than Duat died on the way to exile, so he had to throw his body into the sea. Nguyen Van Tuong was later exiled to Tahiti island, a few months later he died (July 30, 1886) (According Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.627).

⁸⁶ Phan Dinh Binh (1831–1888) was a renowned mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Vietnamese history. He was the grandfather of King Thanh Thai. (*Từ điển nhà Nguyễn* (Dictionary of the Nguyen Dynasty), vol. 2, N-Y rhyme, ed. by. Vo Huong An, Irvine: Nam Viet, 2015, p.93).

⁸⁷ Do Bang, *Tình hình triều đình Huế trước vụ biến 1885* (Situation of Hue court before the incident of 1885), “Journal of Historical Research”, 1986, No. 2, p.45-51.

⁸⁸ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng...*, *op.cit*, p.644.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p.645.

authority was transferred to General Charles Auguste Louis Warnet⁹⁰. Following this, Paul Bert was appointed as the new general resident of Tonkin and Annam (Résident général de l'Annam et du Tonkin), as well as the commander of the navy and army⁹¹.

Upon his arrival in Vietnam, Paul Bert immediately commenced the task of restructuring the imperial apparatus of Hue, with the aim of solidifying its political and military support for the colonial regime. Through the astute combination of military and political strategies, Paul Bert gradually gained control over the Hue court, from its central to local levels. On April 8th, 1886, Paul Bert arrived in Hanoi and promptly announced his agenda to reform the feudal colonial governance. As per this plan, the old mandarin system was retained. The government structure, ranging from central to local levels, including the king, mandarins, ministries, departments, and mandarins in the countryside, was appointed in accordance with the old regulations. At that time, Governor Paulin Vial wielded administrative power in Tonkin, while Charles Dillon was designated as the French Resident Superior to Hue (Résident supérieur de l'Annam) from 1886 to 1888, followed by Séraphin Hecto from 1888 to 1889. The military forces in Tonkin and Annam were restructured and placed under the command of Lieutenant General Giamot⁹².

To ingratiate himself with the Hue mandarins and mislead the Vietnamese populace, Paul Bert implemented a series of modest reforms, including the establishment of a French-Vietnamese school, a hospital, a City Council, and a Commercial Council in Hanoi and Hai Phong, the reinforcement of the Council of Village Notables in rural regions, and inquiries into taxes, dikes, communes, and villages. Paul Bert also established the so-called "Academy" of 40 members, aimed at attracting Confucian scholars to the French cause. In September of 1886, Paul Bert issued a Convention that functioned as a supple-

⁹⁰ Charles Auguste Louis Warnet (1828-1913), Paris. He was the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army at Tonkin (Commandant en Chef le Corps du Tonkin) and Resident General of the French Republic (Résident Général de la République Française). (Mathilde Tuyet Tran, *Dấu xưa - tàn mạn Lịch sử nhà Nguyễn* (Ancient Traces - Scattered History of the Nguyen Dynasty), Tre Publishing House, 2011, p. 60).

⁹¹ Paul Bert was the one who loudly exhorted to hold Tonkin at the meeting of the French National Assembly (*Assemblée nationale France*) in October 1885. (See Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.186).

⁹² (Kiến thức về Lịch sử Việt Nam - Knowledge of Vietnamese History) <https://vovankienthuc.com/blog/moi-quan-he-cua-hoc-gia-truong-vinh-ky-voi-trieu-dinh-hue-va-tong-tru-su-paul-bert.762> (accessed on November 12, 2023).

ment to the Treaty of June 6, 1884, whereby France obtained complete control over Tonkin. In Annam, France wielded diplomatic, commercial, and financial power, while Paul Bert insisted that Hue only engage in trade with the French⁹³.

The Secret Council of the Hue court acquiesced to the French demand for the right to appoint officials in Tonkin via the Viceroy, who was effectively under French control, without seeking the consent of the Hue court. This resulted in Tonkin, both in substance and form, being effectively subsumed into the French colonial empire, akin to Cochinchina.

With regards to finances, beginning in 1884, the Hue court ceased to receive any income. In Tonkin, where the land was productive, the French obtained complete authority to collect land taxes, leaving only a paltry sum of 1.5 million Francs (equivalent to 1/5 of the revenue) for the Hue court, to be paid in half cash and half rice. This amount was insufficient to maintain a royal court. Furthermore, the French colonialists failed to remit the full payment at once, instead paying only half. The dispute over this matter between the French colonialists and the Hue court persisted until 1888, but remained unresolved⁹⁴. Amidst the famine, the Dong Khanh court consented to the request of the French colonialists, granting them the perpetual authority to regulate, collect, and expend tax revenues in Annam. This was followed by the right to establish police forces across the provinces.

Consequently, the French progressively curtailed the remaining prerogatives of the Hue court, having already stripped it of fundamental rights pertaining to diplomacy, commerce, and military affairs⁹⁵. The 1887 edict empowered the French Resident Superior in Hue to chair the Cabinet Council and attend any session of the Secret Council, as well as to appoint French officials to oversee the administration of any ministry or province at their discretion. Subsequently, French envoys began to emerge in the provinces of Annam, akin to their Tonkin counterparts in the past⁹⁶.

The Dong Khanh edict issued on July 5, 1887, marked the complete cessation of the Hue court's authorities, as stipulated by the Treaty of Patenôtre. Consequently, the Nguyen dynasty was bereft of its previous capacities in diplomacy, military, commerce,

⁹³ Also according to Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op. cit.*, p.187.

⁹⁴ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các vua triều Nguyễn...*, *op.cit.*, p.114.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.115.

⁹⁶ Le Nguyen, *Xã hội Việt Nam thời Pháp thuộc* (Vietnamese society during the French colonial period), Culture and Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005, p.188.

and even its own fiscal autonomy. This paved the way for the French colonialists to impose their governance model in Vietnam by leveraging the pre-existing feudal administrative structure. Nonetheless, this endeavor faced significant challenges in its initial phases⁹⁷.

Despite being forced into exile, Ham Nghi's court continued to wield considerable sway over the populace of Tonkin and Annam. Consequently, a segment of the mandarins refrained from overtly collaborating with the French. Furthermore, the oppressive and ruthless behavior of the colonizers stoked widespread resentment among the masses. In 1891, De Lanessan assumed the post of Governor-General of Indochina, and drawing on his expertise, endeavored to cultivate an alliance with the entrenched feudal landowners in Vietnam. He sought to leverage their support in facilitating the pacification of the region through military means⁹⁸.

Adopting the aforementioned strategy, the French preserved the feudal court in Hue and established a mobile force of up to 4000 Northerners to operate under its jurisdiction. The Hue court and the mobile force were entrusted with collaborating closely with the French military in quashing popular uprisings. Through this approach, the French simultaneously dismantled the vestiges of the feudal court's authority while aligning themselves with the entire feudal hierarchy, ranging from the king to local mandarins. This culminated in the formation of a semi-feudal colonial regime in Vietnam. By 1891, the French had laid a robust groundwork for conducting military pacification and imposing their governance model over the Vietnamese people. This impeded the national liberation movement in the latter half of the 19th century⁹⁹.

5.3 The movement for struggle and the socioeconomic transformation of Vietnam

⁹⁷ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đồng Khánh Khải Định chính yếu...*, *op.cit*, p.135.

⁹⁸ Phan Khoang, *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử* (History of Vietnam during the French colonial period), Khai Tri Publishing House, Saigon, 1960, p.202.

⁹⁹ Duong Trung Quoc, *Việt Nam những sự kiện lịch sử* (Vietnam historical events), Volume II, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1988, p.120.

5.3.1 *The Can Vuong edict¹⁰⁰ of King Ham Nghi and its Implications for Popular Resistance in Vietnam*

The Emergence of the Can Vuong Movement

Before the invasion of the French colonialists, the feudal class represented by the Nguyen court gradually surrendered and accepted to be henchmen for the French colonialists. However, the process of internal division of that class took place. The part with the ideology of war gradually separated, into the warlord faction, which became more and more active, especially after the death of King Tu Duc (July 1883)¹⁰¹. Supporting these activities was the patriotic movement of the masses in all localities.

During that time, the warlord faction garnered significant support from a substantial number of scholars and feudal intellectuals. While some of them had distinguished academic careers and held official positions, the majority were retired officials or individuals possessing extensive knowledge. Despite their lack of court privileges and rural estates, they commanded considerable prestige and earned the respect and trust of the populace. As adherents of Confucianism, they subscribed to the belief that the state should be closely linked to the monarch, that patriotism entailed unwavering loyalty to the king, and that loyalty to the king was tantamount to patriotism. Accordingly, they advocated for the preservation of the monarchy¹⁰².

¹⁰⁰ The term "Can Vuong" refers to the act of assisting the king. On July 5, 1885, Ton That Thuyet accompanied King Ham Nghi and his followers as they relocated the Hue capital to Tan So (Quang Tri). It was there, on July 13 of the same year, that Ton That Thuyet issued the first Can Vuong edict in the name of King Ham Nghi. Due to the relentless pursuit of the French army, Ton That Thuyet led Ham Nghi across Laos to Au Son (Huong Khe, Ha Tinh) to evade capture. It was in this location that Ham Nghi issued his second Can Vuong edict on September 20, 1885.

Both edicts sought to expose the French colonialist plot to invade Vietnam while calling on scholars, literary figures, and the entire Vietnamese populace to join the resistance movement and help protect their homeland. Despite their nominal association with the Can Vuong movement, these proclamations were, in essence, a patriotic struggle against the French invaders by the Vietnamese people. (Dao Duy Anh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ nguồn gốc đến thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from its origin to the 19th century), Culture and Information Publishing House, 2002, p.478).

¹⁰¹ Do Bang, *Biến cố Kinh đô Huế và Phong trào Cần Vương* (Events of Hue Capital and Can Vuong movement), Tri Thuc Publishing House, 2017, p.64.

¹⁰² Dao Duy Anh, *Lịch sử cách mệnh Việt Nam (từ 1862 – 1930)* (Revolutionary history of Vietnam (from 1862 to 1930)), Construction Publishing House, Hanoi, 1955, p.192.

Upon the arrival of French colonial forces in Vietnam, a segment of mandarins and feudal intellectuals, who lived amongst the common folk, drew strength from the nation's unwavering patriotic traditions. The French colonialists' domination of the court deeply offended their conscience, honor, and fortitude. In response, many Cochinchina scholars and feudal intellectuals joined the spontaneous uprisings alongside the local populace, hoping to aid the Hue court in altering the situation. However, the 1883 and 1884 treaties extinguished their remaining aspirations. Consequently, their patriotism, disdain for the enemy, and animosity towards those who colluded with the French colonialists coalesced into a powerful force that propelled them to staunchly align themselves with the people in the pursuit of national independence¹⁰³.

Following the signing of the Treaty of Harmand in 1883, the Hue court issued an edict, at the behest of France, directing the disbandment of any remaining resistance forces in Tonkin. However, both the French colonialists and the Hue court found themselves confounded by the persistence of resistance movements in the region. Despite the decree, the people in areas such as Son Tay, Bac Ninh, and districts surrounding Hanoi, including Hoai Duc, Vinh Thuan, Thanh Oai, Nam Sach, and Ninh Giang (Hai Duong), persisted in their opposition to French rule¹⁰⁴.

The patriotic scholars and feudal intellectuals were only galvanized into action after the outbreak of war against the French army by the warlord faction within the Hue Citadel, culminating in King Ham Nghi's issuance of the Can Vuong decree to rally support for the king. Prior to this, they had been called upon by the Hue court to resist the French, but it was not until this juncture that their patriotism became closely associated with their loyalty to the king. By rising up against the French colonialists, they were undertaking an official act that had previously been impossible under the Nguyen feudal court¹⁰⁵.

Historically, the patriotic people had served as a bolstering force for the warlord faction within the Hue court, and some factions that had previously remained undecided were persuaded to join the anti-French movement. With the backing of the scholarly and

¹⁰³ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Triều Nguyễn và xã hội Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX* (Nguyen Dynasty and Vietnamese society in the 19th century), in *Historical issues of the Nguyen Dynasty*, Past and Present Magazine, Saigon Cultural Publishing House, 2006, p.325.

¹⁰⁴ Hoang Van Lan, Ngo Thi Chinh, *op.cit*, p.96.

¹⁰⁵ Nguyen Dac Xuan. *Kiến Thức Về Triều Nguyễn Huế Xưa* (Knowledge of the Nguyen Dynasty Ancient Hue), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 2004, p.45.

feudal intellectual class, King Ham Nghi's Can Vuong decree emerged as a powerful impetus for the robust growth of the patriotic movement, which manifested as a sustained, fierce and unwavering struggle throughout the final decade of the nineteenth century¹⁰⁶.

Following the issuance of the Can Vuong edict on July 13th, 1885, numerous scholars took up arms in support of the patriotic king's call for resistance against the French and the feudalists who were willing to surrender to them. These scholars adopted the name Can Vuong and rallied forces in support of the nation's righteous cause. In Cochinchina, there were several uprisings under the banner of Can Vuong beginning in early 1885, such as the Quan Hon uprising¹⁰⁷ that occurred in 18 villages of Vuon Tran, even before the commencement of Ham Nghi's and Ton That Thuyet's campaigns.

The period between 1885 and 1888 saw a particularly active and widespread patriotic movement under the Can Vuong banner. This was the time when King Ham Nghi left the Citadel and issued the Can Vuong decree until his arrest in November 1888. The overall chronological view is like that, but geographically, we can also outline the development process of the Can Vuong movement as follows:

During the initial phase, the Can Vuong movement gained widespread momentum in the provinces of Cochinchina. Numerous uprisings broke out in regions including Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Khanh Hoa, fueled by a strong sense of enthusiasm. Notable movements in Quang Nam featured Tran Van Du, Nguyen Duy Hieu, Nguyen Ba Loan, and Nguyen Ham. Quang Ngai saw the emergence of Nguyen Duy Cung, Bui Dien, Nguyen Duc Nhuan, Le Trung Dinh, and Nguyen Tu Tan. Meanwhile, Dao Doan Dinh and Mai Xuan Thuong, who operated in Binh Dinh and the three southern provinces of Annam, led uprisings in that region¹⁰⁸.

In the central region of Annam, the Can Vuong movement was most concentrated in Quang Binh province, which King Ham Nghi chose as the base for operations in Oc-

¹⁰⁶ Nguyen Phan Quang, *Triều Nguyễn và xã hội Việt Nam thế kỷ XIX...*, op.cit, p.162.

¹⁰⁷ Phan Van Hon (1830-1886) was the leader of the uprising against the French that took place between 8 and 9 February 1885. The uprising was defeated. (According to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *Từ điển nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam* (Dictionary of Vietnamese historical figures), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, p.807).

¹⁰⁸ Phan Van Canh, *Phong trào Cần Vương ở Bình Định (1885 – 1887)* (Can Vuong Movement in Binh Dinh) (1885 - 1887)), Hanoi National University of Education Publishing House, 1997, p.85.

tober 1885, following several changes of residence. Ham Nghi led the resistance movement alongside Ton That Thuyet and his two sons, Ton That Dam and Ton That Tiep¹⁰⁹. The movement's combat commanders included Tran Xuan Soan, Le Truc, and Nguyen Pham Tuan, while the generals who directly led the army were Pham Tuong, Tran Van Dinh, Nguyen Tu Nhu, Truong Dinh Hoi, Dang Huu Pho, and Hoang Van Phuc¹¹⁰...

The region of Annam, encompassing Ha Tinh, Nghe An, and Thanh Hoa provinces, was also a hotbed for the Can Vuong movement. Notable figures in the movement included Le Ninh, Nguyen Xuan On, Le Doan Nha, Phan Cat Thu, Nguyen Don Tiet, Nguyen Hanh, Dinh Nha Hanh, Nguyen Phuong, Phan Dinh Phung, Cao Thang, Pham Binh, Dinh Cong Trang, Tong Duy Tan, and Cao Dien¹¹¹.

In the Thai Binh and Nam Dinh areas, notable figures in the Can Vuong movement included Ta Hien, La Xuan Oai, Do Huy Lieu, Vu Huu Loc, and Nguyen Duc Huy. In Bac Ninh, Hung Yen, and Hai Duong, figures such as Nguyen Thien Thuat and Nguyen Cao played prominent roles. In Phu Tho, Nguyen Van Giap was a key figure, while in the Northwest, Ngo Quang Bich led the movement. In Bac Giang, Lang Son, Hoang Dinh

¹⁰⁹ Ton That Dam (1864–1888) was one of the commanders of the Can Vuong movement (1885–1896), which aimed to assist the king in saving the country and restoring Vietnamese feudalism. He was the eldest son of Ton That Thuyet and the brother of Ton That Tiep.

Ton That Tiep (1870–1888) was the second son of Ton That Thuyet. Along with his brother, Ton That Dam, he was one of the commanders of the Can Vuong movement. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *Từ điển nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam* (Dictionary of Vietnamese historical figures), *op.cit*, p.832).

¹¹⁰ Dang Huy Van, *Về cuộc kháng chiến kiên cường và anh dũng của nhân dân Quảng Bình cuối thế kỷ XIX* (On the resilient and heroic resistance of the people of Quang Binh in the late 19th century), “Journal of Historical Research”, 1968, No. 106, p.32-33.

¹¹¹ Phan Ngoc Lien (editor), *Lịch sử lớp 11 (nâng cao)* (11th grade history (advanced), Education Publishing House, 2007, p.256.

Kinh¹¹² was a notable leader, while in the downstream area of the Da river, De Kieu¹¹³ and Doc Ngu¹¹⁴ were also active participants¹¹⁵.

Hence, upon Ham Nghi's call for the Can Vuong movement, local people across Vietnam energetically rose up against the French under the guidance of patriotic scholars and feudal intellectuals. Despite being initiated under the banner of Can Vuong, this movement was, in essence, a patriotic struggle of the Vietnamese people against aggression. Notably, the involvement of the imperial army was entirely absent during this period, and the leaders of the movement were no longer the Nguyen Dynasty's martial officers who fought against the French in the early stages. Instead, they were patriotic scholars and feudal intellectuals who empathized with the plight of the working masses and voluntarily joined them in their fight against the French colonialists.

Regarding the Can Vuong movement in the south of Annam, from Hai Van pass back to Binh Thuan wharf, shortly after the incident broke out, the atmosphere of the uprising was very lively. When Ham Nghi's Can Vuong proclamation was released, patriotic scholars enthusiastically spread to the localities, exhorting the people to respond. The proclamation of the Can Vuong edict was solemnly organized and received.

“A famous Confucian scholar approved the edict, gathered village officials and propertied gentry as well as people in the communal house in the village. There are two

¹¹² Hoang Dinh Kinh (1830–1888) was a Tay leader who led a seven-year uprising against the French (1882–1888) in Lang Giang at the end of the 19th century. (Tran Van Giau, *Việt Nam cách mạng cận sử và Tổng tập* (Vietnam's Near-Historical Revolution and General Volume), vol 1, People's Army Publishing House, 2006, p.391).

¹¹³ De Kieu (1855–1915), whose real name was Hoang Van Thuy, was one of the generals who early on responded to the Can Vuong movement and became famous for his heroic battles against the French. Later, the French resorted to cowardly tricks to force him to surrender and ultimately poisoned him to death. (*Từ điển nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam* (Dictionary of Vietnamese historical figures), ed. by. Dinh Xuan Lam, Truong Huu Quynh, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006, p.126).

¹¹⁴ Nguyen Duc Ngu (?–1892) was born in Hanoi. He had a difficult childhood, rowing a boat from a young age to help his family make a living. When the French first attacked Tonkin in 1873, he was part of the Hue royal court's army stationed in Son Tay. Due to his bravery and many victories, he was promoted to the Commander of a provincial army and thereafter was called Doc Ngu (Commander of a provincial army Ngu). (*Ibidem*, p.437).

¹¹⁵ (Bách khoa toàn thư Việt Nam – phong trào Cần Vương - Encyclopedia of Vietnam - Can Vuong movement) https://bkt.vn/Phong_tr%C3%A0o_C%E1%BA%A7n_V%C6%B0%C6%A1ng (accessed on November 15, 2023).

rows of flags planted on both sides, in the middle is an altar with a yellow canopy, containing the king's edict. The village officials and propertied gentry bowed before the altar. The most famous person opens the lid of the box, pulls out the king's edict, reads it aloud, explains and clearly outlines the duties of each person. In rejoicing, all present swore annihilation of the enemy. They gathered weapons, the most common being a simple spear. Blacksmiths are recruited to forge new spears and organize enlistment. Usually young men had gathered in a camp. And people tried to wear uniforms. Within a few days armies were formed with red flags flying”¹¹⁶.

During the period spanning from approximately October 1886 to June 1887, the Quang Nam insurgents launched a total of thirteen attacks against the French garrison. Furthermore, the Vietnamese army and French army engaged in thirty-seven separate confrontations during this time frame¹¹⁷. In Quang Ngai, patriotic scholars and people under the leadership of Nguyen Ba Loan (the son of Nguyen Ba Nghi¹¹⁸) joined forces with Bui Dien¹¹⁹ and Dang De¹²⁰ in Binh Dinh to attack Nguyen Than's army¹²¹ responsible for Quang Ngai province but betrayed to follow the French). In Nguyen Than's hands at that time there were 1,206 Kinh soldiers, 1580 provincial soldiers, 316 recruits and over 3,000 soldiers from the army of Quang Ngai province. With this number of

¹¹⁶ F. Charles, *Annam, Tonkin (1885 – 1896)*, Paris, 1989, p.46.

¹¹⁷ Dinh Xuan Lam, Nguyen Van Khanh, Nguyen Dinh Le, *Đại cương lịch sử Việt Nam* (General History of Vietnam) vol. 2, Educational Publishing House, 2006, p.218.

¹¹⁸ Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.484-485.

¹¹⁹ Bui Dien (1845–1887), formerly an official of the Nguyen Dynasty, later participated in the Can Vuong movement in Binh Dinh (Vietnam). (Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược* (A Brief History of Vietnam), Times Publishing House, 2010, p.431).

¹²⁰ Dang De (1851–?) was a Confucian scholar and a martyr in the Can Vuong movement in Binh Dinh, Vietnam. (*Ibidem*).

¹²¹ Nguyen Than (1854–1914) was a military officer of the Nguyen Dynasty under the reign of King Dong Khanh. He collaborated with the French colonialists to suppress uprisings during the Can Vuong movement. He was considered a valuable collaborator by the French colonialists in the late 19th century in Vietnam and was regarded by the Vietnamese people as a typical traitor during this historical period. (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.635-636; Phan Boi Chau, *Việt Nam vong quốc sử* (This is a book written in Chinese, translated by Chuong Thau, the content of the book is about the causes of the loss of the country, the current situation and the future of Vietnam), Social Science Publishing House, 2004, p.34).

troops, Nguyen Than gradually pushed back Can Vuong insurgent forces out of Quang Ngai area¹²².

In July of 1885, during the outbreak of the counterattack in Hue, the provincial-level prefectural examination was underway in Binh Dinh. Upon hearing of Ham Nghi's departure from the capital, thousands of soldiers abandoned the exam and hurried back to their hometowns to join the cause. As a result, the Can Vuong movement in Binh Dinh attracted a substantial following, encompassing several thousand individuals from diverse backgrounds, including scholars, feudal intellectuals, youth, farmers, bachelors, and soldiers.

In mid-July of 1885, the Can Vuong insurgency laid siege to and successfully captured the Binh Dinh province. They then proceeded to attack the parishioners and punished any mandarins who remained loyal to the enemy. From July of 1885 onwards, the Can Vuong insurgents in Binh Dinh operated on a vast territory extending from the southern Quang Ngai region to Phu Yen. They valiantly fought against the French army and its auxiliary forces, engaging in several significant battles such as the Cau Doi battle on September 1st, 1885, and the Battle of Cau Truong Uc on the route from Quy Nhon to Binh Dinh. In this battle, the insurgents encountered a marine company supported by artillery, led by General De Courcy and the Résident supérieur de l'Annam De Champeaux¹²³. Due to events in Northern Annam, this army withdrew on September 9th, 1885, leaving behind only a small force. The Can Vuong insurgency in Binh Dinh subsequently regained control over their former territory.

From late 1885 to early 1887, the Binh Dinh movement maintained its momentum, with numerous insurgent bases established throughout the region. Notably, the Loc Dong center in Tuy Vien district (now known as Tay Son district), led by Mai Xuan Thuong¹²⁴, served as a prominent hub of insurgent activity.

¹²² Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Quốc triều chính biên toát yếu* (National Dynastic Essential Compilation), Thuan Hoa Publishing House, Hue, 1998, p.132.

¹²³ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol.I, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, 2001, p.420.

¹²⁴ Mai Xuan Thuong (1860 - 1887), was a scholar and leader of the late 19th century French resistance movement in Binh Dinh, Vietnam. When being captured by Tran Ba Loc (a character will be noted in the back) and lured him to surrender, Mai Xuan Thuong insisted: "*Only take the head of the general, but do not surrender to the general*" (See in Trinh Van Thanh, *Thành ngữ điển tích danh nhân từ điển* (Idioms from the dictionary of famous people), vol. 1, Saigon, 1966, p.733).

Based on French statistics, albeit potentially subject to inaccuracies, the number of insurgent leaders in Binh Dinh at this time reached 1,723 individuals, spanning from marshals and deputy generals to army commanders, governors, managers, and commanders¹²⁵. The participants primarily consisted of young men hailing from both the plains and mountains of Binh Dinh and Gia Lai, representing diverse ethnic groups, including Kinh, Bana, Cham, and H're. Notably, the Bana and H're armies often assumed leading roles in engagements against the enemy¹²⁶.

Around April 1887, the French colonialists dispatched a large force with the effective coordination of the armies of Nguyen Than's henchmen, commanded by Tran Ba Loc¹²⁷. They launched a large-scale attack to destroy the Can Vuong movement in Binh Dinh.

Subsequent to the siege battles, the insurgent army underwent a protracted period of siege and isolation, resulting in the loss of numerous rebel leaders, and a demoralized cadre. Nonetheless, a few leaders tenaciously persisted in the pursuit of their noble objectives, among them being Mai Xuan Thuong, Bui Dien, Bui Hien, and Vuong Toan¹²⁸...

In early June 1887, the French colonialists engaged in discussions with the Dong Khanh court regarding the Can Vuong movement leaders in Binh Dinh. The outcome was the execution of 27 individuals, including Mai Xuan Thuong, who was subjected to dissection. The siblings of Mai Xuan Thuong, such as Mai Xuan Quy and Mai Xuan Khanh, were also put to the sword. Additionally, the French colonialists imposed house arrest on many members of the Mai family¹²⁹.

Consequently, the Can Vuong movement was essentially terminated following the final execution of its leaders in Binh Dinh by mid-June 1887.

¹²⁵ Phan Van Canh, *op.cit*, p.67-69, and Quach Tan, *Nước non Bình Định*, Nam Cuong Publishing House 1967, p.105.

¹²⁶ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.205.

¹²⁷ Tran Ba Loc (1839-1899) was an effective partner of the French colonialists in suppressing many peasant uprisings in South Vietnam in the late 19th century. May 26, 1866, Vice Admiral of the French Navy De La Grandirere praised Loc: "Continue to serve France, the country of which you are one of its proud children". (According to Vuong Hong Sen, *Sài Gòn năm xưa* (Old Saigon), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 1991, p.290).

¹²⁸ These individuals formerly served as mandarins under the Nguyen dynasty and were actively involved in the Can Vuong uprising within the province of Binh Dinh (Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.636).

¹²⁹ See Tran Trong Kim, *Việt Nam sử lược...*, *op.cit*, p.568.

Regarding the Can Vuong movement in central Annam, after Ham Nghi left the capital and proclaimed the movement, the patriotic resistance movement developed rapidly. To counter this, the French colonialists established the Dong Khanh court and organized military campaigns with the support of the court's forces to suppress the rebellion.

Towards the end of July 1885, the French military occupied the Dong Hoi citadel with the intention of obstructing Ham Nghi's route to the North. At the start of August, French forces were dispatched from Da Nang to seize the Vinh citadel. The majority of officials in Vinh retreated to rural areas to engage in combat. Those living in the immediate vicinity of the citadel adhered to a policy of vacating their homes, demonstrating their unwavering refusal to cooperate with the French military. Gosselin's reaction was one of incredulity: "*Mandarins, especially high-ranking mandarins, almost all left, they joined Ton That Thuyet. Ton That Thuyet's influence is increasing day by day. The scholar emerged armed to fight... no one cut the ripe rice in the field. A few rare mandarins remained, but on this side they fondled our troops. On the other hand, they are one with the rebels*"¹³⁰.

From Vinh to Dong Hoi, the French army spread fire and killed people. They destroyed temples, gathered Catholics to easily recruit puppet soldiers and forced the people to supply them with food. This is also the cause of the mistakes of the Can Vuong insurgents, when they advocated burning churches and killing parishioners, making the relationship between Catholics and the people increasingly tense, the national unity bloc was severely affected¹³¹. In February 1886, when knowing that King Ham Nghi had gone to Quang Binh, Ha Tinh, the French invaded Ha Tinh citadel and established a base of Cho Don at estuary of the Gianh River.

In light of the escalating fervor of the local movement, the inadequacy of the 30,000 French troops to quell it became apparent. Consequently, additional agile military con-

¹³⁰ C. Gosselin, *L'Empire d'Annam*, Perrin, Paris, 1904, p.247.

¹³¹ The aforementioned scenario was markedly conspicuous in the context of the Can Vuong insurrection within the South of Annam, specifically within the provinces of Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh (According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XVIII, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1999, p.73-74).

tingents were dispatched towards the northern territories from the central region to counteract the uprising. The resultant dearth of French forces in the central region engendered significant trepidation within the Dong Khanh court¹³².

To assuage the precarious state of affairs, Dong Khanh adopted a dual-pronged approach. Firstly, he embarked on a tour of Tonkin to implore the populace to desist from further resistance. Secondly, the Dong Khanh court endeavored to create a proxy military force under the guise of the imperial army. Thanks to the French army paved the way, Dong Khanh's forces had a hard time reaching Dong Hoi. Following a stay of three weeks, the monarch was hesitant to proceed further, nor was he inclined to return via land. Consequently, court officials accompanied the king on a French vessel back to Hue. The political objective of the Tonkin march was categorically unsuccessful, and the populace harbored animosity towards the puppet king, who was perceived as being in cahoots with the French¹³³.

After the unsuccessful tour to Tonkin, the French colonialists and Dong Khanh issued an edict to call the scholar to surrender. The ploy involved enticing them with monetary inducements and isolating them from the patriotic movement, thereby severing their ties with Ton That Thuyet.

Despite the machiavellian stratagem employed by the French colonialists and Dong Khanh, the patriots remained steadfast, and no resistance leader capitulated to the puppet regime of Dong Khanh. Meanwhile, the autonomy of the Hue court was gradually eroded under the relentless pressure and chicanery of the colonialists. As a result, by the close of 1886, the Dong Khanh court's control over the central Annam region had significantly weakened, extending only as far as Quang Binh. Court-appointed mandarins and French officials were apprehensive to travel anywhere, and even assuming responsibility necessitated the accompaniment of French troops and the establishment of French military encampments in close proximity to their bases of operation¹³⁴.

¹³² Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.207.

¹³³ Dinh Xuan Lam (editor), *Đại cương lịch sử Việt Nam...*, *op.cit*, p.85.

¹³⁴ According to Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên*, vol. XXXVII, 1977, *op.cit*, p.186.

Most of the roads in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh were blocked by the insurgents¹³⁵. The rebel army led by Le Truc¹³⁶ was active. They continuously surrounded and attacked the enemy's stronghold.

In Quang Tri, the French tried to hold Dong Hoi citadel. In early 1886, they were so surrounded by insurgents that they could not get out of the city. Fortunately, thanks to the reinforcements from Hue, they escaped from being annihilated. It was not until the end of 1886, thanks to the organization of the puppet troops, that the enemy's power began to expand. Particularly in Thua Thien Hue, because it was close to Hue capital, the Can Vuong movement was worse. Here, the French army has organized more or less puppet bases¹³⁷.

The French colonialists, in turn, unsuccessfully attempted to attack Ham Nghi's base on three separate occasions between the end of 1885 and the end of 1886¹³⁸.

Starting in mid-1887, the Can Vuong movement in Quang Binh began to experience a decline in strength due to the unrelenting sweeping campaigns by the enemy. Approximately in March of 1886, Ton That Thuyet journeyed to China to solicit assistance¹³⁹.

¹³⁵ Dinh Xuan Lam, *Tìm hiểu về phong trào Cần Vương Hà Tĩnh (1885 – 1893)* (Learn about Can Vuong movement in Ha Tinh (1885 - 1893)), "Journal of Historical Research", 1993, No. 269, p.71-73.

¹³⁶ Le Truc (1828-1918) was a martial officer of the Nguyen Dynasty and the leader of the Can Vuong insurgent army in the late 19th century in Quang Binh. (Trinh Van Thanh, *op.cit*, p.126).

¹³⁷ See Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.208.

¹³⁸ Pham Van Son, *Việt Nam cách mạng sử* (Vietnamese revolutionary history), Saigon, Khai Tri Publishing house, 1963, p.38.

¹³⁹ Nguyen Quang Trung Tien, *Tôn Thất Thuyết anh hào lắm nỗi nhiều khê* (Ton That Thuyet, a hero with many challenges, "Journal of Science and Technology Information", 1995, vol. 8, No 2, p.20.

Meanwhile, Nguyen Pham Tuan was fatally wounded and passed away¹⁴⁰. The captured rebels would rather die than declare the king's whereabouts¹⁴¹.

As military action proved to be ineffective, the French resorted to political machinations. In this regard, Dong Khanh dispatched Hoang Ta Viem to Quang Binh as a vice-roy with the aim of persuading Ham Nghi and the insurgents to capitulate¹⁴². However, this effort proved futile. It was Le Truc, a resolute figure who could not be swayed by the French, who authored a letter unmasking their insidious ploy to create a schism between non-Christian and Christian factions: “Following the incident in the capital, the priest was responsible for instigating massacres and looting. During my tenure in Quang Binh, I had to urge the soldiers to restore order. In December of the previous year, I issued orders to restore peace between non-Christians and Christians. However, the French established a garrison at Minh Cam with the aim of penetrating inland, which naturally caused anxiety among the people. Therefore, I suggest that the French remove their garrison at Minh Cam and return to Quang Khe, which would contribute to a peaceful situation”¹⁴³.

¹⁴⁰ Nguyen Pham Tuan (1842–1887) was a patriot and mandarin under the Nguyen Dynasty. In 1883, when he heard the news that the Hue court had surrendered to the French colonialists, Nguyen Pham Tuan resigned his position and actively participated in the Can Vuong movement (*Từ điển nhà Nguyễn* (Dictionary of the Nguyen Dynasty), vol. 2, N-Y rhyme,... *op.cit*, p. 276).

When the French army launched major attacks on Nguyen Pham Tuan's forces, which included about 100–200 insurgents guarding them, the attack began on April 8, 1887. Mr. Tuan was caught in an unexpected situation and did not have time to arrange his troops for battle. As the French army closed in on the station, he quickly took the command sword, the casket containing the seal of King Ham Nghi, and the papers of the Secret Council, intending to escape, but he was shot before he could get away. At 5:00 p.m. the next day, he succumbed to his severe injuries (*Ibidem*, p.277).

Ironically, this loss resulted in a reward for the person who shot Mr. Tuan: “The French official (name unknown) who defeated and killed Nguyen Pham Tuan obtained the seal of King Ham Nghi. He was awarded a medium-class golden tray by the Hue court. The French soldiers and internees were also rewarded with money according to their ranks” (*Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn* (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), vol. XXXVII, *op.cit.*, p.269).

¹⁴¹ L. M. Cadière, *Quelques papiers du capitaine Mouteaux* (*Mấy trang tài liệu của đại úy Mouteaux*), *Bulletin des amis du vieux Hué*, vol. 1, 1944, p.64.

¹⁴² He had initially been associated with the belligerent faction, but subsequently shifted his allegiance to the pacifist camp (According to Nguyen Quang Thang, Nguyen Ba The, *op.cit*, p.240).

¹⁴³ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng...*, *op.cit*, p.94.

Shortly thereafter, Le Truc's base was attacked, resulting in the decimation of his entire insurgent army, although Le Truc managed to evade capture¹⁴⁴. Le Truc surrendered in December 1888, and others withdrew to live in seclusion¹⁴⁵.

In broad terms, following an active phase, the Can Vuong movement demonstrated evident indications of regression across Vietnam from 1887 onwards.

The insurgents encountered mounting challenges as their operational scope was increasingly constrained; their movements were impeded by French occupation of the plains and their food supplies were raided. Additionally, Ham Nghi was not apprised of the prevailing circumstances and persisted in taking risks within a limited terrain characterized by scarcity of land, personnel, and provisions. Hence, despite detecting indications of disloyalty in Truong Quang Ngoc, he was compelled to leverage the latter's influence as a regional leader¹⁴⁶.

Towards the end of 1887 and the beginning of 1888, Ton That Tiep and Ton That Dam endeavored to alleviate the siege by launching initiatives in the Ha Tinh and Quang Binh deltas. Despite the arduous combat and living circumstances, the leaders of the Ham Nghi-led movement remained resolute in their conviction, buoyed by the unwavering adulation, reverence, and unwavering support of the diverse ethnic communities residing in Quang Binh.

By the close of the summer of 1888, the operational landscape of the Quang Binh insurgent army exhibited a modest improvement. In the subsequent autumn, the French relinquished control of several forts along the upper Gianh river, thereby furnishing a favorable opening for the Can Vuong rebels to regain ascendancy. Nonetheless, this juncture also witnessed the emergence of a treacherous conspiracy involving Nguyen Dinh Tinh, a member of the king's guard. Tinh and Ngoc colluded, and the French military orchestrated an assault on Ham Nghi's domicile. Subsequently, the guards stationed to protect Ham Nghi were ambushed and slain. When Ham Nghi beheld the encirclement, he brandished his sword in defiance but eventually relinquished it to Ngoc, stating: "*You just kill me, it is better than forcing me to hand it over to the French*"¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁴ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.201.

¹⁴⁵ See Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty) *Dai Nam thuc luc chinh bien* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Social Science Publishing House, volume XXXVIII, Hanoi, 1978, p.140.

¹⁴⁶ Dao Duy Anh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ nguồn gốc đến thế kỷ XIX...*, *op.cit*, p.479.

¹⁴⁷ Tran Van Giau, *Chống xâm lăng...*, *op.cit*, p.100.

Thereafter, the French colonial authorities transferred Ham Nghi to Thuan An and subsequently exiled him to Algeria¹⁴⁸. The apprehension of Ham Nghi engendered a transient spell of ambivalent and wavering sentiments among the ranks of the insurgent army and the Can Vuong movement nationwide. In Quang Binh, Ton That Dam convened the surviving generals and courtiers to convene to his birthplace and await a propitious opportunity, refraining from pledging allegiance to either the French or the feudal court. Subsequently, he committed suicide in the Hoanh Son mountain after composing a letter of contrition to Ham Nghi, admitting to dereliction of his fiduciary obligations¹⁴⁹. The Can Vuong movement in Quang Binh, after three years of resistance against the enemy, was ultimately disbanded¹⁵⁰.

Upon receiving news of the king's detention, the demise of his son and the suicide of the other, Ton That Thuyet, while anguished, remained undaunted and persisted with his endeavors. Although he was unable to return to his homeland, he remained resolute in his undertakings until his demise in 1913¹⁵¹.

Although the cumulative losses mentioned above were significant, they did not cause the end of the Can Vuong movement. From the end of 1888, the Can Vuong movement entered its second phase, known as the phase without a king. Despite numerous uprisings being quelled from 1889 onwards, the movement continued to grow and deepen, culminating in large-scale, highly organized uprisings. These uprisings, such as the Bai

¹⁴⁸ Phan Tran Chuc, *Vua Hàm Nghi...*, *op.cit*, p.142.

¹⁴⁹ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.213.

¹⁵⁰ Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn (National Historical Bureau of Nguyen Dynasty), *Đại Nam thực lục chính biên* (Veritable Records of the Great South), Vol III, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Institute of History, 2006, tr. 126.

¹⁵¹ Tran Trong Kim, *op.cit*, p.550.

Say¹⁵², Hung Linh¹⁵³, and Huong Khe uprisings¹⁵⁴, operated over wide areas and successfully mobilized popular support. Consequently, even without the leadership of Ham Nghi, these uprisings persisted until 1896. The Can Vuong movement ultimately ended completely after the failure of the Huong Khe uprising in 1896.

Author Nguyen The Anh, in the book *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các triều vua nhà Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society under the Nguyen Dynasty kings) outlined the reasons for the failure of the Can Vuong movement:

Firstly, the local nature of the movement: The failure of the Can Vuong movement was due to its resistance being primarily local in nature. The movements had not yet unified into a cohesive bloc strong enough to effectively combat the French. Can Vuong leaders only had prestige in their own regions, and their strong local spirit led them to oppose unification on a larger scale. When leaders were captured or died, their troops either dispersed or surrendered¹⁵⁵.

Secondly, relations with the people: These armies were not very popular in rural areas because, in order to sustain themselves and maintain combat operations, they had to plunder from the local populace¹⁵⁶.

Thirdly, conflict with religion: The unjust massacre of Catholics by the Can Vuong army forced Catholics to defend themselves by informing the French. French statistics show that more than 20,000 Catholics were killed by the Can Vuong army¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵² The Bai Say uprising, which occurred between 1883 and 1892, was a significant event in the late 19th century Can Vuong movement, whereby Dai Nam residents revolted against French colonial rule. It was among the most prominent anti-French strongholds during that era. (Dinh Xuan Lam (editor), *Đại cương lịch sử Việt Nam...*, *op.cit*, p.70).

¹⁵³ The Hung Linh Uprising was a rebellion within the Can Vuong movement against the French at the end of the 19th century in Vietnamese history. This uprising began in 1887 in Hung Linh (Vinh Loc, Thanh Hoa) and ended in October 1892. (*Ibidem*, p.77 and Pham Van Son, *Việt Sử tân biên* (Revised History of Vietnam), Volume IV, Khai Tri Publishing House, 1961, p.137).

¹⁵⁴ The Huong Khe uprising, spanning from 1885 to 1896, represented the zenith of the Can Vuong movement. Regrettably, the suppression of this uprising signified the culmination of a decade-long endeavor by Vietnam's patriotic feudal class to resist the French colonialists. (Dinh Xuan Lam (editor), *Đại cương lịch sử Việt Nam...*, *op.cit*, p.83).

¹⁵⁵ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các triều vua nhà Nguyễn* (Vietnam's economy and society under the Nguyen Dynasty kings)..., *op.cit*, p.108.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.102.

Fourthly, ethnic conflict: The policy of dismissing Vietnamese officials and granting broad autonomy to ethnic minorities led these groups to side with the French. It was the Montagnards who captured Ham Nghi, and the Thai, Man, Meo, Nung, and Tho¹⁵⁸ tribes severed the Can Vuong army's communication lines with China, depleting their weapons supplies. Familiar with the mountains and forests, they also helped the French army effectively combat guerrilla warfare¹⁵⁹.

According to Dao Duy Anh, in addition to the lack of organizational connection and unity (similar to the "local nature" that Nguyen The Anh noted), the Can Vuong movement failed for several other reasons¹⁶⁰:

First, the backward and underdeveloped production base meant that rudimentary weapons could not compete with France's modern weaponry.

Second, the forces and tactics employed were insufficient. The uprisings were not strong enough and could only exploit the enemy's weaknesses and loopholes; they were not capable of engaging in direct warfare with the enemy's regular forces.

Third, the fighting spirit was lacking. Except for a few leaders who were determined to fight to the end and die for their country, many insurgent leaders quickly laid down their weapons and surrendered when the balance of power shifted unfavorably for the insurgents. This caused the movement to rapidly weaken and disintegrate.

Historian Wieslaw Olszewski, in his analysis of the fall of Vietnamese independence, wrote the following about the aftermath of the Can Vuong movement's defeat: "The defeat of the "Can Vuong" definitively closed nearly a thousand years of independent, feudal Vietnamese statehood. From this defeat, the state in such a form would no longer rise. The uprising could not have succeeded anyway. Neither the potential of the backward country nor the overwhelming superiority of the colonizers allowed it. The poorly armed insurgent units were unable to counterbalance the thousands-strong, modernly armed, and well-trained French expeditionary corps. The imperial edict also offered nothing original. The annihilated dynasty, instead of a general program at least, as in centuries past, appealed to mere loyalty—loyalty to those equally responsible for the failures, the gradual loss of state sovereignty, and the deep crisis of formation and superstructure. At

¹⁵⁸ These are Vietnam's ethnic minorities. (Tran Ngoc Them, *Tìm về Bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam* (Searching for Vietnamese Cultural Identity), Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 2001, p.9).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p.109.

¹⁶⁰ Dao Duy Anh, *Lịch sử Việt Nam từ nguồn gốc đến thế kỷ XIX* (History of Vietnam from its origin to the 19th century)...*op.cit*, p.478.

a time when traditional ties in their traditional form were becoming a thing of the past, the attempt to restore the old system could not win many supporters. Nor could it mobilize the entire society for the struggle”¹⁶¹.

In conclusion, the Can Vuong movement represents a significant chapter in Vietnamese history, reflecting the complexities and challenges of resistance against colonial powers. Despite its ultimate failure, the movement showcased the determination and resilience of various regional leaders and their followers. The Can Vuong movement's efforts laid the groundwork for future nationalist endeavors, highlighting both the potential and the limitations of localized uprisings in the broader context of anti-colonial struggles. Its legacy continues to be a testament to the enduring spirit of resistance and the quest for independence in Vietnam.

5.3.2 The transformation in Vietnamese society

In terms of education, in pursuit of their colonization agenda, the French colonial authorities prioritized the training of interpreters and administrative personnel at both central and local levels. Additionally, the French sought to promulgate the notion of their civilizing mission in Indochina. The establishment of French educational institutions gradually eroded the primacy of Chinese characters. Although schools that taught Chinese characters and Confucianism persisted in rural areas of Annam and Tonkin, Confucian scholars aspiring to become mandarins were required to pass the French examination¹⁶².

The colonial administration in Cochinchina demonstrated a greater emphasis on education than in Tonkin and Annam. By 1886, Cochinchina had 343 schools with 600 teachers, including 97 French instructors, and an enrollment of 18,231 students. Although French-Vietnamese schools were established, Chinese-language institutions still persisted with 426 teachers and 9,000 students¹⁶³.

In November 1896, with the aim of co-opting and seducing the elite, the French colonial authorities founded the Hue National Academy for the Gifted, also known as Hue High School for the Gifted or Quoc Hoc – Hue High School. This institution was placed under the control of the Résident supérieur de l'Annam, the French Ambassador to Annam. The academy specifically admitted the offspring of prominent Vietnamese mandarins to cultivate a cadre of loyal collaborators to the colonial regime.

¹⁶¹ W. Olszewski, *Historia Wietnamu*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1991, p.253.

¹⁶² Phan Trong Bau, *Giáo dục Việt Nam thời cận đại* (Modern Vietnamese Education), Hanoi, 1994, p.48.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, p.51.

In the effort to train Vietnamese officials to serve the colonial government, the Collège des stagiaires was established in Cochinchina in 1873, later renamed as the College des Interprètes. The Colonial School (Ecole Coloniale) was established in Paris at the end of 1889, after the French colonialists formed the Indochina Federation (Union indochinoise, later known as Fédération indochinoise after 1947). These institutions were dedicated to producing a cadre of individuals who would serve the colonial government in various capacities)¹⁶⁴.

During the late nineteenth century, Western civilization was introduced to Vietnam from a cultural standpoint. To facilitate the exchange of ideas and to foster mutual cultural understanding, eminent Vietnamese scholars and French educators founded the Tonkin Academy. The primary objective of this institution was to promote French civilization while simultaneously educating the French on Vietnamese culture. In addition, the Vietnamese script was introduced into schools in Cochinchina, and it subsequently spread to Tonkin and Annam after its successful implementation.

With the help of the French, in Cochinchina at the end of the nineteenth century, newspapers written in Vietnamese script appeared such as *Nam Kỳ*, *Gia Định báo*, *Thông loại khóa trình...*¹⁶⁵. Some official documents were also written in Vietnamese script.

Truong Vinh Ky became the editor-in-chief of *Gia Định journal* (1865) and published many books in Vietnamese script¹⁶⁶. In 1877, he translated *Truong Luong tùng xích tông tử du phú*; 1881 introduced *Gia huấn ca*; then *Phú bản truyện*, *Phép lịch sự Annam* (An Nam Courtesy) (1883); he translated *Đại học*, *Mạnh Tử*, *Huân Mông*, published books on literature such as *Lục Vân Tiên*, *Phan Trần* (1889); a number of books supporting French, Confucian and national languages such as *Từ điển địa lý Pháp – Việt*, *Việt – Pháp* (French-Vietnamese, Vietnamese-French Geographical Dictionary); *Từ điển*

¹⁶⁴ Duong Kinh Quoc, *Chính quyền thuộc địa ở Việt Nam trước Cách mạng tháng Tám 1945* (Colonial government in Vietnam before the August Revolution 1945), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1988, p.265.

¹⁶⁵ According to Tran Nhat Vy, Truong Minh Ky-Unknown Vietnamese script writer and journalist (Trương Minh Ký-Nhà văn, nhà báo Quốc ngữ chưa được vinh danh), Past and Present, No. 502, December 2018, p.8 – 9:(<https://elearning.tdmu.edu.vn/elearning-book/T%E1%BA%A1p%20Ch%C3%AD%20S%E1%BB%91%20H%C3%A1/TranNhatVy502.pdf>) (accessed on November 20, 2023).

¹⁶⁶ Hoang Xuan Viet, *Tìm hiểu lịch sử chữ Quốc ngữ* (Learn the history of the Vietnamese script). Ho Chi Minh City: Culture and Information Publishing House, 2006, p.273.

địa lý Annam (Geographical Dictionary of Annam); *Đại Nam nhân vật bị khảo* (Dai Nam character being tortured)...¹⁶⁷

The emergence and popularization of the Vietnamese script has become a gentle vehicle carrying new streams of thought¹⁶⁸ so that it later becomes a weapon of the Vietnamese nation's struggle against colonialism and feudalism.

Changes in the economic structure

In terms of economic structure, during the latter half of the 19th century, the Vietnamese economy underwent significant fluctuations in its economic structure. Despite these fluctuations, however, the fundamental economic structure of Vietnam remained largely unchanged. The agricultural and handicraft sectors continued to dominate the economy. While traditional factors persisted in these two sectors, new elements began to emerge.

Regarding agriculture, while there was a notable increase in arable land area, it remained insufficient to compensate for the number of abandoned fields resulting from natural disasters, crop failure, and the ongoing conflict. This displacement of farmers was observed in various regions. For instance, in 1882, Thanh Hoa province reported an abandoned land area of 36,522 acres, accounting for approximately 18% of the province's total arable land¹⁶⁹.

The aforementioned circumstance has had a considerable impact on Vietnamese society. For several reasons, the ratio of public land, including land tenure and farm land, increased significantly during this period compared to the beginning of the century. In some coastal regions, the land tenure and farm land proportion occasionally ranged from 40% to 50%, while the ratio of popularity land rose from 25% to 30%¹⁷⁰.

Agricultural production was still monoculture. The vast majority of the arable area was planted only with rice. Due to outdated technology, the yield was not high (about 9 quintals/ha – the lowest in Southeast Asia).

Towards the conclusion of the 19th century, French capitalists intensified their appropriation of peasants' lands in Vietnam. In 1888, the Governor General of Indochina

¹⁶⁷ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.289.

¹⁶⁸ Hoang Xuan Viet, *op.cit*, p.324.

¹⁶⁹ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các vua Nguyễn...*, *op.cit*, p.118.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p.120.

issued a decree, granting colonial landowners the authority to establish plantations referred to as "derelict land"¹⁷¹. Subsequently, in 1897, the Hue court signed a treaty, conceding to the French the right to reclaim wasteland. On May 1, 1900, the French colonialists released a decree that revoked the land ownership of Nguyen kings, thus enabling them to freely confiscate the land of the Vietnamese populace. As a result, by 1890, the colonialists only occupied 10,900 hectares of land across the entire country. In contrast, by 1900, they had taken over 301,000 hectares of land, and in 1912, the number reached 470,000 hectares, all for plantation farming¹⁷². The business methodology utilized in the French plantations was still mainly founded on feudal exploitation. The colonizers showed less interest in modern technology, leading to land degradation and exhaustion of labor power.

Apart from rice, French capitalists started importing several crops into Vietnam, including tobacco, castor, coffee, and rubber, which exhibited significant potential. Nonetheless, at this juncture, these crops were only being tested and had not been widely cultivated like traditional crops¹⁷³.

Regarding handicrafts, by the middle of the 19th century, Vietnamese handicrafts were quite developed. Some occupations have tended to separate from agriculture to form craft villages or craft streets, for example pottery in Bat Trang, Tho Ha; silk weaving in Van Phuc, La Khe (Ha Dong), Bao An (Quang Nam), casting in Dai Bai (Bac Ninh); goldsmithing in Chau Khe (Hai Duong), Dong Xam (Thai Binh); paper making in Yen Thai (Hanoi), Phong Khe (Yen Phong, Bac Ninh); mat weaving in Hoi village (Thai Binh), Phat Diem (Ninh Binh)¹⁷⁴.

When the French colonialists opened fire to invade Vietnam, Vietnam's handicrafts began to be affected and dominated by the war such as shipbuilding, weapon making, gun casting, and bullet making. In addition to state-managed craft workshops, a number of folk craft workshops have sprung up in many places. The profession of milling and food processing began to appear, especially in Saigon and Cho Lon areas.

¹⁷¹ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.284.

¹⁷² Nguyen Khac Dam, *Thủ đoạn bóc lột của thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam* (Exploiting tricks of the French colonialists in Vietnam), Văn Sử Địa Publishing House, 1957, p.132.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p.137.

¹⁷⁴ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.773.

The pottery industry in Vietnam, particularly the production of bricks, tiles, and construction materials, has undergone significant development in recent times. For instance, in 1882, each brick kiln in Cho Lon produced approximately 480,000 bricks annually, amounting to a total of 14 million bricks manufactured in the region each year¹⁷⁵. Moreover, in addition to Saigon, Cho Lon had several construction material production facilities across provinces like My Tho, Sa Dec, Chau Doc, Ba Ria, and Tra Vinh within Cochinchina.

In general, during the latter half of the 19th century, the handicraft industry in Vietnam underwent changes, either due to the impact of war or the demands of French capitalist colonialism and exploitation. However, in terms of technical structure, production methods, and consumption patterns, the industry remained similar to that of the first half of the 19th century. Most handicraft activities were still closely tied to agriculture and existed as a family-based side occupation. Large-scale, pre-capitalist workshops had yet to emerge¹⁷⁶.

During this era, various new economic sectors emerged. The industrial sector saw significant growth, with the exploitation of numerous coal mines in Dong Trieu, Hon Gai, and Quang Ninh. The annual coal production in Indochina reached hundreds of thousands of tons, contributing to the region's economic development.

¹⁷⁵ Nguyen Van Khanh, *Cơ cấu kinh tế xã hội Việt Nam thời thuộc địa* (The socio-economic structure of Vietnam in the colonial period), National University Publishing House, Hanoi, 2000, p.72.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p.90.

Coal production at the end of the 19th century¹⁷⁷

Year	Output (tons)
1892	95.000
1893	143.000
1894	146.000
1895	131.000
1896	187.000
1897	203.000
1898	244.000
1899	276.000
1900	201.000

Most of the coal mined has been sold to the world market. In 1895, Hon Gai coal mine exported 12,000 tons of coal¹⁷⁸.

Along with mining, the French colonialists also opened a number of industrial facilities in cities such as Hai Phong Power Plant, Nam Dinh Yarn Factory, Hanoi Yarn Factory (1894), Hanoi Power Plant (1895), Hai Phong Cement Factory (1899)¹⁷⁹.

Towards the close of 1895, Cochinchina had a total of 200 rice mills dedicated to exportation¹⁸⁰. Alongside these mills, various other manufacturing plants specializing in wine production, match-making, brick and tile firing, as well as lime calcination, were established throughout the country.

In the agricultural sector, the French landowners rapidly expanded their plantations' land area until the conclusion of the nineteenth century. According to the decrees of October 5, 1889 and October 15, 1890, the colonialists were authorized to petition for a single grant of 500 hectares of land¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁷ Led by Cao Van Bien, *Công nghiệp than Việt Nam thời kì 1888 – 1945* (Vietnam coal industry in the period 1888 – 1945), Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.10.

¹⁷⁸ Tran Van Giau, *Giai cấp công nhân Việt Nam* (Vietnamese Working Class), Truth Publishing House, 1958, p.53.

¹⁷⁹ Phan Khoang, *Việt Nam Pháp thuộc sử...*, *op.cit*, p.409.

¹⁸⁰ According to Nguyen Van Khanh, *op.cit*, p.29.

¹⁸¹ Truong Huu Quynh, *Nhìn lại tình hình xã hội Việt Nam nửa sau thế kỷ XIX...*, *op.cit*, p.29.

The Governor General of Indochina issued a decree in July 1888 and particularly on August 18, 1896, which granted the French broad and conditional concessions to appropriate the land of the peasants. Through this decree, the colonial government enabled the French landowners to acquire an entire region. The concession declaration procedure was uncomplicated. The landowner only needed to report the area, location, landmarks, and pay a fee of 1 dong/ha to apply for the land. After two years, the landowner was obliged to utilize 1/5 of the reported area, and after five years, tax payment was required for the entire area. Additionally, the landowner held the right to ownership of both the land and all resources beneath and above the ground, including forests and mines¹⁸².

Drawing on this decree, the French and their Vietnamese collaborators endeavored to expropriate the land of the peasants, resulting in the establishment of numerous large plantations. According to French statistical data, there were 116 European-owned plantations by 1890, with the majority located in Cochinchina. By 1900, the area of European plantations had expanded to 322,000 hectares, of which 78,000 hectares were situated in Cochinchina¹⁸³.

In these plantations, the French owners still mainly exploited in the way of renting land and getting land rent. Tenants have to rent farm tools, cattle, plow hoes, and borrow rice seeds with high interest rates. Rice was the main crop. From 1888 on, a number of French plantations began to grow coffee trees and rubber trees. In 1893, Vietnamese tea products were first exported to France, but the quantity was still small, mainly to introduce products¹⁸⁴.

In commerce, until the end of the 19th century, due to France's lack of established political control in Vietnam, initially it focused solely on business and trade. However, subsequent to the French occupation of Tonkin, the colonial administration shifted its attention towards the development of technology-based industries. The French administration endeavored to transform the Indochinese market, an integral part of the East Asian market, into a market that was reliant upon the French imperialist system. To achieve this objective, the French implemented protectionist trade policies through tariff policies, which aimed to outcompete Chinese, Indian, and Southeast Asian goods from

¹⁸² Ta Thi Thuy, *Đồn điền người Pháp ở Bắc Kỳ 1884 – 1918* (French plantation in Tonkin 1884-1918), World Publishing House, Hanoi, 1996, p.20.

¹⁸³ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.776.

¹⁸⁴ Nguyen The Anh, *Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các vua Nguyễn...*, *op.cit*, p.114 – 115.

1887 onwards. Under these tariff laws, French imports into Vietnam were taxed at a rate of only 2.5%, whereas imports from other countries were subjected to a 5% tax on their value¹⁸⁵.

In addition, on January 11, 1892, France issued a new law that granted complete tax exemption for French goods and imposed import duties of 25% to 120% of the value of goods from other countries¹⁸⁶. With this policy, French colonialists gradually established a monopoly on trade, turning Vietnam into a captive market for their goods. This practice eroded traditional Vietnamese handicraft production and compelled the Vietnamese people to purchase French goods at exorbitant prices¹⁸⁷.

In the process of colonializing and subjugating Vietnam, the French implemented various exploitative economic policies, in addition to their military repression and pacification efforts. In Cochinchina, capitalist production facilities, such as rice mills and ship repair workshops, emerged, while Tonkin saw the establishment of mining, winery, textile, and mechanical factories. Nonetheless, the proportion of Vietnam's economy influenced by French capital remained small until the end of the 19th century, with agriculture and handicrafts remaining the dominant industries. Although new economic sectors, such as industry and plantation economy, emerged and grew as a result of French investment and exploitation¹⁸⁸.

Building on the economic changes of the late 19th century, significant changes in social class structure also began to occur in Vietnam.

Prior to 1858, Vietnam had a limited number of cities, with only Cho Lon and Hanoi exhibiting notable size, while the others remained quite small. Provinces, districts, and provincial capitals were primarily centers of governance rather than commercial hubs. However, towards the conclusion of the nineteenth century, cities began to experience gradual expansion. Hai Phong and Saigon emerged as two significant seaports, with select regions possessing electric lighting and railway infrastructure. These cities also began to feature a diversity of social classes, including citizens, laborers, petty bourgeoisie, and bourgeoisie¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁵ Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit*, p.777.

¹⁸⁶ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.287 – 288.

¹⁸⁷ Nguyen Khac Dam, *Thủ đoạn bóc lột của thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam...*, *op.cit*, p.145.

¹⁸⁸ Le Quoc Su, *Một số vấn đề về lịch sử kinh tế Việt Nam (Some issues on economic history of Vietnam)*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.121.

¹⁸⁹ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.291.

Despite some changes in the urban landscape and economy, the traditional social structure in Vietnam at the end of the 19th century remained largely intact. The majority of the population continued to reside in rural areas and engage in agriculture, with only a small percentage of landowners, approximately 3%, controlling approximately 40% of the arable land¹⁹⁰. This social hierarchy continued to be a significant aspect of the feudal-colonial government.

The bureaucracy was formed through examinations and recommendations. The literati class (the educated people) through formal or self-study, took on the job of teaching literacy in the countryside. The group of dignitaries directly participates in the management of communes and villages, having a certain position in society. The concept of officer - farmer - worker - merchant is still quite heavy. Craftsmen and small traders were very few. Most Vietnamese craftsmen are engaged in agricultural production, considering agriculture as the main source of income¹⁹¹.

The adoption of a substantial import policy by France posed numerous challenges to Vietnamese artisans, resulting in the bankruptcy of several traditional manufacturing occupations. Moreover, the urban bourgeoisie in Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina was predominantly composed of overseas Chinese, while only a small fraction of the Vietnamese populace engaged in minor technological enterprises. Notably, Vietnamese merchants in the late 19th century were conspicuously absent from the import-export arena.

The urban petty bourgeoisie and artisans were relatively outnumbered, despite being highly taxed and oppressed by the French bourgeoisie and overseas Chinese. It was this class that would be the main social basis for some later anti-imperialist movements.

Notably, the proletariat - the working class - played a pivotal role in the early stages of colonization, undertaking rudimentary tasks such as constructing roads, buildings, bridges, piers, and carrying steel lines. As industrial enterprises and factories emerged, their physical strength remained in high demand. For instance, some construction sites and industrial establishments at the turn of the 20th century relied on thousands of Vietnamese laborers¹⁹². The Hai Phong Cement Factory, established in 1899, alone employed six hundred workers, while the mining industry boasted a workforce of four thousand

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p.292.

¹⁹¹ Nguyen Tien Dung, *Văn hoá Việt Nam thường thức* (Common Vietnamese Culture), National Culture Publishing House, 2005, p.210 – 211.

¹⁹² Vu Huy Phuc (editor), *op.cit.*, p.784.

individuals in 1900¹⁹³. Specifically, the coal mines in Tonkin employed over two thousand workers by 1899.

Despite a relatively modest presence of skilled workers, Vietnamese laborers were notably concentrated in economic hubs such as Saigon, Cho Lon, Hanoi, Hai Phong, Nam Dinh, and various mining regions. Notably, polytechnic schools were established in urban centers such as Saigon, Hanoi, and Hue. A contributing factor to the influx of laborers from rural to urban areas was the impoverishment of farmers. Such circumstances fostered a labor force comprised of proletariats and semi-proletariats, bolstering the number of workers in a swift manner¹⁹⁴.

The oppressive and exploitative nature of colonial rule culminated in the emergence of the first workers' movements in Vietnam. These struggles included the canal diggers in Saigon, the railway builders in Lang Son, and the miners of Hon Gai, Cam Pha, and Cai Bau. Similarly, the chefs in Saigon and Hanoi, as well as the workers at the Hanoi lamp factory, also engaged in notable instances of labor activism. Collectively, these struggles represented pivotal historical moments during the latter part of the 19th century¹⁹⁵.

Looking back at the history of Vietnam from 1858 to 1896, although less than 40 years ago, there were many important events that happened and determined the nation's destiny. During those nearly 40 years, the country of Vietnam was from a complete monarchy to a French dependent country under two different institutions with three separate regions: Cochinchine was the land of direct rule, Annam was the protected land. Tonkin were also protectorates, but the French held stronger power.

This protectorate maintained vestiges of the Nguyen Dynasty's feudal court, albeit in a position subservient to the French-imposed protectorate government. This administrative arrangement served to facilitate French colonialists' exploitation and suppression of the colony, thereby enabling the latter to exploit Vietnam's bountiful natural resources, such as rubber plantations, rice, coal mines, and precious metals, and labor force at low

¹⁹³ Tran Van Giau, *Giai cấp công nhân Việt Nam...*, *op.cit.*, p.54.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p.57.

¹⁹⁵ Tran Van Giau, *Sự phát triển của tư tưởng ở Việt Nam từ thế kỷ XIX đến Cách mạng tháng Tám* (The development of thought in Vietnam from the nineteenth century to the August Revolution), Volume 2, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1975, p.87.

cost. In pursuit of maximum profit, French financial capital invested heavily in the exploitation of Vietnam's resources and labor, leveraging the advantage of abundant, fast, good, and cheap supplies¹⁹⁶.

In order to realize these objectives, the French colonialists had to establish a significant infrastructure that Vietnam had not hitherto experienced, comprising a comprehensive network of transportation, encompassing roads of varying descriptions, bridges, and other forms of contemporary travel infrastructure, as well as a range of electrical, mechanical, and industrial facilities, together with an array of services. This can be construed as a form of industrialization, but one that is forced and inherently limited, designed not to impinge on the French economy. In order to facilitate this process, the French colonialists had to import science and technology, train technicians, and establish a number of vocational schools in Vietnam¹⁹⁷.

To quell resistance among the colonial populace in various domains, spanning from armed to unarmed conflict, and from political to ideological-cultural spheres, the French colonialists resorted to the importation of Western civilization, the enhancement of administration, education, and healthcare. These imported elements, encompassing science, technology, civilization, and culture, represent the product of the ingenuity and creativity of the world's laboring masses, intended to serve the advancement of humanity at large.

The Nguyen Dynasty bore the responsibility of countering the incursion of Western capital. Initially, they endeavored to resist, but in light of an overwhelmingly more powerful adversary, which had already subjugated numerous Asian and African nations, including China, the Nguyen Dynasty was unable to devise suitable measures or policies to surmount this daunting historical challenge. As a result, the Nguyen Dynasty suffered a series of defeats, signed numerous treaties, and eventually lost the country, which became a puppet state under the yoke of French colonialists. Nonetheless, within the ranks of the Nguyen kings and mandarins, there existed numerous individuals who refused to capitulate. These individuals tenaciously fought against the French colonialists and mobilized military forces, while the Vietnamese people remained resolutely prepared to confront their adversaries, a tradition inherited from the past and further reinforced following the French colonialist invasion of Vietnam.

¹⁹⁶ Also see Nguyen Van Khanh, *op.cit*, p.155.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p.157.

In the pre-1896 period, local leaders and warlord mandarins typically played the leading role in the people's anti-French movement. The Can Vuong movement, championed by King Ham Nghi, his courtiers, and the people throughout the nation, embodied tireless efforts and unyielding fighting spirit. However, these efforts failed to bear fruit. History has shown that the monarchy's intellectual capacity no longer plays a significant role, despite the fact that some patriotic feudal intellectuals and scholars still hold it in high esteem after 1896¹⁹⁸.

During the period preceding 1896, a notable manifestation of the Nguyen dynasty's erroneous ideology was their reliance on the Qing dynasty for assistance against the French. Despite the fact that the Qing dynasty was also subjected to the Western powers and had ulterior motives for both France and Vietnam, the Nguyen dynasty persisted in seeking their aid until 1884. It became apparent that this anti-French measure was not only futile but also detrimental. Nevertheless, the intellectuals involved in the Can Vuong movement persisted in this approach even in the face of failure. Additionally, there was a pressing need for comprehensive reforms to enable the country to become self-sufficient and extricate itself from its precarious situation. While the majority of intellectuals at the time recognized this necessity, the Nguyen court's lack of determination and procrastination hindered meaningful progress in this regard¹⁹⁹.

In the early twentieth century, the Vietnamese people had to find a new path to save their country, as the previous approaches were ineffective. The new approach required a combination of innovation and renewal, armed struggle, and national unity in various fields, led by a new class. However, until the end of the nineteenth century, Vietnam had not yet seen the emergence of a class that was qualified and capable of leading the nation towards this new approach. Fortunately, colonialism's core economic ambitions had gradually created a new class, the working class. Due to its economic and political position in all aspects, the working class was the only class capable of fighting and winning against colonialism. While the Vietnamese intelligentsia struggled to find a way to liberate their country, the Vietnamese working class emerged and developed as the forerunners of this new class²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁸ Nguyen Ngoc Co (editor), *op.cit*, p.294.

¹⁹⁹ Duong Trung Quoc, *Việt Nam những sự kiện lịch sử* (Vietnam historical events)... *op.cit*, p.247.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p.295.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation investigated the topic of “*From the mission to the protectorate. Vietnam towards the French colonial expansion in the second half of the 19th century*” (*Od misji do protektoratu. Wietnam wobec francuskiej ekspansji kolonialnej w drugiej polowie XIX wieku*). The research findings tackle the questions that were initially posed.

Firstly, the dissertation addresses the French efforts to spread Christianity in Vietnam during the first half of the 19th century and examines the Nguyen court's response to this phenomenon. During the 17th to 18th centuries and particularly in the early 19th century, French missionaries played a significant role in propagating Catholicism in Vietnam. This missionary activity coincided with French capitalist interests, dating back to the establishment of the Paris Missionary Society in 1664 under Alexandre de Rhodes. Throughout the first half of the 19th century, French clergy actively promoted Catholicism, establishing and nurturing Catholic communities while providing valuable intelligence to the French government and advocating for French intervention in Vietnam. This missionary endeavor posed a direct threat to Vietnamese security, independence, and sovereignty.

In contrast, the Nguyen Dynasty sought to elevate Confucianism as a cornerstone of Vietnamese identity and stability. Viewing Catholicism as a challenge to traditional cultural values, the Nguyen court adopted a generally anti-Christian stance, prohibiting the spread of Christianity. However, rather than leveraging Christianity as a catalyst for modernization and reform, the Nguyen rulers perceived it as a Western threat and inadvertently alienated potential allies. This antagonistic approach towards Christianity exacerbated internal divisions within Vietnamese society, weakening the nation's resistance to French aggression.

The inconsistent policies of the Nguyen Dynasty towards Christianity, vacillating between tolerance and prohibition, further compounded societal tensions and political instability. Despite attempts by Emperor Tu Duc to reverse the ban on religion and reconcile with affected clergy and adherents, the court's isolation from anti-French uprisings and its loss of popular support ultimately facilitated French colonial dominance. The policy of religious prohibition contributed to the Franco-Spanish coalition's attack on Da Nang in 1858 and the subsequent failures of the Tu Duc court in its conflict with France. This misguided policy exacted a heavy toll on the nation, culminating in the Quy Mui treaty of 1883, which signaled the formal acceptance of French colonial rule over Vietnam.

The Nguyen Dynasty's mishandling of Christianity as a political and religious force underscores the imperative of adopting nuanced and adaptive religious policies that align with the nation's interests and historical context. The enduring lesson of this period serves as a cautionary tale for future generations, emphasizing the need for astute diplomatic strategies and a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of religious dynamics in shaping national destiny and sovereignty.

Secondly, addressing the second query involves examining the reasons behind France's invasion of Vietnam in the latter part of the 19th century and tracking the reactions of the Nguyen Dynasty's rulers, officials, and the Vietnamese people at each stage of the colonial incursion. The French invasion of Vietnam during the latter half of the 19th century stands as a watershed moment in Vietnamese history, profoundly shaping the nation's trajectory for generations to come. Rooted in a combination of economic interests, imperial ambitions, and geopolitical strategies, the invasion marked the convergence of colonial expansionism and Vietnamese vulnerability.

At the heart of this historical saga lies the reaction of the Nguyen dynasty's rulers and mandarins, juxtaposed against the resilience and aspirations of the Vietnamese people. While the military and ordinary citizens displayed unwavering determination to resist French aggression, the court in Hue exhibited a perplexing blend of reluctance, timidity, and self-interest. This stark dichotomy between the courageous defiance of the masses and the cautious pragmatism of the ruling elite underscores the complexities inherent in confronting colonial domination.

The Nguyen court's approach to the invasion was marked by a series of strategic missteps and ideological limitations. Focused more on self-preservation than national sovereignty, the court's pursuit of peace at any cost often undermined the broader aspirations of the Vietnamese people. Reluctant to fully engage in popular resistance and hesitant to embrace comprehensive reforms, the court's actions reflected a deep-seated conservatism and a narrow focus on maintaining the status quo.

This failure to mobilize effectively against French encroachment can be attributed to structural weaknesses within the political system, characterized by entrenched interests, ideological rigidity, and a lack of strategic foresight. Despite occasional attempts to seek alliances or employ tactical maneuvers, such efforts were hampered by a fundamental disconnect between the court's priorities and the aspirations of the populace.

Moreover, the court's reliance on diplomatic negotiations and its reluctance to fully harness the potential of the masses further exacerbated the nation's vulnerability, leaving

it ill-prepared to withstand the full force of colonial domination. The eventual capitulation documented in treaties like the Treaty of Patenôtre (1884) symbolized not only the subjugation of Vietnam but also the erosion of the Nguyen dynasty's legitimacy and the abandonment of national sovereignty.

In essence, the French invasion of Vietnam and the Nguyen court's response epitomize a tragic chapter in Vietnamese history, characterized by missed opportunities, strategic miscalculations, and the tragic consequences of internal division and external aggression. The legacy of this period serves as a sobering reminder of the importance of visionary leadership, national unity, and collective action in the face of adversity, providing valuable lessons for future generations as Vietnam continues its journey towards sovereignty, prosperity, and self-determination.

Thirdly, in addressing the third overarching inquiry of the thesis, one delves into an exploration of France's methods of governance and colonization in Vietnam, alongside an analysis of the societal transformations experienced in Vietnamese society subsequent to the formal establishment of French protectorate status. The establishment of French colonial rule in Vietnam following the surrender of the Nguyen Dynasty marked a significant turning point in the nation's history, precipitating profound changes in governance structures, societal dynamics, and the lived experiences of the Vietnamese people. This transition from a constitutional monarchy to a colonial regime heralded the coexistence of two parallel systems of governance within the same territory, with the Nguyen Dynasty retaining limited autonomy over the Central region while French colonial authorities asserted their dominance elsewhere.

Despite the institutional continuity of the Nguyen Dynasty's state apparatus, the period of French colonial rule witnessed minimal reforms and a glaring lack of initiatives aimed at bolstering national resilience against imperialist encroachment. The failure of the royal court to heed calls for reform and self-reliance ultimately paved the way for Vietnam's subjugation and stagnation under colonial domination.

In Cochinchina, the French colonial administration systematically established and fortified its governance apparatus, intensifying exploitation and enslavement of the Vietnamese populace to serve colonial interests. The consolidation of military, police, judicial, and administrative structures ensured the effective exercise of colonial control, perpetuating a cycle of oppression and subjugation.

The imposition of the protectorate regime plunged Vietnamese society into a state of deprivation and despair. Widespread famine, social disorder, and economic destitution

became endemic, exacerbated by exorbitant taxes and neglect of basic social services such as healthcare and education. The colonial administration's prioritization of the welfare of the colonizers over the colonized further exacerbated the suffering of the Vietnamese people, fueling resentment and resistance against colonial rule.

Indeed, the harsh realities of colonial subjugation provided fertile ground for numerous uprisings and revolts among the Vietnamese populace, reflecting a profound and pervasive desire for liberation from foreign domination and the restoration of national sovereignty. The reaction of the Vietnamese people to the Can Vuong movement at the end of the 19th century was particularly significant, as it demonstrated widespread nationalistic fervor and an unyielding commitment to resistance despite the movement's ultimate failure. The robust participation in the Can Vuong movement underscored the depth of patriotic sentiment and the collective resilience of the Vietnamese people, who, despite facing formidable challenges, were steadfast in their pursuit of autonomy and self-determination. This movement, although unsuccessful in its immediate objectives, played a crucial role in cementing a legacy of resistance and inspiring subsequent generations. These early manifestations of defiance were instrumental in laying the ideological and practical groundwork for future struggles against colonial oppression, highlighting the enduring spirit and unity of the Vietnamese in their ongoing quest for freedom.

In essence, the period of French colonial rule in Vietnam was characterized by the dual dynamics of exploitation and resistance, as colonial authorities sought to assert control and extract resources while Vietnamese society grappled with the profound upheavals wrought by foreign domination. The enduring legacy of this era serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring quest for freedom, justice, and self-determination that continues to animate the Vietnamese people to this day.

GLOSSARY

Ambassador	Công sứ
Canton chief	Chánh tổng
Commander of a provincial army	Đề đốc
Court of the Imperial Clan	Hội đồng phủ tôn nhân
Deputy Maire	Phó Đốc lý
Deputy village headman (deputy village mayor)	Phó lý
Feudal provincial mandarin	Bổ chính
Gouverneur-général de l'Indochine française	Toàn quyền Đông Dương
Governor of Annam – Tonkin	Toàn quyền Trung – Bắc Kỳ
<i>Imperial biographies</i>	<i>Đại Nam liệt truyện</i>
Intendant of the imperial treasury	Thái bộc tự khanh
King's special envoy	Khâm sai
Left Division	Tả quân
Legation	Tòa công sứ
Maire	Đốc lý
Military commander	Lãnh binh
Mountain district	châu
Palais du Résident Supérieur	Phủ Thống sứ Bắc Kỳ
Résident adjoint	Phó sứ
Prefectual examination (first – degree examination (at provincial level)	Thi hương
Province chief (under French colonialist domination)	Tuần vũ (Tuần phủ)
Provincial Council	Hội đồng hàng tỉnh
Provincial judge/Surveillance Commissioner	Án sát
<i>Repertoire of Institutions and Regulations</i>	<i>Khâm định Đại Nam hội điển sự lệ</i>

<i>Imperially Commissioned Itemized Summaries of the Comprehensive Mirror of Việt History</i>	<i>Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục</i>
Résident général de l'Annam et du Tonkin	Tổng Trú sứ Trung Bắc Kỳ
Resident General	Tổng Trú sứ
Résident supérieur de l'Annam ((The Ambassador to Annam)	Khâm sứ Trung Kỳ
Résident supérieur du Tonkin	Thống sứ Bắc Kỳ
Résident	Trú sứ
The Board of Appointments	Bộ Lại
The Board of Finance	Bộ Hộ
The Board of Infantry	Bộ Hình
The Board of Rites	Bộ Lễ
The Board of Works	Bộ Công
The Cochinchina Colonial Council (Conseil colonial	Hội đồng thuộc địa Nam Kỳ
The Cochinchina Confidentiality Council	Hội đồng Tư mật Nam Kỳ
The Council of Ministers	Hội đồng Thượng thư
The French Resident Superior	Khâm sứ
The Main Sub-Council	Hội đồng Phụ chính
National Historical Bureau	Quốc sử quán
The Royal Academy	Quốc tử giám
The Royal censorate	Viện Đô Sát
The Secret Council	Cơ mật viện
<i>Veritable Records of the Great South/ Annals of Đại Nam/ Chronicle of Greater Vietnam</i>	<i>Đại Nam thực lục</i>
<i>Vermilion Records</i>	<i>Châu bản</i>
<i>Essential Writings of Emperors Đồng Khánh and Khải Định</i>	<i>Đồng Khánh Khải Định chính yếu</i>
<i>Essential Writings of Emperor Minh Mệnh</i>	<i>Minh Mệnh chính yếu</i>
Vice - Canton chief	Phó chánh tổng
Viceroy	Kinh lược sứ (in north Vietnam)

Village chief

Village officials and propertied gentry

Village chief

Kỳ hào

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