MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
HA NOI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

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THE PLANTATION ECONOMY IN SOUTH – WESTERN REGION FROM 1900 T0 1945

Major: History of Viet Nam
Code: 9.22.90.13

THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS ON HISTORY

HA NOI - 2018

WORK TO BE COMPLETED IN FACULTY HISTORY
HANOI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

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The thesis will be protected spots School Councils doctoral thesis at the meeting in Hanoi National University of Education
On days back .... year.…month 2018

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Pursuant to the decree dated 20/12/1889 of the Governor-General of French Indochina, South-Western Region consisted of seven provinces which were Chau Doc, Ha Tien, Long Xuyen, Rach Gia, Can Tho, Soc Trang and Bac Lieu. After the Giap Tuat Treaty (1874), France made investment in finance and tools to reclaim lands, set up the plantation system and establish agricultural production with rice as the most important crop. Studying the plantation economy in South-Western Region shall contribute greatly to the study of the history of Vietnam and Indochina's economy. The study aims to achieve a scientifically meaningful result.

Plantation economy in the first half of the 20th century is also a new subject in the history of Vietnam's agricultural economy. Researching the plantation economy in South-Western Region, we can make profound judgment and criticism of France's colony exploitation, hence we can understand better the colonial system in Vietnam.

Investigating the plantation economy in South-Western Region in the first half of the 20th century, we shall learn lessons to plan and develop agricultural economy suitably to the current development of Vietnam.

Studying this subject is the chance to collect, research and archive important historical documents to serve the purpose of teaching and scientific studying.

For all those reasons above, I chose the subject "The plantation economy in South-Western Region from 1900 to 1945" for my doctoral dissertation.

2. Subject and scope of research

Subject: The forming and development of the plantation economy in South-Western Region from 1900 to 1945.

Scope of research:

-Geographic scope: 7 provinces in South-Western Region in the French colonial era including Chau Doc, Ha Tien, Long Xuyen, Rach Gia, Can Tho, Soc Trang and Bac Lieu.

-Time scope: South-Western Region in the first half of the 20th century (1900 – 1945).

3. Aims and objectives

- *Research aims:* The study aims to collect data and generalize the situation of the plantation economy in South-Western Region in the first half of the 20th century (1900 – 1945). This dissertation analyzes and criticizes land allocation and transferring policies, production activities, productions organizing forms, manpower issue and the effect of the plantation economy on the society and economy's situatuion. It also aims to draw lessons to learn for developing rice-based agricultural economy in South-Western Region under current conditions.

- *Research topics:* First, the dissertation generally studies the agricultural situation and plantation policies of Nguyen Dynasty and the French Colony before 1900.

Second, this research reconstructs the forming course and types of production and business of the plantation economy in South-Western Region from 1900 to 1945.

Next, it studies plantation's human resources, economic relations between the plantation owners and workers and the ways laborers were used at plantations.

Finally, the dissertation studies the plantation economy's impact on the South-Western Region's socio-economic situation in the first half of 20th century, positive results and limitations of plantations.

4. Research resources

Documents at National Archives II, Hochiminh city including reports related to the economy, production establishment, rice research institutes, soil, weather, etc. of South-Western provinces.

Reference works and monographs, researches of the history of Vietnam's economy, especially the agricultural economy in the Cochinchina under the French colonial era; newspapers and magazines specialized in Indochina's economy and the Southern Region's economy in the first half of the 20th century.

Publications on professional magazines, doctoral dissertation studying the agricultural economy of Vietnam and Indochina under the colonial era.

Online reference documents including articles on creditable websites. This source helps the dissertation be richer and more vivid in terms of content, figures, images, etc.

5. Methodology and research methods

In the dissertation, Marxist historical methodology is used with dialectical materialism and historical materialism as the main based philosophies.

This work combines professional research methods such as historical method, logical method and multi-professions research methods such as statistical method, collective method, generalizing method, comparative method, graphing, etc.

6. Contribution of the dissertation

This work gives an adequate and systematic presentation of the forming and development of the plantation economy in South-Western Region in the first half of the 20th century. Thus, it points out plantation's characteristics and its effects on this region's economy and society.

It also contributes to the criticism of the roles of colonial government, farmers and landlords in the plantation economic system; the influence of

technology and forms of production establishment at the plantations in South-Western Region from 1900 to 1945.

Furthermore, the dissertation is a contribution to research sources related to Vietnam's economy under the colonial era. It brings lessons and recommendations to build and develop South-Western Region in modern days.

7. Dissertation's organization

Besides the introduction, conclusion and appendix, the dissertation consists of 5 chapters:

Chapter 1. A general view on previous researches and documents relevant to the research topic.

Chapter 2. Plantation economy in South-Western Region from 1900 to 1918.

Chapter 3. Plantation economy in South-Western Region from 1919 to 1945.

Chapter 4. Characteristics of plantation economy and its effects on the society of South-Western Region in the first half of 20th century.

Chapter 1
A GENERAL VIEW ON PREVIOUS RESEARCHES AND RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

1.1. Foreign authors' works

Publications of Society of Indochina Studying (Publications de la société des études Indo-Chinoises) about history, geography, economy, etc. of Southern provinces in the first half of the 20th century. Among them, for South-Western Region, there are 5 monographs about Ha Tien (1901), Chau Doc (1902), Can Tho (1904), Soc Trang (1904), Long Xuyen (1905).

Note sur les anciens Don Dien Annamites dans la Basse-Cochinchine (Notes of Annam's ancient plantations in the Southern Region) by E. Deschaseaux was published in Sai Gon in 1889.

In 1911, *Paddys et Riz de Cochinchine* (Paddies and Rice of the Southern Region) by Albert Coquerel was published in Lyon, France.

In 1931, *Indochine Française* (French Indochina) by Henri Russier was published in Paris.

In 1931, *Exposition coloniale internationale* published the two books *La Cochinchine* (Southern Region) and *Rizicuture en Indochine* (Rice Culture in Indochina) in Paris.

In 1932, the research *Economie agricole de l'Indochine* (Agricultural Economy of Indochina) was published in Hanoi and translated into Vietnamese by Hoang Dinh Binh.

In 1934, *La crise économique en Indochine* (The Economic Crisis in Indochina) was published in Paris.

In 1994, the translators group led by Dinh Xuan Lam translated *Présence financière et économique française en Indochine (1859-1939)* (The Presence of French Finance and Economy in Indochina (1859-1939)) by Jean Pierre

Aumiphin into Vietnamese and it was published by Vietnamese Society of History Science.

In 1994, the French authors Daniel Hesmeery and Pierre Brocheux published the book *Cochichine, la colonisation ambiguë 1858 – 1945* (Indochina, the ambiguous colony 1858-1954)

1.2. Domestic authors' works

In 1930, To Van Qua wrote *Điền thổ trong xứ Nam Kỳ* (Field lands in Southern Region) and it was published by Nhut Van Chau Doc.

The article *Chế độ sở hữu ruộng đất lớn ở Nam Bộ trong thời kỳ đế quốc Pháp thống trị* (Massive Land Ownership Regime in Cochinchina under French colonial era) by Tran Ngoc Dinh was published on Nghien Cuu Lich Su Magazine, vol. 132, 1970.

In 1957, Nguyen Khac Dam had his work entitled *Những thủ đoạn bóc lột của chủ nghĩa đế quốc ở Việt Nam* (Imperialism's Exploitation in Vietnam) published by Publisher Van-Su-Dia.

In 1967, Publisher Khai Tri released the book *Thực trạng của giới nông dân Việt Nam dưới thời Pháp thuộc* (Situation of Vietnamese farmers under French colonial era) by Pham Cao Duong.

Nguyen The Anh's book *Việt Nam thời Pháp đô hộ* (Vietnam under French colonial era) was published in Saigon by Publisher Lua Thieng in 1970 and republished in 2008 by Publisher Van Hoc.

Kinh tế và xã hội Việt Nam dưới các vua triều Nguyễn (Vietnam's Economy and Society under Nguyen Dynasty) by Nguyen The Anh was published in Saigon before 1975 and republished in 2008 by publisher Van Hoc.

In 1983, Ngo Van Hoa released the article *Tổ chức quản lý xã thôn và cộng đồng làng xã ở Nam Kỳ thời Pháp thuộc* (Organization of communes and villages and the village communities in Cochinchina under French colonial era) on Nghien Cuu Lich Su Magazine, vol. 5 (212).

Pham Quang Trung published the article *Về chính sách vơ vét lúa gạo của tư bản Pháp và quá trình phát triển của giai cấp địa chủ ở Nam Bộ thời Pháp thuộc* (Rice Exploitation of the French Empire and the development of landlords in Cochinchina under French colonial era) on Nghien Cuu Lich Su Magazine, vol. 6 (225).

In 1993, the same author released the article *Vấn đề mắc nợ đất đai ở Nam Kỳ dưới thời Pháp thuộc* (Land Debts in Cochinchina under French colonial era) on Nghien Cuu Lich Su Magazine, vol. 1 (226).

In 1994, Vu Huy Phuc published on Nghien Cuu Lich Su Magazine, vol. 2 (274) the article *Đồn điền - một loại hình tổ chức sản xuất nông nghiệp quan trọng nửa đầu thế kỉ XIX* (Plantation – An Important Form of Agricultural Production in the First Half of the 20th Century).

In 1997, Do Bang and Truong Huu Quynh released the book *Tình hình ruộng đất nông nghiệp và đời sống nhân dân dưới triều Nguyễn* (Agricultural land and the life under Nguyen Dynasty) via publisher Thuan Hoa.

In 2004, Nguyen Van Khanh's *Cơ cấu kinh tế xã hội Việt Nam thời thuộc địa (1858-1945)* (Structure of Vietnam's Economy and Society under colonial era (1858-1945)) was republished by Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

In 2004, Nguyen Phang Quang released *Thị trường lúa gạo Nam Kỳ 1860-1945* (Rice Market in Cochinchina from 1860 to 1945) via The Hochiminh City General Publishing House.

Dissertation related to the topic:

In 1995, Vo Thi Hong defended her doctoral dissertation *Tình hình kinh tế An Giang thời Pháp thuộc (1867-1929)* (An Giang's Economic Situation Under French Colonial Era (1866-1929)) at Hochiminh City Graduate Academy of Social Sciences.

In 1997, Nguyen Thuy Duong's doctoral dissertation *Kinh tế Hà Tiên-Rạch Giá thời Pháp thuộc (1867-1939)* (Ha Tien- Rach Gia's Economy Under

French Colonial Era (1867-1939)) was defended at Hochiminh City Graduate Academy of Social Sciences.

In 1998, Tran Thi Mai defended her doctoral dissertation *Kinh tế Sóc Trăng thời Pháp thuộc 1867-1945)* (Soc Trang's Economy Under French Colonial Era (1867-1945)) at Hochiminh City Graduate Academy of Social Sciences.

In 2003, Le Huynh Hoa's doctoral dissertation *Cảng Sài Gòn và biến đổi kinh tế Nam Kỳ thời Pháp thuộc (giai đoạn 1860-1939)* (Sai Gon Port and Southern Region's Economic Change Under French Colonial Era (1860-1939)) was defended at Hochiminh City Graduate Academy of Social Sciences.

1.3. Inherited findings and subjects to be focus in the dissertation

Findings inherited by this dissertation:

First, the papers about Indochina in general and this region's agricultural economy in particular offers the general direction to approach the topic.

Second, findings of papers about South-Western Region's agricultural economy under French domination. The common approach of these papers is to present agricultural production activities such as land treatment, rice treatment, methods of fertilization, harvesting, etc., the living of major landlords in Southern Region, the situation of social classes such as peasants, coolies, etc.

Third, scientific articles written particularly about subjects such as land ownership, the economic relation between landlords and plantation workers, land allocation and transferring policies by the French, etc. are detailed works on certain specific subjects.

Finally, books and dissertations about agricultural economy and plantations in Northern Region (Tonkin) and Central Region (Annam) were studied by other authors. The findings from researching plantation economy in those region are inherited by this dissertation to be compared and contrasted in terms of matters related to West-Southern Region's plantation economy.

Subjects to be studied in this dissertation:

First, the dissertation focuses on studying, analyzing and criticizing plantation economy policies of Nguyen dynasty in Southern Region.

Second, this dissertation studies socio-economic policies practiced by the French in Indochina in general and Cochinchina in particular.

Third, the dissertation focuses on economic activities at plantations such as production techniques, production organization forms and rice trade from 1900 to 1945.

Next, in this work, the life of peasants and workers in rice plantations is also studied.

Finally, the dissertation investigates characteristics of plantation economy and its effects on the society of South-Western Region in the first half of the 20th century.

Chapter 2
PLANTATION ECONOMY IN SOUTH-WESTERN REGION FROM 1900 TO 1918

2.1. Natural and social conditions

2.1.1. Natural conditions

Geographic location: According to the map drawn by the French in 1883, this region has its easternmost point at 106.30° E and 09.36° N, its westernmost point at 104.25° E and 10.25° N, the southernmost point at 104.54° E and 8.34° N and the northernmost point at 105.29° E and 10.59° N.

Administrative border: From 1900 to 1945, this region consists of 7 provinces: Chau Doc, Ha Tien, Long Xuyen, Rach Gia, Can Tho, Soc Trang and Bac Lieu.

Terrain: This region has the terrain of a river delta with flat flood plains. It is in the zone of tropical monsoon climate. However, salinization appears in some coast areas.

Climate: The temperature of Cochinchina is high in most of the year. However, with large sources of fresh water, the provinces here do not depend on the annual amount of rain and raining days. The rice cultivation here mainly depends on the water and alluvium supplied from Hau River.

Soil: There are different types of soil: alluvial soil, acid sulfate soil, saline soil and sandy soil. In general, the land is fertile, which is ideal for rice agriculture.

River: South-Western Region mainly gets its water from Hau River flowing to the sea through three estuaries: Dinh An, Bassac and Tranh De. Canals also contributes to the development of agricultural economy and transportation here.

2.1.2. Social conditions

South-Western Region in the early years of the 20th century was a new land waiting to be invested and exploited. With the first stage of colony exploitation, immigrations happened more and faster. This made a considerable change in population of the region in comparison to the late years of the 20th century.

2.2. Situation of land and the plantation economy before 1900

2.2.1. Situation of land

Wilderness cultivation: Nguyen kings paid much attention to recruiting people to reclaim land toward South-western region as the land here is very fertile and easy to develop agricultural economy. Having occupied Cochinchina, the French developed the canal system to prepare for plantations. In 1897, Paul Doumer became Indochina's Governor-General and he paid much attention to investing in engineering infrastructure. The area of rice field increased quickly thanks to those canals. Thus, land ownership in South-Western Region reached a certain change.

Situation of land ownership: Nguyen Dynasty sped up cultivating wilderness. From the reign of Gia Long to Tu Duc's, the land reclaiming brought great achievement. The area of cultivated land grew quickly; the society also took changing steps. Right after completion of occupying, the French forced Nguyen king to cede the right to "cultivate the wilderness". Land which had belonged to classes in Cochinchina shrunk, more land quickly fell into the ownership of the French.

2.2.2. Plantation economy

Plantation supposed to be a kind of field land cultivated by the government's soldiers. Those plantations were established as military property. However, they were used mainly for production, not for fighting.

Plantations in Cochinchina started to flourish in the time of Nguyen

Dynasty, especially the reigns of Minh Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc. Plantation economy in Cochinchina brought many benefits to the life of farmers here.

After occupying the three provinces of South-Western Region, French settlement of the Nguyen plantations. The Nguyen dynasty's plantation in Cochinchina came to an end. French colonialists began to implement plans to develop the agricultural economy in the newly acquired land.

2.3. The forming and the early stage of plantation economy from 1900 to 1918

2.3.1. Economic policies of Colonial administration

The strong financial investment in the South-Western Region has made the process of land ownership and economic development have changed.The soil condition of South-Western Region is suitable for rice agriculture, hence most plantations' only product here was rice. Until 1910, according to the French's statistic, the population of this region still did not reach 1 million. Landlords' land consolidation happened too fast. Farmers tended to lose their own land and become peasants or workers at plantations.

Money from French government and the bourgeoisie started to be poured into Cochinchina. The Bank of Indochina played an important role in the development of plantation economy in South-Western Region. The production activities at those plantations brought certain economic benefit to France, too.

2.3.2. Land allocation regulations, investment in infrastructure and the initial development of the plantation economy

In the first half of the 20th century, the colony government started land allocation regulations and established a plantation system in Cochinchina. The total area of plantations in 1900 was 322,200 ha while the French alone owned 78,000 ha. The colony government ought to issue many new decrees related to land allocation such as the Decree dated 27/12/1913 and the Decree dated 11/11/1914.

The canal system played an important role in the first stage of colony exploitation in South-Western Region carried out by Governor-General Paul Doumer.Plantations grew wherever the canals reached. Roads connecting provinces were built and improved more and more. Investment in waterway traffic and road traffic opened an easier way for the land reclaiming and plantation establishment in South-Western region.

In Rach Gia province, many large plantations owned by the French were established. In Can Tho province, there were two big ones: Xa No and Co Do. In Bac Lieu province, large rice plantations still belonged to Vietnamese people.

2.4. Labor problem, production and trading activities at plantations

2.4.1. Workforce

Origin: First, the workforce was people from Tonkin and Annam recruited by the protectorate's government and by landlords. Second, they were native people from South-Western Region and neighboring provinces.

On the number of workers: Workforce were coming from many different lands. French colonialists in Indochina have the policy of recruiting workers from Tokin, An Nam. However, there are not many workers. The workforce is mainly local people and neighboring provinces.

2.4.2. Production techniques

Production technology played an important role in promoting the plantation system in South-Western Region. Seeds, fertilizer and stages of a crop, etc. were necessary conditions for an economic success in production. Cochinchina's farmers grew many rice varieties suitable to lands of different natural conditions, especially the varieties for flooded areas. To improve the quality of rice varieties, many laboratories were established in South-Western Region.

The production process were guaranteed with necessary techniques for each different stage. In South-Western Region, most fields are low and often

flooded so the cultivation technique is also different from the one used for high field. Farmer grew rice seedling in 45-60 days and took them up then transplanted them to the field.

2.4.3. Economic relations between landlords and plantation workers.

The first relation was that landlords hired people to work as workers.

The second was that farmers were landlords' tenants working for a shared proportion of the crop.

The last one is that landlords leased their land to farmers with a fixed deal.

2.4.4. Rice Export

In the first half of the 20th century, this region became one of the biggest center of rice production and export. In 1910, the export amount was 2,169,740 tons of rice. Most plantations here had rice as their only product. Only some plantations in Ha Tien produced black pepper but the scale was not considerable.

CHAPTER 3
PLANTATION ECONOMY IN SOUTH-WESTERN REGION FROM 1919 TO 1945

3.1.The policy of the French colonialists on the economic development of the plantation

3.1.1. Capital investments

The most important purpose of this stage of colony exploitation was to cover France's loss after WWI. The Bank of Indochina's development affected and controlled the agricultural economy. In South-Western Region, many landlords took loans from this bank for agricultural production.

The period in which investment was made the most was from 1920 to 1930. The global economic crisis 1929-1923 affected South-Western Region seriously. After the crisis, France stepped up investment in infrastructure and focused the finance in the growth of rice plantations here.

3.1.2. The completion of infrastructure and land reclaiming

Besides making new canals, widening the existing canal system was also paid attention to. The strategic canal routes in this stage were Rach Gia - Ha Tien, Bac Lieu – Ca Mau and Quan Lo – Phung Hiep. In 1930, the reclaiming fertile areas basically finished and plantation economy grew strongly. However, in the middle of the 20th century, new canals were no longer urgent and they would have cost more money comparing to the earlier stage. Many rice factories and rice cargo ships still operated busily.

3.1.3. Land allocation regulations and the development of plantation economy

On 26/11/1918, the French released a new decree to complement the Decree dated on 27/12/1913. The most important point in this decree is to prevent most land falling into the ownership of a small group. In 1925, the

amount of area applied for allocation reached 50,000 ha. On 19/09/1926, a new decree was made to amend the regulations in the one dated on 27/12/1913. On 04/11/1928, The Governor-General issued a new decree to prevent the explosion of plantations which led to many other complex problems.

About land ownership, the area of cultivated land increased quickly and more and more land owned by landlords. The percentages of those who owned 50-100 ha, those who owned 200-500 ha and those who owned more than 500 ha were very high, especially the ones in Bac Lieu provinces. In the early 1930s, thousand hectares of plantations in South-Western Region belonged to French companies and French landlords. During WWII, the situation of land ownership and plantation economic activities in South-Western Region fluctuated. However, it was just a slight fluctuation and this region was still an important rice production center of Indochina.

3.2. Production and trading activities at plantations

3.2.1. Workforce

The main source of workforce was still Cochinchina's peasants. The most common relation at plantations was still the land leasing with a fixed deal. Few people from Tonkin and Annam appeared in the seven provinces of South-Western Region and when they did they left it soon.

3.2.2. Organization forms and production techniques

The French capitalists and Vietnamese landlords organized their business in capitalist way but kept Vietnamese traditional way of land taxing. At large plantations, French landlords did not manage them correctly but lease them for middlemen. Those middlemen then leased the land for farmers and peasant with a higher price.

Many innovations of cultivation technique were made: a new way to plough, transplanting rice seedling at correct distances, threshing with basked, new ways to store rice, application of machines at plantations, etc. Right at the

early 20th century, the French brought tractors and modern tools and technology to the paddies. Many laboratories were established in provinces to create hybrid varieties and to improve rice productivity and quality.

3.2.3. Economic relations between landlords and plantation workers.

Standing workers got paid with money yearly depending on the level of their duty and the deal between them and the landlord. Temporary workers took tasks which were paid daily or as promised. Farmers and peasants who rented land paid the landlords with rice. In 1930, South-Western Region had 160 major landlords owning from 500 ha or above while the population was just 1.3 million.

3.2.4.Rice export

In 1920, the area of rice fields were 1,939,000 and the exported amount was 1,189,000 tons; in 1928, the area of rice fields were 2,114,000 and the exported amount was 1,797,000 tons. In 1931, the provinces with the largest rice production were the ones in South-Western Region, especially Soc Trang and Can Tho with the yearly average production of over 300,000 tons from each province. Ranked next to them, Rach Gia and Bac Lieu had the yearly production varied from 120,000 tons to 150,000 tons. Indochina’s average exported amount from 1927 to 1931 was 1,390,000 tons per year and most of it was exported from South-Western Region. Rice-based products were paddy, rice cargo, whole-grain rice, broken rice, rice flour, etc.

CHAPTER 4
CHARACTERISTICS OF PLANTATION ECONOMY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SOCIETY OF SOUTH-WESTERN REGION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

4.1. Characteristics of South-Western Region's plantation economy

4.1.1. Plantation system's massive land ownership

Major landlords owned thousands hectares. According to Y.Henry, in 1930, the major landlord group (those who owned 50 ha and above) was 2.5% of the total number of landlord and they owned 45.5% total area of rice field. In 1936, in South-Eastern Region, there were 193 big landlords with more than 500 ha of cultivated land. Four of them owned more than 4000 ha. In general, rice plantations in South-Western Region were much larger than ones in Tokin and Annam.

4.1.2. Production in the main plantations is rice

Natural conditions and the climate of South-Western Region made rice the most suitable crop here. Most plantations in this region produced and traded only one product: rice. This is different from plantations in South-Eastern Region, Annam and Tokin where there were various products besides rice to produce and trade such as coffee, tea, tobacco, cotton fluff, sugarcane, cattle, etc.

4.1.3. Investment in technology for production and trading at plantations

The French brought fruits of the first scientific-technical revolution to South-Western Region. They were excavators to dig canals, tractors, water pump, etc. Some landlords owned big ships and they could shipped exported rice to Sai Gon by themselves. They could also build factory to mill and polish rice. Those technical factors promoted the plantation economy.

4.1.4. Capitalist relations of production and feudal ones existed simultaneously

At the French's plantations, workers were paid daily and monthly. At most of the rest plantations, workers earned what left of the crop after they paid the land lease. The latter form of payment ensured the high profit for landlords and it was also easy to manage, hence it was chosen by many landlords, especially the Vietnamese.

4.2. Plantation economy's effects on South-Western Region's economy and society

4.2.1. In the field of economics

Agriculture: Traditional agricultural economy changed along with the modern trend. Science and technology got an important role in production. That made an important change in South-Western Region's economy.

Industry: The most important industry in South-Western Region was rice milling-polishing. Light industry required little capital from the bourgeoisie but it paid them back quickly.

Commerce: The development of plantation economy led to the appearance of a non-agricultural class. They were middlemen who connected the production and trade with rice as the major product. They bought rice from plantations and transported them to Sai Gon to sell. Can Tho province was the wholesale market to gather rice from other provinces in South-Western Region.

4.2.2. In the social field

Landlords: In South-Western Region, the origins of landlords were pretty complex. In the early days, before WWI, most landlords were foreign priests, government officials and retired soldiers so they favored the method of leasing land, not the capitalist business method. Landlords who came into business after 1918 with large area of plantation pushed up the production and business.

Farmers: They were plantation workers, farmers who rented land and tenant farmers. While land was consolidated into the ownership of landlords and

made them wealthy, farmers were driven into extreme poverty because of the exploitation from the feudal class and the bourgeoisie class.

The bourgeoisie: The bourgeoisie in South-Western Region were into commercial and service business more than industries. In general, Vietnamese bourgeoisie took light industries. They learned the productions method from French bourgeoisie.

Industrial Workers: In South-Western Region, there were not as much industrial workers as in South-Eastern Region or other colonies. Since the economy was mainly agricultural and the main economic relation was land leasing-renting with payment made after each cropping season, industrial workers did not have a chance to develop here.

Petty bourgeoisie: Small business men, small bosses, officers, freelancers, etc. After WWI, petty bourgeoisie met good conditions to gather and grow faster, yet they were still not as crowded as in East-Southern Region, especially in Saigon.

Plantation economy made South-Western Region thrive. Many crowded urban area were established such as Can Tho, Phung Hiep, Tra On, Long Xuyen, Rach Gia, Bac Lieu, etc. The situation of culture and society had certain changs as many newspapers and school were founded in the region.

CONCLUSION

France's invasion, its ruling in Cochinchina, and its colony exploitation gave South-Western Region an opportunity to develop. With the capability of a capitalist country, France focused their investment in agricultural economy. The process of cultivating the wilderness and plantation establishment began from the late 19th century and were promoted in the first half of 20th century. Production activities at plantations were focused in rice-based agriculture. To judge the results of the research, the dissertation draws some conclusions of the forming and development of plantation economy, its characteristics and effects on the social structure of South-Western Region in this period.

Canal system played an important role in the development of plantation economy. Canal was an important factor of South-Western Region's plantation economy. The first kings of Nguyen Dynasty knew the importance of canal to agricultural economy. Thoai Ha canal and Vinh Te canal contributed greatly to the smooth development of South-Western Region's economy. The area of cultivated land increased when the problem of flood, salinization and acid sulfate soil were solved. Water drainage was more important than water pumping for rice cultivation here. When the French carried out the colony exploitation, Indochina's government paid a special attention to canals. Cultivated land appeared wherever the canals reached. Thousands of kilometers of canals were built from 1874 to 1945. Thanks to the canal system, rice plantations of thousands of hectares grew. The importance of canals to plantation economy in South-Western Region were seen clearly through rice production, transport and export activities.

The establishment and development of plantation economy happened quickly with much achievement. The financial investment in South-Western Region to reclaim land and establish plantations brought benefits to the French.

Land allocation regime being preferential to French bourgeoisie and Vietnamese landlords gave them opportunities to cultivate the wilderness and establish massive plantations. South-Western Region had many more plantation of 300 ha or larger than Tonkin and Annam did. Rice export showed the important role of rice plantation. The export amount increased every year and after WWI, South-Western Region became the major rice export center of Indochina.

South-Western Region's plantations were much different from plantations in other colonies in Indochina. The plantations here had only one product: rice. While plantations in Annam and Tokin worked on various crops such as rice, coffee, tea, rubber tea, tobacco, etc., and there were even castle plantations. Plantations in this region focused in rice because of suitable the conditions of nature and soil. No other crop could be compared to rice in terms of economic value. Massive land ownership was also another difference between South-Western Region's plantation economy and other regions'. Since the land was massive and the workforce was not stable, at most plantations, landlords leased the land to farmers for a fixed deal. The number of workers who got paid daily or monthly here was much fewer than in Tokin and Annam.

Capitalist features appeared in production activities of plantation system. French landlords carried out production and trading activities in capitalist methods. The French's plantations were divided into many lots, each lot was leased to a middleman who paid a certain price. He then leased the lot to a farmer with a much higher price. This is absent exploitation, a popular kind of exploitation in many French bourgeoisie' large plantations. Leasing land for a high price was landlords' main way of exploitation which had begun from the feudal age. Capitalist economy did not meet enough conditions to strongly grow in South-Western Region.

Plantation economy's strong impact on South-Western Region socio-economic situation. Plantation economy's development in South-Western

Region brought other economic fields along with it. Rice production and transport helped industrial economy and commercial economy grow. Light industry, especially the industry of rice milling and polishing thrived. Because of the need to ensure rice quality, landlords processed rice before export, which led to the appearance of many milling-polishing rice factories in South-Western Region.

The quick change of economic structure brought along changes of social situation. The two major classes in this period in South-Western Region were still landlords and farmers. Farmers in South-Western Region with the majority was peasants had a very unstable life because of high tax and land rent. However, because South-Western Region's natural conditions was good comfortable and the resource was abundant, their life was still not so hopeless. Peasant was not a steady job. In time of poor crops, they would likely to escape from their plantations and seek for shelter and peasant job at other plantations.

Landlords became wealthy quickly thanks to plantation business. They lived luxury life in big cities. The population of other classes such as industrial workers, bourgeoisie, scholars, etc., in South-Western Region rose day after day but still not as much as in South-Eastern Region.

Plantation economy left lessons and important practical values.

The practical values of the colony government's canal system planning and excavation for canal system remains until now. Canals in South-Western Region are still important routes and gathering point of the agricultural economy. The canals now still play an important role in the development of economy, tourism and culture of South-Western Region.

Cultivating the wilderness and rice plantation establishment made South-Western Region the biggest rice production center in Indochina. Regular development of rice research brought new varieties. Nowadays, rice cultivation is still the major economy in Mekong Delta. Traditions and experience are till

kept and positive value from them are still applied in cultivation. Water, fertilizer, industry and varieties are always valuable lessons in agricultural economy. The application of science and technology at plantations still shows its value. People in South-Western Region approached western industrial civilization early. It was excavations, steamboats, tractors, etc. While approaching western culture, the personalities of people in South-Western Region were formed gradually. Nowadays, many inventions and new machines are still being made to serve the agricultural economy of this region.

Plantation economy helped South -Western Region grow from wilderness with harsh natural conditions into a rich river delta with massive rice fields and fruitful gardens. Economic values from the early 20th century are still thriving with new achievements.

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