

### ***Rebellion in the early years of colonial rule in Indochina***

After the initial invasion of Vietnam in 1858, it was nearly four decades until the last areas in the mountainous north were pacified. Each stage of the colonization of Vietnam provoked its own wave of resistance; the defeat of imperial troops rarely signaled the end of opposition, and the territorial concessions and treaties forced from the Nguyen tended to heighten resistance rather than putting an end to it. Indeed, a strong case can be made that the Court's decision to negotiate and give in to French demands rather than tapping the strength of popular resistance dealt a fatal blow to the dynasty's legitimacy.

Armed opposition to French control over Cochinchina continued well into the 1860s. It was in part the ability of resistance forces to retreat into still uncolonized provinces after 1862 that pushed the French to complete their conquest of the Mekong delta in 1867. Local military commanders like Truong Cong Dinh and Nguyen Tri Phuong led prolonged campaigns against the French, spurred on by the patriotic verses of the famous blind poet Nguyen Dinh Chieu. Eventually the French pacified the region, but the numerous swamps and patches of jungle provided the same haven for rebels that they would during the wars of the mid-twentieth century.

The longest and most concerted resistance movement was the Can Vuong ('loyalty to the king' or 'rescue the king'), which broke out in 1885 after the newly crowned emperor Ham Nghi (r. 1884-85) fled Hue and took refuge in the mountains with a group of royal family members and high-ranking mandarins. Throughout Tonkin and Annam scholar-officials like Phan Dinh Phung - who became the movement's most prominent leader - responded to Ham Nghi's call to arms, mobilizing networks of former students. Ham Nghi was soon captured and sent into exile, but the resistance in his name continued into the mid-1890s. The Can Vuong movement is often seen as the 'last hurrah' of traditional Confucianist loyalty to the monarchy. While two of Ham Nghi's

successors - Emperors Thanh Thai (r. 1887-1907) and Duy Tan (r. 1907-16) - also caused trouble for the French, the monarchy as a rallying point for resistance or rebellion became an ever less potent symbol than the nation.

Between the time of the first treaty of protectorate in 1863 and the second in 1884, Cambodia experienced several violent rebellions in various parts of the kingdom. Unrest following the earlier treaty was instigated mainly by Prince Si Votha, a half-brother of King Norodom. As had so often been the case in Cambodia's history, intra-dynastic squabbles and foreign intervention were intertwined. By helping Norodom to suppress the revolts, the French gained greater leverage over his internal affairs. In the years following the 1884 treaty, which eroded royal powers much more than the earlier agreement, the shoe was on the other foot. This time the revolt directly targeted the French; Norodom was in a stronger position and able to gain French goodwill by cooperating in restoring order in the protectorate. Thereafter, there was no major unrest until after World War I.

In Laos, the main source of unrest seems to have been less the colonization of the Lao in the lowland regions than the extension of colonial power to the upland areas. Much of the dissatisfaction was caused by the colonial state's efforts to squeeze revenue and labor out of the highland populations, most of which had generally been beyond the reach of any government throughout their history. Unrest was concentrated in several main areas: the Boloven plateau (sporadically throughout this period), the area along the border with Yunnan (inhabited by the Leu ethnic group, now separated from their kin in China); and the northeastern region along the border with Vietnam, where there were large populations of Hmong. Many of these rebellions were led by 'holy men' of various kinds who claimed special powers and made predictions about cataclysmic change. Ong Kommadam, a highlander in the Salavan region, led attacks on the French for more than three decades beginning in 1905; he was killed only in 1936, and the southern highlands were not really pacified until just before World War II. While some of these movements did attract ethnic Lao followers, the momentum for resistance came mainly from the uplanders.