

French colonial rule of Laos from the perspective of international relations

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Abstract: After the Qing dynasty and French War, France gradually dissolved the tributary relations between southeast Asian countries and the Qing Dynasty. Before colonizing Laos, France first let it escape from the rule of Siam, and then gradually improved the colonial ruling institutions, and implemented colonial policies such as “division and rule”, “Laos and Vietnam”, massive plunder of land resources, and excessive taxes, and enslavement education. The colonial rule of France continued the backward and decadent feudal monarchy, which brought profound disasters to the Lao people, and at the same time had a profound influence on the modernization of Laos.

1. Introduction

Laos was also a vassal state of the Qing Dynasty invaded by foreign powers. The history of Laos can be traced back to the 1st to the 2nd centuries, and the death of King Anu of Laos in 1829 also marked the complete annexation of the whole of Laos by Siam.^[1] In 1885, the Qing government signed the Treaty of China-France with France. Although the treaty only stipulated that the Qing government recognized France's right to protect Vietnam, in essence, the Qing government also lost the sovereignty of the vassal states of Indochina Peninsula. After the collapse of the Chinese tributary system in the Indochina Peninsula, France invaded the countries on the Indochina Peninsula. After the occupation of Cambodia and Vietnam, they colonized Laos. Therefore, he fought with his ruling country, Siam. After the defeat of Siam in 1893, he signed the Treaty of France and Siam, in which Lao territory was ceded to France, and thus Laos entered the French colonial era. Laos was one of the many French colonies, first ruled by Siam and then ceded by it, which was unique in the colonial process. Based on Laos, taking the invasion of France as the entry point, this paper deeply explores the French colonization of Laos, which not only facilitates to reflect the French colonial policy, but also presents the political, economic and educational culture of Laos, and understands the influence of French colonial rule in the history of Laos on the whole. At the same time, it provides some thinking for the survival of small countries under the game of great power in international relations.

2. History of Laos before the French invasion

Before Laos was completely occupied by Siam, there were three kingdoms: Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Zhan Baset. All three countries were occupied by Siam respectively.

In terms of geographical location, Laos is located in the Indochina Peninsula, most of which are isolated mountainous areas, with obvious regional dispersion.

Politically, the internal inconsistency and the royal family declined. Before the 14th century, there were Shan, Ming, Wenshan, Mixed, Queen, Meng Sao and other states in Laos. In 1353, the first feudal centralized country in Lao history- -Lancang Kingdom was established (1353- -1707), which was a prosperous period in Lao history. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Lancang Kingdom gradually divided into three countries, namely, the Kingdom of Luang Prabang, the Kingdom of Vientiane, and the Kingdom of Zhan Barcelona. The Kingdom of Laos "implemented the landscape system, with the local feudal master consisting of political and financial power.^[2]"For the lords for their own interests, constantly expand their own power, the feudal Lord between the feudal Lord and the feudal Lord conflict of interest and the constant friction with the central government. In 1778, the kingdoms of Laos were invaded by Siam and successively reduced to protectorates of Siam. Moreover, the Xieng Khouang region between Siam and Vietnam forms a separate political entity; "like a vassal state, it is controlled by the control of the Siamese kingdom of Vientiane and the feudal dynasty of Vietnam".^{[3][4]} All three states were occupied by Siam, and then reduced to Siam.

Economic level, backward and scattered small-scale peasant economy is the main, commodity economy cannot develop. Taxation was heavy, rent and tax were combined, every adult man was involved in corvee, and the serfs spent most of their time working for the lords. Before the French invasion, the village community system in Laos was both the basic economic unit and the administrative unit. In some villages, every family works for the township head for eight months every year, and this system is called the tribute abuse system. Farmers have been bound to the land for a long time, and they ask to rent the real land, which hinders the development of commodity economy, and the national economy has been in a very backward state for a long time.^[5]

3. France's colonial policy in Laos and that of Cambodia and Vietnam

The aggression and expansion of the French colonial powers on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia formed their own control of French Indochina. The modern history of Indo-china countries thus became the history of the independent development of the feudal society, which was slightly different in the specific implementation.

3.1. The French colonial policy in Laos

When France invaded Vietnam and Cambodia, it constantly put pressure on Siam to seize Laos and launched a series of aggressive activities. In the invasion of Laos in the name of missionary and business, the colonial forces conducted investigations into the historical, geographical, political and economic conditions in Laos, drew maps and collected intelligence to prepare for the invasion of Laos. On April 5, 1893, the French army "liberated" Laos under the control of Siam and invaded Laos; "On October 3, France signed the Bangkok Treaty with Siam, Siam ceded Lao territory to France, Laos from Siam to French protector, in 1899, Laos was merged into the French Indochina Confederacy."³

3.1.1. Politics

At the beginning of the French occupation of Laos, it did not establish a clear colonial rule institution, but could only "rule in the form of military occupation". After Laos was merged into the French Indochina Confederacy, the Supreme French Commissioner in Laos controlled the power of Laos and implemented the colonialist policy of "division and rule".

After colonizing Laos, France realized the colonial rule mode of division and rule, and adopted different ways for different ethnic groups in different regions. The Lao territory was pieced together by different vassals, and France did not want Laos to become a unified country and dividing them into small plots for easy rule. Laos is divided into upper liao and lower liao, which includes six provinces and seven provinces.^[6]

France ruled Laos indirectly, retaining the name and etiquette of the king of Luang Prabang. August Pevi, the first French governor of Laos, brought King Zakarin to the throne and allowing the king to achieve social stability through traditional rule. Although the feudal ruling institution was retained, it was only used as a tool for French colonial rule. After being appointed the first top garrison officer of Laos, Lieutenant Colonel Durne dismissed the top commander of the upper and lower Lao, and France directly ruled the provincial governments and monitored and controlled Laos. In 1911, the colonial authorities strengthened their rule over the remote areas, abolished the local states outside Luang Prabang, abolished the titles and titles, and unified the country throughout the country into five administrative regions of province, county, district, township and village, with the French serving as officials at or above the province.

France also practiced the Vietnamese policy of managing Laos when it colonized Laos. In order to divert the attention of the people and provoke ethnic relations, the French colonizers have invaded Laos and ruled Laos many times in history, and France has used the complex relationship between the two countries to serve them. The main measures were to transfer part of Lao territory to Vietnam, encourage Vietnam to immigrate to Laos, manage trade activities in many parts of Laos by Vietnamese, and allocate some officials from Vietnam to the government agencies of Laos. In the anti-colonial struggle of the Lao people, France used the Vietnamese army to suppress them.

3.1.2. Economic policy

Extensive land plunder was a measure of French colonial rule in Laos. France implemented the land lease system in Laos, auctioned the land at a low price, and granted the land to the French colonists for free, which displaced many farmers who had lost their land, and some even became serfs, causing social unrest and devastating damage to the social production in Laos. On the one hand, the feudal masters of the pro-French forces owned a lot of land and continued to exploit the poor people. These actions reinforce the conservative backwardness of Laos.

The collection of harsh taxes and heavy servitude was an important means of the French colonists' economic exploitation of Laos. There are more than 100 kinds of names, in addition to land tax and head tax, there are many indirect taxes, "salt, wine and opium taxes are very harsh, which constitute the three important incomes of the French colonial regime."^[7]

3.1.3. Educational culture

After the French occupation of Laos, France adopted the policy of assimilation and tried to make the education in Laos, ignored and even killed the development of local national culture, but did not develop modern education.

The French peoples are often noble peoples, who discriminate against the local culture of the colonies, and even often have a sense of national superiority in the colonies. After the invasion of Laos, it tried to completely French Laos, but it was resisted by the local people with profound

Buddhist culture. Since the introduction of Buddhism in the Lancang Kingdom, Laos has always believed in the Buddhist culture. France uses education as a means to instill its values in the local people. Generally speaking, "France is not interested in local education, and their purpose is to instill increasing French culture into local people." The main methods were school education and sending international students to study in France. During this period, the school education was only aimed at the ruling class in Laos." The first group of French students, Song Jin Pierre Ning, arrived in France in 1906."By learning the French culture, from accepting the values of France, they become the elite in various fields (such as medical care, education, etc.), to serve the rule of France.^{[8][9]}

3.2. The French ruling policy over Vietnam and Cambodia

The missionaries were the vanguard of the French invasion of Vietnam, and the French foreign missions had long been active in Vietnam."From 1830, the July dynasty, the tool of the French great bourgeoisie, was ready to open the door to Vietnam by force. The so-called abuse of missionaries became an excuse for France to exert pressure on Vietnam."^[10]In 1867, the entire southern Quangqi region became a French colony, and after the French occupied it, its strategy was to consolidate its rule in the southern Quangqi."In 1863, I forced Cambodia to sign the Treaty of Eastern Ukraine, turning Cambodia into its own protectorate."^①

In terms of education, translation schools were established, and French and Vietnamese schools were taught French and Vietnamese to some French and Vietnamese to train officials and teachers for primary schools at all levels. In 1869, there were 120 south Quangqi French schools with 4,481 students^①. In addition, the number of Vietnamese students studying in France increased year by year, and they all served the French colonial rule after graduation.

In the economic aspect, the peasants were plundered of their land, rented out the occupied land and exploited them. In order to get funds for the funds of the colonial administrative organs, harsh taxes were imposed on the people. In addition to tobacco, alcohol and field tax, land tax, business tax and head tax were also levied.

4. Conclusion

Since the 19th century, the Qing Dynasty and its vassal states were invaded by western powers. The first step of the invasion of the vassal states was to remove their relations with the vassal states. Before the French invasion, Laos was divided between Vietnam and Siam for its inland location and territory. In 1893, Laos became the "protectorate" of Siam, retaining its form of royal family and kingdom, and exercising indirect rule. As a vassal state of China under the tributary system, Laos is more unique in its colonization process. France first dissolved Vietnam, Siam and the Qing dynasty, then Laos and Siam. In the 19th century, France was a powerful capitalist power in the West, while Laos was a backward and small country controlled by its strong neighbors. When France turned its aggression to the Indo-china Peninsula, Laos was not spared. After the French invasion of Laos, they brought it into the rule of the Federation of Indochina until the period of colonial rule, and gradually improved the institutions in the rule. With the invasion of Laos, the modern geographical mapping method and western architectural method were brought to Laos, which had an important influence on the modernization of Laos.

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