

EFFECTS OF FRENCH COLONIAL RULE - Encyclopaedia Britannica

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/628349/Vietnam/52739/Effects-of-French-colonial-rule>

Activity: Circle words you don't understand or are confusing. Underline the main point in paragraph below.

5 Whatever economic progress Vietnam made under the French after 1900 benefited only the French and the small class of wealthy Vietnamese created by the colonial regime. The masses of the Vietnamese people were deprived of such benefits by the social policies utilized by the governing French power. Through the construction of irrigation works, chiefly in the Mekong delta, the area of land devoted to rice cultivation quadrupled between 1880 and 1930. During the same period, however, the individual peasant's rice consumption decreased without the substitution of other foods. The new lands were not distributed among the landless and the peasants but were sold to the highest bidder or given away at nominal prices to Vietnamese collaborators and French speculators. These policies created a new class of Vietnamese landlords and a class of landless tenants who worked the fields of the landlords for rents of up to 60 percent of the crop, which was sold by the landlords at the Saigon export market.

10

15 The mounting export figures for rice resulted not only from the increase in cultivable land but also from the growing exploitation of the peasantry.

In one complete sentence, write the main point of the paragraph above: _____

20 _____

Evidence / Examples to back up main point: _____

25 _____

Activity: Circle words you don't understand or are confusing. Underline the main point in paragraphs (2) below.

The peasants who owned their land were rarely better off than the landless tenants. The peasants' share of the price of rice sold at the Saigon export market was less than 25 percent. Peasants continually lost their land to the large owners because they were unable to repay loans given them by the landlords

and other moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates. As a result, the large landowners of Cochinchina
30 (less than 3 percent of the total number of landowners) owned 45 percent of the land, while the small
peasants (who accounted for about 70 percent of the owners) owned only about 15 percent of the land.
The number of landless families in Vietnam before World War II was estimated at half of the population.

The peasants' share of the crop—after the landlords, the moneylenders, and the middlemen (mostly
Chinese) between producer and exporter had taken their share—was still more drastically reduced by
35 the direct and indirect taxes the French had imposed to finance their ambitious program of public
works. Other ways of making the Vietnamese pay for the projects undertaken for the benefit of the
French were the recruitment of forced labor for public works and the absence of any protection against
exploitation in the mines and rubber plantations, although the scandalous working conditions, the low
salaries, and the lack of medical care were frequently attacked in the French Chamber of Deputies in
40 Paris. The mild social legislation decreed in the late 1920s was never adequately enforced.

In one complete sentence, write the main point of the 2 paragraphs above: _____

Evidence / Examples to back up main point: _____

45

Activity: Circle words you don't understand or are confusing. Underline the main point in paragraph below.

50 Apologists for the colonial regime claimed that French rule led to vast improvements in medical care,
education, transport, and communications. The statistics kept by the French, however, appear to cast
doubt on such assertions. In 1939, for example, no more than 15 percent of all school-age children
received any kind of schooling, and about 80 percent of the population was illiterate, in contrast to pre-
colonial times when the majority of the people possessed some degree of literacy. With its more than 20
55 million inhabitants in 1939, Vietnam had but one university, with fewer than 700 students. Only a small

number of Vietnamese children were admitted to the lycées (secondary schools) for the children of the French. Medical care was well organized for the French in the cities, but in 1939 there were only 2 physicians for every 100,000 Vietnamese, compared with 76 per 100,000 in Japan and 25 per 100,000 in the Philippines.

60 In one complete sentence, write the main point of the 2 paragraphs above: _____

Evidence / Examples to back up main point: _____

65 _____

Activity: Circle words you don't understand or are confusing. Underline the main point in paragraph below.

Two other aspects of French colonial policy are significant when considering the attitude of the Vietnamese people, especially their educated minority, toward the colonial regime: one was the absence of any kind of civil liberties for the native population, and the other was the exclusion of the Vietnamese from the modern sector of the economy, especially industry and trade. Not only were rubber plantations, mines, and industrial enterprises in foreign hands—French, where the business was substantial, and Chinese at the lower levels—but all other business was as well, from local trade to the great export-import houses. The social consequence of this policy was that, apart from the landlords, no property-owning indigenous middle class developed in colonial Vietnam. Thus, capitalism appeared to the Vietnamese to be a part of foreign rule; this view, together with the lack of any Vietnamese participation in government, profoundly influenced the nature and orientation of the national resistance movements.

80 In one complete sentence, write the main point of the 2 paragraphs above: _____

Evidence / Examples to back up main point: _____

85

Final Activity:

Write one paragraph describing why Communism might seem like a good idea to many Vietnamese people during French colonization.

90

Strategy: Build your case. Discuss the problems experienced by the average Vietnamese peasant. Include the ideals of communism that would be appealing. Clearly state your stance and don't forget your conclusion.