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**FRENCH COLONIAL EXPLOITATION IN ANNAM:
A CASE STUDY OF NONG-SON COAL MINE (1889–1927)¹**

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The authors of the paper study the colonial exploitation of Indochina in general and Annam in particular by the French with special reference to the Nong-Son coal mine (Quang-Nam province) from 1889 to 1927. The authors clarify the process of procurement of right to exploit the Nong-Son coal mine from the Chinese, the organization of management, exploration, and mining in Nong-Son by the French, and on this basis evaluate the results, analyze the core characteristics, clarify the advantages and limitations of the management organization and coal extraction in Nong-Son during the mentioned period. References used by the authors include administrative texts (reports, decrees, etc.) of the French protectorate government in Indochina and original materials of organizations or individuals who participated in management or worked in Nong-Son between 1889 and 1927. In addition, the authors also use historical materials published in French journals or newspapers at that time (*Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, *Le Génie civil*, *L'Écho des mines et de la métallurgie*, *L'Avenir du Tonkin*, *Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*, *Le Journal des finances*, *Bulletin de l'Office colonial*, *La Presse Coloniale Illustrée*, *L'Éveil économique de l'Indochine*, *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, *Le Temps*, *La Cote de la Bourse et de la banque*, etc.) and research works related to the Nong-Son coal mine from the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. The paper contributes to “sketching” the picture of the Nong-Son coal mine in 1889–1927, thereby helping researchers and readers have a more objective and comprehensive view of the process of assessing the impact of colonial exploitation conducted by the French in Vietnam in modern times.

Keywords: Annam; coal mine; colonial exploitation; Nong-Son; French Indochina

Introduction

In 1884, along with achieving the goal of invading the territory by military force and forcing the Nguyen Dynasty to sign the Patenotre Treaty, recognizing France's rule and protectorate over the entire territory of Vietnam [Billot 1888, 418–421], the French colonialists initiated colonial exploitation of the country. This process took place in many fields. Among them, the exploitation of mineral resources in general and coal in particular

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was one of the fields that attracted the top attention of the French at that time. In the *Mission Géologique dans l'Indochine*, published in *Le Génie civil* on December 25, 1882, Aug. D. affirmed the French interest in the rich mineral resources hidden in the vast territories of Annam (Central Vietnam)² and Tonkin (North Vietnam) [Aug 1882, 78]. At the same time, the author also believed that the future of the Indochina colony was associated with rich natural resources and their exploitation under conditions suitable to the France's interests. With such a colonial exploitation orientation focusing on the mining industry, Nong-Son (Quang-Nam province) at that time, being one of a few locations in Annam possessing relatively abundant coal reserves [Un discours de M. de Lanessan 1893, 2], was not beyond the desirable targets of the French. In order to realize the ambition of turning this site into one of the first mining concessions in Indochina, as stated in the decree on mining concessions in Annam and Tonkin signed by the French president on October 16, 1888 [L'Industrie minière de l'Indochine 1929, 8], the French had to use protectorate government pressure in order to seize control over and exploitation of this mine from the Chinese in 1889. From then until 1927, the French gradually built and adjusted the management apparatus and conducted exploration, mining, and operation of this mine according to European processes and methods [Lettres D'Indo-Chine 1889].

Specifically, in the exploration and mining work, some popular methods and technical means were applied in mining in Europe at that time (using machinery and drilling techniques [Counillon 1900, 7–11], using explosives to create deep underground coal mining tunnels [Nouvelles et Renseignements 1891, 2; Tonkin (Explosion) 1891], building the Decauville railway and using wagons to transport coal [Pila and Malon 1899, 11], using special “Marsault” lamps to minimize the risk of fire and explosion in coal mining tunnels [Counillon 1900, 8–9]). Moreover, the French also thought about the coordination between the development of coal mining infrastructure and the transportation system (digging a canal connecting Nong-Son with Tourane [Le Courrier du Tonkin 1893, 4], investing in the construction of Tourane Port [Pila and Malon 1899, 5–22], building a railway connecting Tourane and Faifoo [Conseil supérieur de l'Indo-Chine 1904; Tourane 1905a, 3; Tourane 1905b, 3; Jung 1908, 87]) in order to help effectively transport and heave coal. However, all of that was not enough to obscure another contrasting picture taking place in Nong-Son at that time, where the number of native people used in coal mining with manual labor was quite large, sometimes up to 600–700 people [Les mines de charbon... 1904, 47; Le mines en Indo-Chine 1903, 1327]. “Clumsy” and “awkward” combination of some mining means from Western capitalist production with the backward methods of feudalism in Vietnam (for example, the French used railways and wagons to transport coal but the animal draught power was used in Nong-Son [Pélissier 1904], a canal connecting Nong-Son with Tourane to facilitate the coal transportation process was dug using only human power [Pila and Malon 1899, 44–45], etc.), reflected the nature of the “colonial economy” the French established there. So, with such making, could the French achieve their goals of extracting coal in Nong-Son?

When researching the Nong-Son coal mine during the French colonial period, the authors found that this mining concession was mentioned directly and indirectly in various historical materials. Firstly, the historical materials reflect the economic activities in general and the mining industry in particular in the Indochina Federation. Among them, a part of the content refers to the formation and operation of the Nong-Son coal mine. Typical academic publications include: *Notes sur Nong-Son* by De Saugy L. (*Revue Coloniale*), *Du développement actuel et possible de l'industrie en Indochine* by H. Brenier (*Bulletin de l'Office colonial*), *Les mines de charbon de Nong-Son* by J. B. H. Counillon (*Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*), *Notice sur gisements de charbon en Indo-Chine* by M. G. H. Monod (*Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*), *Port de Tourane: mine de Nong-Son* by U. Pila and J. B. Malon, etc. Secondly, current affairs papers reflecting the management, exploration, and mining of coal in Nong-Son, as well as the effectiveness of

these activities, were published during the period 1889–1927 in French newspapers or journals such as *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, *Le Génie civil*, *L'Écho des mines et de la métallurgie*, *L'Avenir du Tonkin*, *Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*, *Le Journal des finances*, *Bulletin de l'Office colonial*, *La Presse Coloniale Illustrée*, *L'Éveil économique de l'Indochine*, *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, *Le Temps*, *La Cote de la Bourse et de la banque*, etc. (see References). In particular, in 2019, doctoral student Jaehyun J. completed and successfully defended doctoral thesis *Exploitation minière et exploitation humaine: Les charbonnages dans le Vietnam colonial, 1874–1945* at Université Sorbonne Paris Cité, France. This thesis is considered to be a scholarly work of a summative nature, helping scholars visualize a panoramic picture of coal mining activities in Vietnam from 1874 to 1945. In particular, statistical data on coal exploration and mining activities in Nong-Son were mentioned by J. Jaehyun in the text and appendix of the thesis, which became one of the essential scientific bases for the authors of this paper to apply in their research, to clarify the changes in the activities of the Nong-Son coal mine in the period from 1889 to 1927.

Coal Mining Rights in Nong-Son Delegated From the Chinese to the French (1889)

A paper published in *Le Temps* on April 24, 1888, stated that since 1881, the Chinese (represented by Luong-Van-Phong and later Nam-Chéong) were given the right to exploit the Nong-Son coal mine by the Tu Duc court for 29 years. Coal mined in this area would become a necessary fuel source for glass and forge factories in Guangzhou (廣州), and it meet the consumption needs of households in Shanghai (上海). Such a stable consumer market partly boosted coal-mining activities here. In 1888 alone, the Chinese extracted and exported about 2,000 tons of coal from this mine [Lettres de L'Indo-Chine 1888].

However, according to the French assessment, Chinese coal mining activities in Nong-Son at that time had many shortcomings and limitations. Firstly, the Chinese seemed content with making Nong-Son coal mining cost nothing or as little as possible. Therefore, they still advocated operating a manual mining industry and seemed to pay little attention to investing in improving working conditions and technical means. This led to another consequence: mining was limited to open-pit mines, while coal seams deep underground seemed beyond their capabilities. Chinese mine owners completely ignored reforestation in exploited areas. During the rainy season, when water flooded the mine, the measures to prevent this situation with human power and outdated manual tools proved ineffective. When the amount of water flowing into the mines was too large, causing the risk of landslides that lurked and threatened the lives of miners, the Chinese often stopped mining there and started somewhere else further away [De Saugy 1903, 143–144].

In the report of Engineer Pierre-Marius Fauquier, who was sent to Annam by the decision of December 29, 1888, with the mission of helping the Protectorate government conduct preliminary research in order to prepare for the exploitation of this mine, he also mentioned a weak and wasteful situation in the organization of coal mining in Nong-Son by the Chinese that had occurred before when many mines were abandoned or flooded. Part of the mined coal was washed away by water after the first season rains or settled at the bottom of nearby streams in this area. Besides, the Chinese used baskets, a very outdated way to load coal onto barges for transport to Tourane (Danang City). Despite his efforts, Pierre-Marius Fauquier could not find any trace of any long-term mining plan by the Chinese at the Nong-Son coal mine. The payment and housing conditions for miners working there were either very poor or not of concern to the Chinese bosses. With such a situation, Pierre-Marius Fauquier hoped that when the exploitation of this coal mine was in the hands of the French, the working and living conditions of many miners here would be improved, thereby ensuring the supply of coal for ships coming from Hai-Phong, Hong Kong (香港), and other places via the Tourane port.

Pierre-Marius Fauquier's expectations were realized not long after. On July 12, 1889, in Hue, under the Protectorate government pressure, Nam-Chéong, the Chinese owner who was managing the Nong-Son coal mine at that time, signed a document certifying the transfer of mining rights for this coal mine for 30,000 piastres to the French merchant Charles Cotton and Amock, a Chinese man authorized by Charles Cotton to resolve all issues related to this mining concession. On July 28 of the same year, the Privy Council of the Nguyen Dynasty approved the transfer of this exploitation right. On August 2, 1889, Chavassieux and Hector, two Frenchmen representing the Protectorate government who were present in Hue at that time, received this decision. From then on, the Nong-Son coal mine became officially under French management and operation. That was also the starting point for the foundation of the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* (Tourane Coal Mining Company of France). However, due to problems arising from the transfer of management rights between two Chinese owners, Luong-Van-Phong and Nam-Chéong [La tribune des colonies et des protectorats 1891, 152–156], after the first-instance trial in Hai-Phong (December 13, 1889), the appeal trial (March 7, 1890) and the cassation (June 9, 1891) court in Saigon rejected Nam-Chéong's legal representation rights over the Nong-Son coal mine at the time of signing the document transferring the mining rights to the French (July 12, 1889). Therefore, Nam-Chéong did not receive 30,000 piastres from Charles Cotton as agreed. Meanwhile, Charles Cotton and Amock, along with the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* they founded, were still recognized for the right to manage and exploit the Nong-Son coal mine because the Nguyen Dynasty approved the transfer of this coal mine from the Chinese to the French on August 27, 1889.

The French Management of the Nong-Son Coal Mine in the Period 1889–1927: Five Changes of Its Owners

Before the Nguyen Dynasty Privy Council approved the right to exploit the Nong-Son coal mine, the French thought of organizing and managing the operations of this coal mine by establishing the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* (Tourane Coal Mining Company of France) on April 11, 1889, headquartered in Tourane with a nominal capital of 4,000,000 francs [De Saugy 1903, 145]. It was difficult for the researchers to find historical materials that fully and specifically record the organizational structure of this company. However, through some contents reflecting its activities in the period of 1889 to 1898 published in the press, it became known that the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* was run by the Director [Ingénieurs 1890, 9] and the Chairman of the Board of Directors [Lettres du Tonkin 1890]. All issues related to the operation of the Nong-Son coal mine, from investing in infrastructure, technical equipment, and means for exploitation and coordinating human resources working there to selling coal to the locals and exporting abroad, were all handled by this top-management department. Meanwhile, coal exploration and mining activities in Nong-Son were directly managed by experienced French engineers and miners [Ingénieurs 1890, 9; Nouvelles et Renseignements 1891, 2]. Finally, in order to bring the coal seams from underground to the outside, the French bosses had to use the labor of Vietnamese workers [Colonies Françaises 1891].

Information in *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* on June 11, 1890, also stated the intention of the French owners to issue stocks of the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* in Hong Kong immediately after it was established and began to operate. Because of the advantage of providing a stable source of coal for Hong Kong, the company's issuance of stocks in this market would bring them a significant source of profit. The plan was officially realized on April 15, 1892. The company issued 8,000 stocks with a par value of 500 francs based on its 4,000,000 francs nominal capital for the first time. This was quite an essential milestone in the development history of the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane*.

Despite this, the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* also encountered many difficulties restoring coal mining activities in Nong-Son after the Chinese left the location and left a mess there. The company cherished the ambition of creating a well-developed infrastructure in Nong-Son to serve large-scale exploitation worthy of the mine's abundant coal reserves, including the construction of housing areas for Europeans, the purchase of mining and transportation equipment, the re-planning of mining, the construction of the Decauville railway to transport coal from the site to the dock for loading barges on the Thu-Bon river, and, when necessary, dredging and improving the riverbed, which was constantly being filled with sand, to ensure the transportation of coal to the Tourane port. However, from 1889 to 1898, the above plans remained unfulfilled due to a lack of financial resources [Jaehyun 2019, 130]. The need to promote coal mining activities in Nong-Son, especially the connection between the mining process and the transportation and consumption of products, has been urgently raised, requiring the establishment of a new management structure based on the conversion, adjustment, and augmentation of functions of the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane*. Foundation of a new company was needed, and the *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* became such organization.

On March 1, 1899, *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* (Tourane Coal Mines and Warehouse Company) was officially established with an initial capital of 3.5 million francs (it issued 7,000 stocks, each with a par value of 500 francs) [Pila and Malon 1899, 66–72; De Saugy 1903, 148–149] with Ulysse Pila and J. B. Malon as shareholders holding the executive power. *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* had to pay the recently dissolved company (*Société Française des Houillères de Tourane*) 500,000 francs for the right to exploit the Nong-Son coal mine [Pila and Malon 1899, 8]. Ulysse Pila – one of the two executives of the company, expressed optimism about a brighter future for the company than the previous period by linking the restoration of coal mining with the development of the seaport at Tourane. He said that once equipped with modern infrastructure, this port would stimulate coal exports and other Annam products. The number of ships calling at the port would increase. At that time, the demand for coal to supply ships was urgent, and that became the driving force to promote coal mining activities in Nong-Son.

With the idea of linking the exploitation of the Nong-Son coal mine with the planning and management of seaports for coal shipment, in 1899, Ulysse Pila and J. B. Malon set up the “Port de Tourane – Mine de Nong-Son” project, with investments in the construction of ports, wharves, temporary warehouses, coal concentration yards, etc. [Pila and Malon 1899, 66–72; Les Industries de L'indo-Chine 1899, 3]. This caused coal mining in Nong-Son to restart and raised high new hopes. The *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* anticipated spending two million francs to drill coal wells and purchase other mining coal equipment in order to achieve an output of 200,000 to 250,000 tons/year [Pila and Malon 1899, 68]. However, for many reasons [Jaehyun 2019, 158–159], coal mining in Nong-Son during 1900–1907 did not achieve the positive results expected by the company's top-management group [Jaehyun 2019, 159]. The company's financial statements for 1904 showed a debit balance of 231,483 francs (129,295 francs in 1904 alone) [Docks et Houillères de Tourane 1905, 10]. On October 22, 1907, the extraordinary general meeting of shareholders of the *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* deliberated the situation and declared the dissolution of the company; it also appointed Édouart Courbis as liquidator to pay off the company's debts [Société des docks et houillères... 1907]. Thus, the mission of *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* of managing coal mining in Nong-Son officially ended.

From 1910 to 1913, the Nong-Son coal mine was owned by Antoine Brizard and managed by Félix Lion. During this time, coal mining continued with an output of 50 to 80 tons/day. Coal was used for brick, lime, glass factories, cooking, low-pressure boilers,

and forges. However, on January 15, 1914, Antoine Brizard sold the Nong-Son coal mine to Alfred Debaux. A. Bonté, A. Houzet, F. Lion, and A. Lunings collaborated with Alfred Debaux to manage the coal mining activity in Nong-Son. Alfred Debaux's management of the Nong-Son coal mine finished on September 20, 1921, because he did not fulfill his obligation to pay the mining concession tax [Arrêté prononçant... 1921, 973–974]. From then on, the *Banque de l'Indochine* (Bank of Indochina) owned the Nong-Son coal mine because it was the former owner's mortgaged property. After a while, the exploitation was ineffective [La production des mines de charbon... 1928, 15], and the *Banque de l'Indochine* stopped its activity at the Nong-Son coal mine in 1927 [Les bassins houillers... 1927, 14–15; La production des mines de charbon... 1928, 15].

Table 1
Organizations/individuals managing the Nong-Son coal mine
and its production from 1889 to 1927

Periods	Organizations/individuals	Total mining output (tons)
1889–1898	Société Française des Houillères de Tourane	No specific statistics
1899–1907	Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane	133,125
1908–1913	Antoine Brizard	83,740
1914–1920	Alfred Debeaux	64,258
1921–1927	Banque de l'Indochine	4,100

Source: [Jaehyun 2019, 76, 84 (Appendix)]

Exploration and Mining Coal Activities of the French
in Nong-Son (1889–1927)

Although coal mining in Nong-Son had been started by the Chinese before 1889, with outdated techniques, the Chinese bosses and the labor force from Guangzhou [Lettres de L'Indo-Chine 1888] could only dig up the coal surface layers using open-pit mines. The coal deposit was not without interest to the French. However, it was not their ultimate goal. They wanted to prospect for deep underground coal seams with large reserves, because it would be a massive source of profit in case of the success. Therefore, before and after taking control of this coal mine, the French focused on exploring and surveying coal resources in the region.

This process took place as early as 1882 when the Nong-Son coal mine was still in the hands of the Chinese. The exploration work was initiated by Edmond Fuchs and Édouard Saladin – two French engineers [Charbonnages du Tonkin 1893, 28]. The exploration result report confirmed that the coal seams in Nong-Son stretched over five kilometers along the Thu-Bon River and deepened about two kilometers inland. According to the slope of the terrain, the coal seams were found from the sea level up to the hilltop 300 meters high. Regarding the expected reserves, according to a rough assessment at some Chinese mining locations, the estimated volume of coal from the sea level to the top was about 2,500,000 tons (average of about 200,000 tons/hectare).

In 1890 and 1891, the French dug two exploratory wells, carried out three exploratory drillings, at the same time they dug exploratory trenches, and found coal at depths of 90 to 121.5 meters [Counillon 1900, 11]. The information published in *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* on February 26, 1892, stated that the exploration activities of French engineers received excellent results when they discovered a 10 meters thick coal seam at a depth of 80 meters underground in the Nong-Son area. According to preliminary assessments, it was pretty easy to exploit it [Indo-Chine 1892a]. However, on April 4, 1892, *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* published a piece of information that seemed even more ideal than the results announced nearly two months earlier: a good quality coal seam with a thickness of about 30 meters (not 10 meters) had

been discovered at Nong-Son [Indo-Chine 1892b]. The above discoveries probably made the Nong-Son coal mine even more attractive to the French. Therefore, in 1893, Édouard Saladin – a famous engineer who had collaborated with Edmond Fuchs in exploring coal mines in Tonkin was supported by a group of French capitalists in Lyon to research and analyze the Nong-Son coal mine in order to provide a comprehensive assessment and the necessary financial plan to promote mining activities there [Charbonnages du Tonkin 1893, 28]. The results of the above explorations became the basis for the French protectorate to affirm that Nong-Son was one of Indochina's three main coal mining areas [Monod 1903, 11–12].

Regarding the coal mining activities of the French in Nong-Son from 1890 to 1893, although there are no specific statistics on the amount of coal exploited, researchers have sufficient grounds to affirm with certainty that this work was still maintained [Annam 1890]. Information published in the *L'Écho des mines et de la métallurgie* on September 21, 1890, stated that the sale of anthracite coal from the Nong-Son [Lettres D'Indo-Chine 1890] coal mines was still taking place in Tourane and Hong Kong at prices of 7 piastres/ton and 12 piastres/ton respectively [Les mines de houille... 1890, 7]. During this period, coal mining was under the command of two engineers, Vincens and Beauverrie. The number of miners working there once reached nearly 600 people (1892) [Les mines de charbon... 1904, 47]. It resulted from many reasons. Firstly, the stable consumption from Chinese markets (Hong Kong, Guangzhou, and Shanghai) enabled the French to export a significant amount of coal mined from Nong-Son. Secondly, the digging of the Cam-lao Canal (August 1893) [Pila and Malon 1899, 44–45] made the transportation of coal from Nong-Son to Tourane easier.

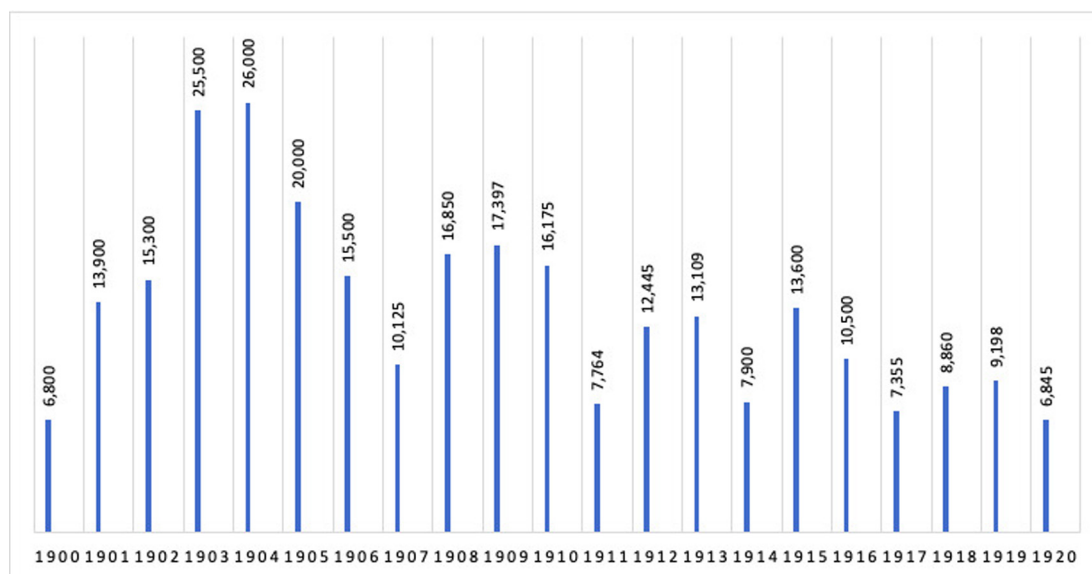
However, that does not mean that the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* (Tourane Coal Mining Company of France) did not encounter any difficulties in the process of mining coal there. On the contrary, the French gradually realized the problems they needed to solve from the operating process and actual activities at the Nong-Son coal mine. Firstly, in the context of the Vietnamese resistance to the French colonial invasion that continued to explode in the late 19th century, the French encountered considerable difficulties in mobilizing indigenous labor resources to serve coal mining there. Secondly, to organize an advanced mining industry following European processes in Nong-Son as the French had expected, they needed a much more abundant financial resource than the 1.5-2 million piastres invested at that time in building a synchronous infrastructure foundation from housing for mining engineers and workers, exploration and mining equipment to the traffic system, means of transportation (railway and waterway) in order to transport coal from Nong-Son to Tourane.

As the French had predicted, from 1894 onwards, a series of difficulties arose due to a lack of financial resources to invest in the mine, causing the promising start of the previous stage to stagnate completely. In such a situation, Ulysse Pila and J. B. Malon – two shareholders who controlled the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* had to think about extracting only a certain amount of coal for sale (worth about 350 francs/month) to ensure a basic level of exploitation costs, hoping to help the company overcome this difficult period. With such a making, from 1894 to 1899, coal mining in Nong-Son was at a poor level, with a total output in six years reaching only about 23,000 tons (including about 12,000 tons of grade one coal and about 10,800 tons of grade two coal). Coal exports were recorded at 1,600 tons in 1896, 1,440 tons in 1897, and 2,255 tons in 1898. Meanwhile, only about 30 to 40 miners were working there [Counillon 1900, 13]. By 1898, the increase in production costs and the shortage of working capital led to a bad result; dissolution of the *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane*, and the suspension of coal mining activities in Nong-Son.

During the period of 1899–1907, when the Nong-Son coal mine was transferred from *Société Française des Houillères de Tourane* to *Société des Docks et Houillères*

de Tourane (Tourane Coal Mines and Warehouse Company), the new company planned to spend two million francs for drilling coal wells and purchasing other mining equipment with the expectation of achieving an output of 200,000 tons/year. This ambitious plan raised new high hopes. The number of native miners working at Nong-Son was about 350, which could increase to 600 [Les mines de charbon... 1904, 47] or 700 [Le mines en Indo-Chine 1903, 1327] people at certain periods of the year. However, the actual results were not as expected by the owners of the *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane*.

Figure 1
Coal production in Nong-Son during the period of 1900 to 1920 (unit: tons)



Source: [Jaehyun 2019, 76, 84 (Appendix)]

From Figure 1 above, we see that during the first year (1900) after the *Société des Docks et Houillères de Tourane* took over the management of the Nong-Son coal mine, the amount of coal exploited reached only 6,800 tons, then just one year later (1901), the figure doubled, reaching 13,900 tons. The growth in coal mining output in Nong-Son has not stopped there. In 1902, coal production reached 15,300 tons, then 25,500 tons in 1903, and peaked at 26,000 tons in 1904. However, if we compare this output with the company's expected figure of 200,000 tons/year, it is still quite far away. From 1905 onwards, coal mining output in Nong-Son continuously decreased from 20,000 tons to only 15,550 tons (1906) and 10,125 tons (1907). The reason for this was the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–1905, which disrupted trade activities and affected coal exports to the Chinese market. Hence, the unimpressive mining results were completely understandable. Furthermore, during this period, the global coal market was saturated, affecting Nong-Son's mining output.

After that, in the period of 1908 to 1913, the coal mining situation in Nong-Son somewhat improved again in the three years of 1908, 1909, and 1910 with an output of 16,850 tons, 17,397 tons, and 16,175 tons, respectively, although it still could not surpass the figure of 26,000 tons in 1904. However, the mining output in 1908–1910 was not stable, and in 1911, the coal output in Nong-Son decreased to only 7,764 tons. In 1912 and 1913, the output increased to 12,445 tons and 13,109 tons, respectively, however, it was beyond the level of production in 1908–1910 [Jaehyun 2019, 76 (Appendix)]. From 1914 to 1918, during World War I, coal mining in Nong-Son continued. Production increased in the first three years from 7,900 tons in 1914 to 13,600 tons (1915) and

10,500 tons (1916). However, this prosperity could not be maintained for long, and from 1917 to 1920, the annual coal output did not reach ten thousand tons [Jaehyun 2019, 84 (*Appendix*)], and even the *Bulletin de l'Office Colonial* assessed such output as insignificant [Brenier 1917, 70].

After World War I, from 1919 to 1929, the French carried out the second colonial exploitation in Vietnam. This is considered the “mining boom” period. However, the situation in Nong-Son was tranquil. In particular, on September 20, 1921, Alfred Debaux, the owner of the Nong-Son coal mine since 1914, was stripped of ownership of this coal mine for failing to pay the mine concession tax [Arrêté prononçant... 1921, 973–974]; the *Banque de l'Indochine* (Bank of Indochina) became a new owner of the Nong-Son coal mine because it was the mortgaged property of the previous owner. Then mining operations were interrupted from 1921 to 1924. In 1925 and 1926, the Nong-Son coal mine resumed operations, but the output was relatively low (1925: 3,200 tons; 1926: 900 tons) [La production des mines... 1928, 15]. Faced with that situation, the Bank of Indochina decided to stop coal mining in Nong-Son in 1927 [Les bassins houillers... 1927, 14–15; La production des mines... 1928, 15].

Thus, from the above analysis, it can be seen that, during 1889–1927, there were times when the French had great expectations for Nong-Son, with an expected annual exploitation reserve of 200,000 to 250,000 tons of coal [Pila and Malon 1899, 68]. However, the actual productivity was much lower, causing the total coal production here in the four periods of 1899–1907 (nine years: 133,125 tons, average 14,791 tons/year), 1908–1913 (six years: 83,740 tons, average 13,956 tons/year), 1914–1920 (seven years: 64,258 tons, average 9,179 tons/year), 1921–1927 (seven years: 4,100 tons, average 585 tons/year) to not even reach the target figure for a year, and production interruptions were also recorded in Nong-Son from 1921 to 1924 [Jaehyun 2019, 76, 84 (*Appendix*)]. That partly showed the ineffectiveness of the management and operation of the Nong-Son coal mine by the French during this period.

Conclusion

From 1889 to 1927, the site name Nong-Son was mentioned with increasing frequency in administrative documents of the protectorate government as well as contemporary press as one of the few mining concessions in Central Vietnam that the French focused on investing in. During those 38 years, the French calculated and implemented a long-term plan with a specific roadmap: after having legal and practical ownership of the Nong-Son coal mine in 1889, they gradually built a management organization, conducted exploration, mining, and operation of the mine, based on advanced mining processes, methods, machinery and techniques from the West, as the French affirmed and the press recognized at that time. However, would that help Nong-Son coal mine escape the backward and wasteful state it had in the previous period when the Chinese took control? The reality that took place in Nong-Son during the period of 1889 to 1927 did not confirm that.

It must be admitted that when the management of the Nong-Son coal mine was entirely in the hands of the French since 1889, a methodical and focused investment plan was also outlined and partially implemented. However, the lack of financial resources, together with the inherent nature of French colonial policy, which was mainly based on the collection of available products and little technical investment, led to a “half-hearted” and “dripping” outcome in the construction of infrastructure in order to serve economic development in French colonies in general and Vietnam in particular. Naturally, coal mining in Nong-Son could not escape the above situation. Western machinery and technology were used only in a few stages of Nong-Son’s coal exploration and mining process. This has not resulted in a significant and effective breakthrough change. Furthermore, during 38 years of operation, the Nong-Son coal mine has changed ownership five times

(two companies, two private owners, one bank), which partly reflected the instability and contributed to the ups and downs of the fate of this mining concession during the period of 1889 to 1927.

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² According to *Décret du 17 Octobre 1887, relatif à l'organisation de l'Indo-Chine Française* [Decree of October 17, 1887, relating to the organization of French Indo-China], the Indo-chinese Union was officially established with four colonies: Cochinchina (Southern Vietnam), Tonkin (Northern Vietnam), Annam (Central Vietnam), and Cambodia. See: [Décret du 17 octobre 1887...].

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Колоніальна експлуатація французами Аннаму: на прикладі вугільної копальні Нонг-Сон (1889–1927)

У статті досліджено колоніальну експлуатацію французами Індокитаю загалом та Аннаму зокрема на прикладі вугільної копальні Нонг-Сон (провінція Куангнам) у період з 1889-го до 1927 року. Автори статті першочерговим завданням ставлять висвітлення процесу здобуття права на експлуатацію вугільної копальні Нонг-Сон від китайців, організації управління, розвідки та видобутку в Нонг-Сон французами і на цій основі оцінюють результати, аналізують основні характеристики, з’ясовують переваги та обмеження організації управління й видобутку вугілля в Нонг-Сон протягом зазначеного періоду. Джерела, використані у статті, включають адміністративні тексти (звіти, декрети тощо) французького протекторатського уряду в Індокитаї та оригінальні матеріали організацій або осіб, які

брали участь в управлінні чи працювали в Нонг-Сон між 1889 та 1927 роками. Крім того, автори статті використовували історичні матеріали, опубліковані у французьких журналах або газетах того часу (*Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, *Le Génie civil*, *L'Écho des mines et de la métallurgie*, *L'Avenir du Tonkin*, *Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*, *Le Journal des finances*, *Bulletin de l'Office colonial*, *La Presse Coloniale Illustrée*, *L'Éveil économique de l'Indochine*, *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustrée*, *Le Temps*, *La Cote de la Bourse et de la banque* тощо), а також дослідницькі праці, пов'язані з вугільною копальнею Нонг-Сон кінця XIX – першої половини XX століття. Стаття робить внесок у створення “нарис” картини вугільної копальні Нонг-Сон у 1889–1927 роках, у такий спосіб допомагаючи дослідникам і читачам мати більш об’єктивний і всебічний погляд щодо оцінки впливу колоніальної експлуатації, здійснюваної французами у В’єтнамі в новий час.

Ключові слова: Аннам; вугільна копальня; колоніальна експлуатація; Нонг-Сон; Французький Індокитай

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