

A Short Overview of French's Colonialism in Vietnam and its Impacts

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Abstract

This article explores the complex and multi-faceted legacy of Vietnam's colonial era, which lasted from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. The article reviews important literature that investigates the political, economic, and cultural impact of colonialism on Vietnam. The economic impact of colonialism resulted in the severe exploitation of Vietnam's resources and widespread poverty among its inhabitants. The political impact of colonialism led to persecution, and imprisonment of those who opposed the French colonial regime. The cultural impact of colonialism introduced Western culture to Vietnam, resulting in the decline of traditional cultural practices and values. Despite these negative impacts, Vietnam has restored its cultural legacy and built a distinct national identity through its fight for freedom and independence. This article highlights the lasting impact of colonialism on a country's society, economy, and culture.

Keywords: Colonialism, French, Impacts, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

The legacy of Vietnam's colonial era is a complex and multi-faceted component of the history of the country. Vietnam was governed by a number of different colonial powers,

including France, Japan, and China, from the latter half of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. The time of Vietnam's history when it was colonized by other countries had a significant impact on the country's economy, politics, and culture (Marr, 2013, p. 1). In the following paragraphs, I shall investigate some of the most important features of Vietnam's colonial past.

2. Literature Review

The study of Vietnam's colonial past comes from a variety of academic fields, including as history, anthropology, political science, and cultural studies, among others.

- Hue-Tam Ho Tai's *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolt*, which investigates the political and socio-economic conditions that led to the Vietnamese revolution against French colonialism; this book is considered to be one of the most important works in this field.
- David Marr's *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945-1946)*, which investigates the complexities of Vietnam's transition from French colonial rule to independence and the role of nationalism and communism in this process. This book was written during the time period in which Vietnam was transitioning from French colonial rule to independence.
- Peter Zinoman's book called "The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam 1862-1940," which examines the use of imprisonment as a weapon of colonial control and its influence on Vietnamese society.
- Truong Buu Lam's *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism, from era of 1900-1931*, which presents a vision of colonialism from the perspective of Vietnamese intellectuals and writers; the book was published in 2001.

3. Overview of Impact of Colonialism

It can be concluded there are several impacts of colonialism on society, economy and well-being of the country with following most notable impacts:

- **Economic Impact.** The economic exploitation of Vietnam's resources was one of the most severe effects of colonialism on that country. Policies were implemented by the French colonial authority that encouraged the export of raw goods to France; these materials included rice, coal, and rubber, among others; this resulted in a severe drop in agricultural output in Vietnam and created widespread poverty and hunger among the country's inhabitants (Tai, 1992, p. 7).
- **Political Impact.** The political landscape of Vietnam was also significantly altered as a result of the colonial period's influence; through the use of a Vietnamese puppet government that was obedient to French interests, the French imposed their system of indirect rule on the Vietnamese people; many Vietnamese people who opposed the colonial regime were either imprisoned, tortured, or put to death as a result of their opposition (Zinoman, 2001, p. 30).
- **Cultural Impact.** The cultural traditions of Vietnam were profoundly influenced by the country's colonial past as well. The French were responsible for the introduction of many aspects of Western culture, including the language, architecture, and gastronomy of France. This resulted to a decline in the prevalence of traditional cultural practices and values in Vietnam, despite the fact that it did have some positive benefits on the overall cultural development of the country (Phung, 2002, p. 56).

4. Colonialism Impact on Architecture

The Central Post Office, situated adjacent to the Notre Dame Cathedral, is a magnificent example of Gothic and Renaissance-inspired architecture constructed between 1886 and 1891. Despite commonly being attributed to Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, the renowned architect responsible for the Eiffel Tower in Paris, it was actually designed by Alfred Foulhoux.

With its bright yellow façade and white trim, the building features wooden shutters, arched windows, and looping arches that evoke the architectural style of the 19th century. The entrance boasts a prominent clock, while the interior impresses with its

domed ceilings, metal arches, and two large hand-painted maps showcasing old Saigon and the former south-eastern areas of Indochina from the early 1900s. The Central Post Office still functions as a fully operational post office with English-speaking staff, half a dozen international phone booths, and a variety of reasonably-priced, quirky souvenirs.

Picture: The Main Post Office Building in Ho Chi Minh City.



Source: Vietnam Travel, 2023.

5. Conclusion

The legacy of colonization has left an indelible mark on Vietnam's history, shaping the country in profound ways that continue to be felt to this day. The period of colonization led to the introduction of Western-style governance, education, and industry, which have all contributed to the country's economic and political development. However, this period also saw a great deal of suffering and hardship, with Vietnamese people facing discrimination, exploitation, and violence at the hands of their colonizers.

Despite these challenges, the Vietnamese people fought tirelessly for their freedom and independence, which they ultimately achieved in 1975. This struggle for independence has become an integral part of the country's national identity, shaping its cultural, political, and economic development in significant ways.

Today, Vietnam is a vibrant and dynamic nation with a rich and diverse cultural heritage that is celebrated and cherished by people around the world. Its history of resilience, courage, and determination in the face of adversity is a source of inspiration for people everywhere, and continues to be an important part of the country's national identity.

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