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The road traffic system in the Southeast during the French period (1858-1945)

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Abstract

As the first piece of land to become a French colony, the Southeast region played an important role in the colonization and exploitation of the French colonialists in Cochinchina in particular and in Vietnam in general. First of all, we want to use the profits from the Southeast region to finance the governance in Vietnam instead of using the national budget. In order to effectively carry out the exploitation in the Southeast, the French colonialists deployed the construction and development of the road traffic system in the period (1858 - 1945) to serve that profound purpose.

Keywords: Road traffic system, Southeast region, French colonial period.

1. Introduction

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Southeast was the first land to become a French colony, and it was also the land that suffered the earliest and boldest consequences of colonial rule. By the Treaty of Nham Tuat signed on June 5, 1862, the three Southeast provinces became the country of "French Cochinchina". The land of Cochinchina became "the land of France", the residents of the three provinces of Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh and Dinh Tuong became "the new subjects of Emperor Napoleon". The colonial rule was applied here in all political, military, economic and social fields... After capturing the Southeast, the French colonialists quickly deployed the exploitation of a scale, methodical style of capitalist. By calculation of the invaders, the French were aware of the need to expand and improve the infrastructure, which is an urgent problem of transportation to not only serve the process of pacifying Cochinchina Vietnam but also long-term implications for colonial exploitation. For the Southeast, the French have focused on building transport infrastructure, such as: building a system of ports, roads, railways, airports, etc. In the policy of developing transport infrastructure The road transport system has been invested by France on a large scale, making travel between provinces and cities in the Southeast region more convenient, promoting the central role of urban areas such as: Saigon, Vung Tau, Thu Dau Mot, Bien Hoa... contributed to the socio-economic transformation of the Southeast region (1958-1945).

2. Research content and methods

2.1. Construction of a road transport system

2.1.1. Colonial road system

Before the presence of the French, road traffic in the Southeast was still very backward, mainly by village roads. The roads formed under the Nguyen Dynasty opened not only to serve the travel needs, but the connected routes also created favorable conditions for the development of economic, cultural and social activities. However, transportation under the Nguyen Dynasty at the end of the 19th century in Cochinchina in general and the Southeast region in particular was still based on waterways (river, seaway). The transportation of important goods. Large loads can only be carried out by river or sea. Roads, mainly village roads, became the main means of transport for moving from village to village. In the regions, these roads are established on the partitions between the rice fields.

This causes great obstacles to trade exchanges, cultural exchanges, diplomacy, security - defense.

Entering the first half of the twentieth century was the period when the French colonialists invested in transport infrastructure in the Southeast to seek maximum profits in the process of exploiting their colonies here. Road traffic is an important part of the infrastructure construction plan because it practically serves the needs of colonial exploitation. In parallel with the expansion of waterway transport and railway construction, the French colonialists also strongly promoted the construction of a road transport system. It not only helped the economic development requirements of the French colonialists but also helped to mobilize troops to deal with the uprisings of our people.

The process of investing in the road transport system in the Southeast of France began in the 80s of the nineteenth century to serve the pacification and exploitation, but it was still fragmented. It was not until 1896, after basically completing the invasion and military pacification in Vietnam, that the French colonialists embarked on a large-scale colonial exploitation throughout the territory of Vietnam and Indochina. At this time, the French began surveying to build a road and railway route from Saigon to Nha Trang. In the program of colonial exploitation, the French colonialists paid great attention to building a road system because it was necessary for the exploitation of Indochina, which was significant in exploiting the strengths of the region. parallel two tasks of "building the necessary facilities for exploitation" and "exploitation".

At the initial stage of invading Gia Dinh citadel, the road system in the Southeast could not be used in the rainy season. These roads have partially disappeared, the remaining roads cannot be connected because the bridge system has been severely damaged. Admiral Ohier was the first to want to upgrade the land transport system in Cochinchina in general and in the Southeast in particular. But first, the French colonialists renovated the existing Thien Ly road into the main road, and then built branch roads going to all directions of the Southeast region. The construction of the road transport system in the Southeast includes making (renovating) roads and bridges (crossing canals and rivers). Modeled after the country, roads are divided into 03 types: National and provincial roads, commune roads and are specified in detail (A. Bouinai, 1884. NN.965. NTP II) as follows:

- National highway to connect the most important centers, used as the starting part of the provincial road, almost reuse the road route made in Gia Long period. The length of the national highway is fixed at 939km, the price is 30fr/m (including the bridge), the cost is 28,170,000fr;
- Provincial road will develop 2,049km and cost 20fr/m. The total cost is 70 million for a 3,000km transport network.
- This expense was, of course, apportioned by the Colonial Council and the Provincial Council over many years. In 2 years (1881, 1882), the road was paved, stoned and put into use, including:
 - National and provincial highways: 1,282 km;
 - Large communal road: 965 km;
 - Commune road: 1,139 km.
 - Total: 3,396 km

According to the Report to the Colonial Council, the meeting in 1882, in the first year, thanks to the application of the

policy of in-kind subsidies, opened 500km of roads, 17km of stone, and built 73 bridges of 824m long. The results achieved in 1882 were even more remarkable and the government was convinced that, within a maximum period of 10 years, the colony would be equipped with a better system of communal roads,... better, going directly to the hamlets. the most remote (A. Bouinai, 1884; NN.965. NTC II).

The North-South Thien Ly Road was built under the Nguyen Dynasty and was upgraded and expanded by the French and called the No. 1 colonial road.

Thus at this time, the road transport system in Vietnam was divided into three types of roads:

National highway: the widest and longest road, is the main transport road connecting the provincial roads in the country;
Provincial road: type of road connecting towns and provinces throughout the country;

Commune roads are small roads connecting villages, communes, villages or hamlets together or formed from dikes running along rivers and streams across the country, these small roads are formed by the natural travel habits of people. people.

On the basis of the north-south heavenly road built under the Nguyen dynasty, it was opened to Nam Vang, Van Tuong, and the French colonialists built colonial road No. 1 (national highway 1A). However, until 1913, on Colonial Road No. 1, only cars and rickshaws, bullock carts, buffalo carts could go. Therefore, the renovation and expansion work was carried out on the whole route, each year the Indochinese budget had to invest from 600,000 to 1 million VND (1 Indochina Dong in 1913 was 2.5 francs). In 1932, National Highway 1A was completed, connecting Saigon with Hanoi. In the Southeast, the arterial roads connecting the provinces were basically built and completed in 1913. From Saigon, inter-provincial roads were formed connecting Saigon with the Southeast provinces. :

- Road No. 13, from Saigon to Kratié, 248 km long, passing through Thu Dau Mot and Bantot, ending at Hin Bon.
- Street number 14, from Saigon to Kon Tom, passing through Loc Ninh, Bu Dop, Buon Ma Thuot.
- Road 15, from Saigon to Cap Saint Jacques (Vung Tau) is 132 km.

Up to 1919, the colonial road network in the whole province of Thu Dau Mot had only a 13 km long section of colonial road 13, but later, the French built a provincial road connecting Thu Dau Mot - Ben Cat - Hon Quang. The introduction of the road system 13 and 14 connecting the Southeast coastal area with the Central Highlands promotes socio-economic development in this area.

In 1902, the route No. 15 from Saigon to Cap Saint Jacques (Vung Tau) was completed 132 km long, the road surface was paved with stones. At first mainly for military and official cars, some cars of companies and plantation owners vacationing in Vung Tau; It wasn't until the early 30s - 20th century - that passenger cars ran on this road.

In Saigon, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the construction of many new roads increased rapidly. As a result, the city area was expanded to the north and to the south, making the city area increased by nearly 500 hectares, and roads were built again. Cho Lon area is a busy trading place of the Chinese, where there soon appeared quite beautiful roads such as Gaudot Boulevard and Bonhour Avenue (Hai Thuong Lan Ong Street), Charles Thomson

Street (Hong Bang Street). On April 27, 1931, a decree of the French president merged the two cities of Saigon and Cholon into one called Région de Saigon Cholon, with the old boundary being Nancy street (Nguyen Van Cu street) and Phu Thanh street. (Nguyen Thien Thuat street). Accordingly, a series of roads were built such as Frère Louis (Nguyen Trai Street), Léon Comtes Street (Suong Nguyet Anh Street), roads around Ben Thanh market, roads at the train station area (now 23rd Park). /9). The land of Cho Lon also reaches to Lo Gom canal; many new roads such as Abattoir Avenue (Hung Phu Street), Akas Street (Le Truc Street), Armand Rousseau Avenue (Nguyen Chi Thanh Street), Cay Mai Street, etc. Up to 1945, throughout the territory of Saigon there were 26 avenues, 16 wharfs, 276 streets...; in total there are 321 named streets (Doan Thanh Huong, Ho Huu Nhut, 1999, pp.91-92).

2.1.2. Transportation

In Vietnam, cars first appeared in Cochinchina in 1903. By 1907, a wealthy man in Saigon became the first owner of a car that was first sold in Vietnam and Indochina. Since then, many cars have been imported to Cochinchina, Southeast and other countries in Indochina and gradually become the main means of transport by road to transport goods, and the travel needs of the people ruling class and the elderly. In cities and urban areas in the Southeast, major roads have used vehicles manufactured in Europe. By 1914, in the Southeast region, Cochinchina appeared bus-cars carrying both passengers and goods. The appearance of cars and buses has gradually played a major role in road transport activities in this region. The number of cars and automakers is constantly increasing in Cochinchina, the Southeast region.

Cars and buses have quickly become the main and popular means of transport in the road transport system in the Southeast, replacing the vehicles used to pull animals and even vehicles powered by steam engines. The country was imported into Vietnam by the French colonialists in the previous period. This has fundamentally and completely changed the face of road traffic in the Southeast in the first half of the twentieth century. It is an important factor that makes up the appearance of a new, modern, high-capacity transport system. Since then, the Southeast road traffic system has developed strongly with cars and an expanded and upgraded road system. The emergence and becoming the main means of transportation is reflected in the enhanced transport capacity in terms of time and load, helping the automobile to quickly occupy the main and most important position in the general transportation system and road in particular. It was from that development of the car that led to an upgrade of the road system: the road was widened, stretched and paved with more stones and paved. In the following years, the number of cars in the Southeast increased in proportion to the development and upgrading of paved and paved roads.

The development of road transport has contributed to bringing a completely new look to the road transport system in the Southeast. Being a completely new and modern mode of transportation, it requires many requirements on modern facilities, financial capacity, highly qualified technical and managerial human resources. It is a type of transport with many advantages in terms of service time (fastest), scope and operation range (inter-regional, trans-Vietnamese and international). However, the essence of this engine is to serve the highest level of exploitation in this colony. Specifically,

directly serving military operations and the Second Colonial Exploitation Program of the French colonialists in the Southeast and Cochinchina.

2.2. Some comments on the road transport system

Right from the second decade of the twentieth century, the French colonial authorities in the Southeast, Cochinchina, Indochina and the homeland took very specific steps to quickly form and develop transportation activities. road, creating a new look for Southeast traffic in this period. The appearance of road traffic shows the following specific features:

Firstly, a road traffic organization complete in terms of organizational structure and personnel; on operating regulations and development policies... to most effectively serve the civil and military needs of the French colonial government in the Southeast, Cochinchina and Indochina. The road system across Vietnam and Indochina, connecting the Southeast with Cochinchina, centers in Vietnam, and Indochina was formed and put into operation. All those factors are signs and necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence and development of this modern road transport industry in Vietnam to this day. The presence of cars in road traffic is an important contributing factor to creating a new look of traffic in the Southeast, Cochinchina and Indochina in the period 1919-1945.

Thus, the appearance of traffic in the Southeast in the period 1919 - 1945 refers to a complete addition of components of a modern transport system with high transport capacity by using means of transport. new: cars (cars) with a system of modern technical infrastructure (roads, airports, ports...). The road transport system made an important contribution to the complete formation of traffic during the French colonial period in the Southeast, Cochinchina, Vietnam and Indochina before 1945. And more importantly, it was the foundation for existence. and development of the road transport system in Vietnam to this day.

Second, the process of colonial investment and exploitation by the French colonialists had positive effects on the socio-economic transformation of the Southeast in the early 20th century, even though it was against the will of the French colonialists. The first and most prominent influence is that with a fairly synchronous, complete and widely distributed economic - technical infrastructure system, the economic face of the Southeast has been somewhat different from before. The most prominent are the colonial roads connecting Saigon with Vung Tau and from Saigon to the Southeast provinces. The second is the birth of a series of rubber plantations in the Southeast. Those were quite synchronous, complete and modern economic-technical infrastructures at that time that were not available before. In terms of value and function, this economic-technical infrastructure has laid the foundation, created the basis and conditions for the Southeast economy to develop in the direction of modernity, making an important contribution to creating changes in the socio-economic life of the Southeast at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Third, the economic - technical infrastructure in the Southeast has promoted the development of the economy, especially stimulated the development of domestic and foreign trade; speeding up the transportation of goods and people's travel needs, linking localities in the region together, contributing to expanding exchanges and connecting remote populations with regions and centers political economy was created.

Since then, the urban areas of Saigon, Vung Tau, Thu Dau Mot and Bien Hoa have become busy trading places. In addition, the Southeast region has promoted the potential of industrial crops with vast rubber plantations. Along with the formation and development of the road and rail transport system, the seaport system in the Southeast - especially Saigon port - has made an important contribution to speeding up the transportation of goods. The task of linking regions together, creating conditions for all localities to join in the common movement of the economic machine of the whole region, promoting the entire production development and bringing Southeast Asia together. Ministry of integration into the world market. The association of production activities with regional and world market factors has opened a new direction in the Southeast economy. Production is associated with consumption through the transportation system, wharves and ports play an intermediary role in the production and consumption process; thereby contributing to promoting the formation and development of many new urban areas, typically Saigon - Cho Lon, Bien Hoa, Vung Tau, Thu Dau Mot... and then expanding to neighboring areas. In particular, Saigon - Cho Lon has developed rapidly, becoming the political, economic and administrative center of the South and the whole South of Indochina.

Fourthly, the process of colonial investment and exploitation in the Southeast has led to the formation of economic - technical infrastructure with the development of the road transport system, making an important contribution to the transformation of the country changes in cultural and social life in the Southeast in the early twentieth century. However, this transformation did not make the life of the people of the Southeast better than the growth of trade; on the contrary, it is even worse. Farmers from where they had a field to cultivate and do as much as their own, now have no land because their land was appropriated by the French colonialists and landlords to establish plantations. They were forced to "sell their bodies for a few coins; flesh and bones buried several layers of rubber roots". Economic development, population growth and high urbanization speed have accelerated the formation of important cities and economic centers such as Saigon, Cu Lao Pho, Vung Tau, Thu Dau Mot... In the early years of the 20th century, the French colonialists ruled and established a new administrative system following the Western model. The centers and urban areas of the Southeast have combined both economics and commerce with administration, politics, and culture. Since then, the colonial government focused on investing in designing construction planning and urban expansion, gradually turning Saigon, Bien Hoa, Vung Tau, Thu Dau Mot into important economic centers. , politics, administration and culture, education. In that context, the Southeast has expanded trade relations widely, rice, agricultural and seafood products, handicrafts sold abroad, along with goods are bought and sold both at home and abroad; many new plant varieties, new livestock, new techniques, and new cultural achievements were also introduced, creating socio-economic changes in the Southeast in the early 20th century.

Fifth, changes in urban life in the Southeast region are reflected in the rapid and strong development of the commodity economy and the process of urbanization is also at a high level, attracting migrants, forming thus creating the urban class and indirectly creating the activities of different classes in society. These are consequences that are not in the

will of the invading colonialists. In that context, the Southeast Asian community has the conditions to expand trade relations, with goods being bought and sold both at home and abroad, many technical advances as well as other achievements. New cultures were also introduced. Exposure to Western culture leads to changes in cultural and social life in many areas of social life: literature, journalism, education, healthcare, architecture, lifestyle and even philosophical thought. The socio-economic changes in the Southeast in the early years of the twentieth century were also deeply reflected in the development of beliefs and religions. Residents of the Southeast are open-minded, so it is easy to integrate with imported cultures, especially Western cultures; at the same time, there are few rules and regulations that focus on practicality; there is no envy or conflict between religions. It shows that in the early years of the 20th century in the Southeast, there were many major religions in the world and national religions: Cao Dai, Hoa Hao (ethnic); Islam, Buddhism (Asia); Catholics, Protestants (Western) but Southeast Asians accept and reconcile these religions. Buddhists may be eager to go to church during Christmas or Easter; Catholics can still go to the temple on the full moon day or Buddha's birthday. The Vietnamese in general, and the Southeast coastal communities in particular, do not abandon the custom of worshiping ancestors and consider traditional New Year's holidays sacred.

3. Conclusion

The road traffic system in the Southeast was developed quite complete and modern in the early years of the twentieth century, making an important contribution to the colonial exploitation in the Southeast, Cochinchina and Indochina. In particular, one of the successes of the construction and development of opening new routes, linking with the localities of Cochinchina, Vietnam, and Indochina, promoting the socio-economic development of the region. However, the above changes do not change the essence of colonialism because from the very beginning, the construction of infrastructure (especially transport infrastructure) is mainly and mainly to serve the needs of the people demand for colonial exploitation. Profits from the development of the road transport system in the Southeast belong to the French colonial capital, while the colonial people are still exploited.

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