

ABSTRACT

Joseph Gallieni: Pacifying Tonkin and Providing the Base for
Imperial Success in French Indochina

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French presence in Indochina can be traced back as far as the 16th century when European missionaries first traveled to South East Asia. The formal colonization effort began with the protectorate of Cambodia in 1863 and came to completion with the pacification of Tonkin in 1894. The path to achieving colonial rule was characterized by constant opposition from competing Chinese forces who had cultural and economic advantages over the foreign European power. This thesis examines the pivotal role of the French colonel Joseph Gallieni in Tonkin from his arrival in 1892 to his departure in 1896 by studying his accounts in both the French Sudan and French Indochina. To complement Gallieni's experience, I will also utilize travel and geography journal publications that aid in understanding the wealth of the colony as well as political publications describing the benefits and concerns with colonization. Through this research I attempt to establish that Gallieni's previous experience in other French colonies and his strategic incorporation of native populations allowed for his success in acquiring a region rich in political and economic significance. It was with this victory that France established a foundation firm enough to continue expansion in Indochina.

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JOSEPH GALLIENI: PACIFYING TONKING AND PROVIDING THE BASE FOR
IMPERIAL SUCCESS IN FRENCH INDOCHINA

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

French imperialism not only spanned a vast physical area, but a great length of time. At the height of its imperial rule, France claimed colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and Africa. This growth, however, was not without a few setbacks along the way. France's first wave of imperial expansion came to a crippling end with the Treaty of Paris in 1815 that signaled defeat in the Napoleonic Wars: a treaty that would take away all but a handful of locations from France. The myriad of attempts to regain "greatness" in the latter half of the 19th century would result in varying degrees of successes and failures for the French (Andrew 149). From the early 1600s to the end of the 20th century, the French Empire experienced incredible changes in its holdings (Aldrich 1).

Throughout much of the material on the topic of French imperialism one theme is discussed quite frequently, and C. M. Andrew puts it forward very clearly in his article on the French Colonialist Movement: expansion was "the product not of the official but of the unofficial mind of French imperialism" (Andrew 143). That is to say that it occurred outside of the central government but in the colonies themselves. Barnett Singer in *Cultured Force: Makers and Defenders of the French Colonial Empire* argues that it was often the designs of specific men placed in leadership positions that brought about great gains for France (Singer, *Cultured Force* 46).

My aim is to focus on one of these figures, Joseph Gallieni, and his impact on the colonial history of Indochina. Gallieni's career began in Sudan where he served as

captain from 1878-1881. He returned to Africa in 1886 as Supreme Commander of French Sudan (Singer, "Colonial Background and Leadership in World War I" 3, 7). By the time Gallieni arrived in Vietnam in 1892 he had both gained great experience from his failures and successes in France's colonial possessions, as well as a developed idea and method for a successful colonization.

Positioned in Tonkin, Gallieni helped to pacify that region producing a peace that led to great strides in French cultural influence in succeeding *la mission civilatrice*. The chapter that follows will serve as a review of major political and military changes in the French Indochinese empire up to 1892. I will then begin an overview and analysis of Gallieni's colonial philosophy as it developed in his time in Sudan. The following chapter will be a more specific look at the wealth of Tonkin, physically and economically. Finally, I will bring these two chapters together and talk about the short term and long term political results of his endeavors marking the importance of his presence on the French success in Indochina.

Were it not for Gallieni's previous experience in Africa he would not have been able to pacify Tonkin, a region of incredible political and economic significance, and acquire the foundation France needed to continue expansion in Indochina.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Established in 1664, *la Compagnie des Indes orientales* worked to pull together merchants in order to facilitate trade with Asia, namely India. Unlike trade with the Americas, a considerable amount of capital was needed to achieve material success in Asia. Without this *Compagnie*, trade with Asia would not have been monetarily feasible for France (Haudrère and Le Bouédec 5). The formation of the *Compagnie* was also an answer to many problems faced abroad. It gave French merchants legitimacy when establishing trading liaisons with the local rulers, protection against other European countries looking to monopolize trade in Asia, and defense against pirate attacks on the long journey home (Haudrère and Le Bouédec 6).

The French were by no means the first to attempt monopolizing trade in Asia; Portugal claimed a monopoly late in the 1500s. In Sanjay Subrahmanyam's survey of the Portuguese Empire he reveals several factors that allowed Portugal to gain considerable control of Eurasian trade. However, it is clear that the Asian trade in the 16th century was not at all stagnant. It was growing and changing as the ruling elites developed in each region. To say that the Portuguese found a primitive system of trade in Asia that they then developed and modernized would be a mistake. More accurately, the Portuguese worked to become a part of the developing and growing system already in place. Additionally, the Portuguese were not in Asia to acquire colonies, but to forge

entrepreneurial partnerships: Portugal wanted to set up permanent naval presence and trading posts (Subrahmanyam).

Despite early Portuguese involvement, the first trading company of this type was Dutch and created in 1602. The English East India Company quickly followed in 1613. The French response, coming much later in 1664, was the last of these companies to be formed. The *Compagnie* was created in response to other European powers and in an effort to establish an entity strong enough to stop, or at least hinder, the English and Dutch from being the sole beneficiaries of Asian trade. It was also created to establish France in the Asian trading milieu. The *Compagnie* had the power to negotiate alliances with the local rulers. These alliances allowed France to hold a monopoly in the trade of that region. Through these alliances, France was also granted the right to keep a small army at trading posts in order to protect trade and merchandise in the foreign country (Haudrère and Le Bouédec 5). It was not until the very end of the 18th century that the *Compagnie* ceased to exist, and the French economic presence in Asia lessened until the rebirth of the empire in the 1860s (Haudrère and Le Bouédec 152).

In juxtaposition to the efforts to increase trade, another form of colonial expansion was taking shape: jesuit missions. Alexandre de Rhodes, a Jesuit priest, was one of the most notable figures involved in the first interactions with Vietnam. With Portuguese support he traveled overseas under a sustained mission system called the *padroado* that had began in 1615 (Phan, “Christianity in Indochina” 514). De Rhodes’s influence in this area was great: both the popularization of a Romanized script of the Vietnamese language and the hierarchy established in Vietnam by the appointment of two bishops as vicars in Tonkin and Cochinchina are credited to De Rhodes. Historian Peter

C. Phan in his article *Doing Theology in the Context of Mission: Lessons from Alexandre de Rhodes, S.J.* goes as far as to argue that De Rhodes can be credited with the birth of Vietnamese Christianity (Phan, “Doing Theology in the Context of Mission” 729).

In accomplishing his mission, De Rhodes had to overcome a vast array of complex issues. While already combatting religions present in Vietnam, he had to adapt the way he shared his message with a people who were products of a culture vastly different from that of Europe, and who also spoke a language unrelated to those of the West. In adapting to all these conditions De Rhodes exemplified what it took to make an impact on a people, something that each consequent European colonial leader would have to master if he hoped to reach the same level of influence (Phan, “Doing Theology in the Context of Mission” 732–733).

After a short stay in Cochinchina, De Rhodes arrived in Tonkin in 1627. As he disembarked he immediately addressed the people in fluent Vietnamese (Phan, “Doing Theology in the Context of Mission” 735). De Rhodes had acquired a vast understanding of Vietnamese culture and language. He knew his audience very well and thus knew exactly how to reach them. Though he did not adapt his personal dress to that of the natives, he wore his hair like Vietnamese men and partook of the indigenous cuisine. Even in De Rhodes’s dealings with non-Christian religions already prevalent in Vietnam, he made it a point not to attack what the people already believed but to build upon it by explaining and teaching the parts of Christianity that shared some commonalities with the practices of the people (Phan, “Doing Theology in the Context of Mission” 738–739).

The proliferation of the Christian faith in the West was a task completely different from that in Asia given that the commonalities of culture, language, and faith between the

West and Asia were very few. De Rhodes however came prepared learning from the Vietnamese and working within their culture instead of attempting to change it (Phan, “Doing Theology in the Context of Mission” 738–739).

The time of De Rhodes was marked with strong and persistent infighting in Vietnam between the Le dynasty occupying the north and the Nguyen clan occupying the south that did not cease until 1802 (Phan, “Christianity in Indochina” 514). As a result, the two regions began to form identities separate from each other until 1777 when a band of three brothers called the Tay Son successfully led a rebellion to overthrow both ruling parties. The heir to the Nguyen throne, Nguyen Anh, fled to Thailand during the conflict. It was there that he made the acquaintance of and alliance with Pigneau de Béhaine, a young priest who greatly advanced French influence in Cochinchina (Phan, “Christianity in Indochina” 514).

With the help of De Béhaine, Nguyen Anh secured French assistance to take back his country. In exchange for its assistance, Nguyen Anh promised France territory in Cochinchina including a post at Tourane that would allow French trade to grow along the ocean route to the Far East, an important trading route for the English. In Herbert Ingram Priestley’s monograph, *France Overseas: A Study of Modern Imperialism*, he argues that De Béhaine’s assistance was crucial to Nguyen Anh’s victory over the Tay Son in 1799 (Priestley). It was the personal relationship shared between Nguyen Anh, now Gia Long as the first emperor of the Nguyen dynasty beginning in 1802, and De Béhaine that allowed missionaries into the now unified Vietnam. This gave France just enough footing to begin its colonizing campaign (Priestley). He opened the country up to the European presence. Like De Rhodes he entered into the culture, began to work hand in hand with

the natives, and in exchange for bettering the nation he achieved great gains for France. Both men characteristically show what success looked like in the colonies.

Though De Béhaine's gains were great, they were short lived. Gia Long's death marked the end of tolerance for missionaries and the time that followed led to a violent effort to keep France out of the Nguyen Empire. Shortly after his father's death, Minh Manh began to close off his country to new French missionaries. It was under his rule that Christianity was named *ta dao*, the evil religion, partly due to its conflicting doctrines with Buddhism (Priestley 112). These violent decrees marked the last straw for the French government (Phan, "Christianity in Indochina" 516). The height of Christian persecution led Napoleon III to take forceful action against the Vietnamese in 1856 in order to protect French interests abroad (Johnson 54).

At this point, France was left with virtually none of its original colonial holdings save for a few Caribbean islands, la Réunion, and a handful of trading posts in India and the Senegalese coast. It had just begun its colonization of Africa in 1830, but Asia remained untouched. Singer even goes as far as to argue that throughout this first wave of colonization attempts, the French never once really set out a plan for what their Empire would look like nor how they would acquire it (Singer, *Cultured Force* 46). It was not until the beginning of the Third Republic that colonization started to take a firm hold in Indochina (Singer, *Cultured Force* 46). Margaret Majumdar in her monograph, *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension*, points to three main periods of French imperialistic expansion. The first from the early sixteenth century to 1815, the second from 1830 to 1870, and the final period of expansion beginning in the Third Republic to the culmination of the decolonization process in the early 1960s (Majumdar 1).

The development seen in this new wave of colonization is very interesting in that the involvement of the French government is not abundant. The group namely involved with French colonial expansion was *le parti colonial*. At its largest, this party did not include more than 10,000 members. Compared to a similar group in Germany of 60,000 men, the French interest in colonization was not significant by any means. Not only was the size of this group relatively small, the majority did not reside nor had ever resided in the colonies. *Le parti colonial's* events and meetings centered on intellectual discussion over the situations overseas resulting in very little action (Andrew 144).

Outside of this group, there was an overwhelming push to not invest in the colonies or in French imperial expansion all together. In 1862 France signed a treaty creating a protectorate over Cochin China, given the country a foot in the door to begin taking control of this region. Annam would fall to France in 1883 and Tonkin in 1885. The Vietnamese resistance was by far the strongest in Tonkin, and until 1891 French leadership had trouble figuring out how to pacify the region (Munholland 630).

Joseph Gallieni was sent by the French in 1892 to help decrease the fighting. Gallieni was a son of a French captain, Gaëtan Gallieni. His father dispatched him to military school at the age of eleven. Thus began a long journey that would culminate during World War I. Gallieni, however, was not a typical student. He often displayed disdain for certain aspects of school life while soaking in languages, mathematics, and literature. Gallieni was inspired to bring about change that would once again place France at the apogee of its colonization regime (Singer, *Cultured Force* 118–119).

CHAPTER THREE

Parallels in Experience

As France's presence in Indochina grew and developed, from the early missions to official protectorates, the methods of expanding and colonization were adapted to deal with new conflicts and obstacles. By 1891, France had appointed Jean-Louis de Lanessan as governor general. De Lanessan was tasked with creating the structure necessary to pacify Tonkin — the northernmost portion of modern day Vietnam. In order to do so Tonkin was broken up into four different military territories each with a different commander and a different set of objectives. At this point, Gallieni had successfully completed many assignments throughout the French colonial empire. With experience from Saint-Cyr, Réunion, Sénégal, and Martinique, in September of 1892 Gallieni was assigned to the first military territory of Tonkin: Sept-Pagodes (Gallieni, *Gallieni au Tonkin (1892-1896)* v). His stay there was brief, and on December 1, 1893 he received a new order to take charge of the second military territory by the name of Lang-Son (Gallieni, *Gallieni au Tonkin (1892-1896)* 7).

In looking at his time in Tonkin a great deal about his ideology and techniques can be learned from his two major works composed after his time in Indochina. Because the majority of the content of his logs are direct orders, telegrams, and documents created at the time of his tenure in Indochina certain limitations arise for research purposes. It is difficult to take his work at face value in evaluating his methods during his time in the Lang-Son territory. His own explanation of what he did may be skewed not only by the

fact that he himself analyzes his decisions, but also by the fact that the works were neither completed nor published for several years after the completion of his assignment in Asia.

However, there are also great gains that can come from reading through his accounts. His own thoughts and ideas as well as a detailed explanation of the direction and composition of his military forces compose the majority of his writing where he worked through some of the difficulties he discovered in Tonkin and how he surpassed them. This self-analysis is incredibly valuable in deciphering his motivations behind several of his calls or orders.

While certain limitations exist in relying heavily on Gallieni's own words for an analysis of his time in Tonkin, it is also impossible to grasp accurately the influence he had in pacifying the region without also looking at some of his past ventures, namely those in French Sudan. Much more than in his works on Tonkin, where Gallieni's language was far more didactic and direct, in *Une colonne dans le Soudan français* the reader sees Gallieni include justifications and explanations for his actions and calls during his command in Africa. It was in Sénégal that Gallieni tried to prove himself professionally. At this time, it was still necessary for him to establish his strength and importance as a military leader. Gallieni himself notes the importance of proper documentation of events in an effort to provide a source for future military leaders on what is the most successful action in dealing with foreign adversaries. He finds utility in being familiar with "les principes d'après lesquels nos commandants supérieurs du Soudan français ont dirigé leurs opérations" (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 1). Therefore, while agreeing with Gallieni, it is unwise to attempt

to look at his success in Indochina without first pointing to the experiences that allowed him not only to develop his strategy and way of thinking, but also to succeed while following his own strategy.

There are several huge differences between the efforts undertaken in Africa against the main adversary, Mahmadou-Lamine, and the efforts in Indochina. The conflicting parties Gallieni faced in Sénégal were predominantly strengthened by a religious link with the people. Mahmadou-Lamine controlled the native empire and limited French influence in the area. No matter the efforts undertaken by the French they could not escape being under his thumb (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 2). This was a huge contrast to the empire in Tonkin; there the main adversary, pirate leader Thai-Ngan, held control over the native population by instilling fear in the people. The Tonkinese acceded to his demands and regularly paid him tribute to ensure the safety of both their homes and families as well as the collective wellbeing of villages and cities (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 4).

Other differences existed in the physical composition of the states. The terrain and climate found in Africa were significantly different from that in Indochina. In the former, Gallieni had to find ways to overcome the great heat and the long distances that his armies had to travel in order to gain control of certain cities and regions (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 12). Though there were certain climate limitations that caused difficulties in Tonkin, the solutions that were feasible in Sénégal could not be applied the same way in the new location. Gallieni realized that, though attempting to gain control in Tonkin and solidify French presence in the colony were shared goals in both the African and the Indochinese expeditions, the exact methods that secured success in French Sudan would not garner the same results in Indochina.

What Gallieni brought to Indochina, however, was not simply a set of successful procedures or techniques, he brought with him a method by which to study the people and the opponent as well as the confidence to develop new methods to accomplish his goals. Upon arriving at his new assignment in Sept-Pagodes, he began to order infrastructural improvements throughout the territory (Gallieni, *Gallieni au Tonkin (1892-1896)* 4). Less than eight days after his arrival in Vietnam Gallieni took off with a band of his native infantrymen to explore his region (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 5). In a personal letter home, Gallieni made several comments on his happiness in being in Indochina. He appreciatively described the home that was provided for him and his regret at having to leave it so quickly after settling in.

It is evident that he not only enjoyed his job, but also had a real passion for the people he got to meet through it. He traveled with his infantrymen for several months in which he acted as an equal to the indigenous members of his party. In this description the picture of Gallieni's leadership begins to form. He has only but kind things to say about his travel companions.

J'ai parcouru ainsi toute la frontière chinoise, de Mont-Cay à Lang-Son, par des chemins impossibles, en suivant souvent le lit d'arroyos rocheux. J'éprouve une satisfaction très grande à parcourir ainsi la brousse avec mes braves tirailleurs. Pour moi, notre métier, fastidieux et monotone en garnison, n'est beau que de cette manière. Ici, j'aime mes hommes et je crois qu'ils me le rendent. Ils voient bien, du reste que je partage toutes leurs fatigues, tout leurs dangers et que je me jette à l'eau tout comme eux quand il faut traverser les arroyos...(Gallieni, *Gallieni au Tonkin (1892-1896)* 5)

Creating equals and appreciating them as such is a practice that Gallieni worked to establish. In Africa, he formed his *colonnes*, attacking columns, with emphasis on integrating native infantrymen in units of European soldiers. In fact, looking at the

records of each *colonne*'s composition, these armies were predominantly indigenous giving each one a source of both land and climate only possible from those who were incredibly familiar with both (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 8). Gallieni hoped to accomplish two things with this structure: unify the composition of each group by encircling a core of European soldiers with two or three times the number of native infantrymen and an improved morale among the unit by the Europeans supporting the natives (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 16).

Another important component of Gallieni's strategy comes from his discipline in gathering as much information as possible before acting. In his control of the army in French Sudan, before formulating his plan to attack, Gallieni enlisted two lieutenants to travel across the territory to gather information of the route they would take and the population's view of the leader Mahmadou-Lamine that he planned to attack (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 4). The order he issued with this request was incredibly detailed. He outlined the exact objective for the two men as well as very specific questions they needed to ask (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 4). For example, Gallieni wanted to know more about the racial composition of the area – demographic knowledge that allowed him to know the extent of the support that Mahmadou-Lamine might have at each step of France's advance toward his headquarters. Hoping to gain some more insight into this leader's influence, he asked questions about his credit, his most loyal supporters and his alliances with different people and communities. One key question was also important to Gallieni: where will Mahmadou-Lamine go in case his city is besieged?

There is a huge parallel to this line of questioning that is evident in Gallieni's work in Indochina. It is unclear exactly how and when he attained his knowledge of the pirate leader Thạĩ-Ngan, but Gallieni demonstrates his familiarity with answers to all the previous questions of his Indochinese adversary. He understands the methods the pirates use to terrorize villages by pillaging and taking women, children, and livestock to trade in the markets for weapons, munition, and opium (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 3).

Many of the decisions Gallieni made in his strategy also came from an intimate knowledge of the pirate band's goals and objectives. Working out of the two pirate headquarters, the first in Bao Day and second in Caĩ-Kinh, the pirates main objective was to control the railroad France had constructed from Phu-Lang-Thuong to Lang-Son. In doing so the band set fires to villages, harassed the people on the worksites and waited for European officials and leaders to make an appearance to kidnap them and ask for ransom (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 4).

By the time Gallieni took control of the military territory where the railroad was located, it was evident that the pirates would have to be stopped in order to achieve continued French growth and expansion in the region. Gallieni wrote that "une terreur r茅gnait sur la ligne ferr茅e; les chantiers 茅taient arr茅t茅s; personne n'osait plus s'aventurer sur la ligne" (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 4). Though the French held official rule over the area through the protectorate created more than a decade prior to Gallieni's arrival it was evident that the French colonization of the area was superficial at best. Gallieni considered the victories the French had achieved up to this point to be temporary and not a solution to the real problem (Gallieni, *Gallieni au Tonkin (1892-*

1896) 5). The pirates had a large set of advantages: fear, ammunition, knowledge of the land and climate, as well as unofficial Chinese support; however, they had never faced an adversary like Gallieni. In compiling a great deal of this knowledge, Gallieni began to appeal to De Lanessan for the necessary weapons, people, and support that formed his strategy. It is here that one begins to see even more parallels to strategy employed in Africa.

In French Sudan, Gallieni attributes the lack of success prior to his efforts to a underestimation of the importance of proper care of the *colonnes*. His first endeavor against the pirates failed due to the faulty supply system he inherited. Without proper attempts to protect the supply posts that could provide food and munition to the traveling army as well a lack of manpower to transport those items safely, his army could not properly defend themselves on their journey (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 9). Gallieni dealt with the exact same problem in Africa discovering that “la question des vivres joue le rôle principal dans les opérations de guerre tentées dans les contrées soudaniennes” (Gallieni, *Une colonne dans le Soudan français (1886-1887)* 10). Once fixed Gallieni could focus on his first offensive against the pirate leader.

The strategy used against Thaï-Ngan looked very similar to that used against Mahmadou-Lamine ten years prior. The main idea centered on bringing together different *colonnes* from several directions on one city. For bringing down the pirate leader that city was Cai-Kinh, where his headquarters were housed (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 20). Each infantry was to arrive at Cai-Kinh by the evening of January 19, 1894. Surrounding the city entirely, the pirates were tipped off to the impending siege that would happen the following morning. It was following that tip

that they attempted their escape (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 22).

Preparing for an escape they killed their own livestock, left the women and children and surrounded their leader as they took the only path they believed to be impenetrable by outsiders. Gallieni had thought ahead. The pirates were trapped and their attempt proved detrimental to their forces.

Similar to his inquiry in Africa about the escape route most likely taken by Mahmadou-Lamine, Gallieni had predicted how Thaï Ngan would attempt to escape. Gallieni's men were more than ready for them to take their leave and quickly ambushed and killed many of their men. Gallieni's predictions were incredibly accurate, and the pirates acting as anticipated found not villages for refuge but natives reinforced and empowered with European weapons ready to protect their land and property for against the pirates. In supplying these villages Gallieni tapped into an incredibly force with added incentive to protect possessions and loved ones.

Gallieni's attack was an overwhelming success. Only one month after taking control of the second military territory, Gallieni had planned and executed an effort against the strongest pirate band in the entire region. The results would show themselves more and more over the course of several weeks, but the most immediate evidence of success was found in the number of dead pirate bodies discovered along the flee route.

Gallieni reports:

On évalue à quarante-deux le nombre des morts en comptat tous les pirates tués dans la nuit du 19 au 20, dans les embuscades tendues par les partisans et habitants du pays, ceux blessés et achetés par ces derniers, et enfin ceux morts de leur blessures et frappés par leur congénères eux-mêmes [...] le grand nombre de cadavres rencontrés prouve bien l'affolement de la bande ; car, on connaît la répugnance des pirates à abandonner les corps des leurs (Gallieni, *Trois colonnes au Tonkin (1894-1895)* 26–27).

The band was wounded and disbanded. What was discovered in the wake of the victory

over the pirates was incredibly useful to the French in understanding the powerful structure they had just destroyed. It was here that they began to understand the real wealth of the nation as well as how to successfully control it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Profitability and Wealth

Up to this point in history, it was unclear as to the wealth that France would find in Indochina. Although there were many reasons to believe that colonization of the area would be advantageous, after more than 300 years of exploration, France had yet to establish a market or a control of natural resources that would justify a continued stay in the colony. When the first round of Jesuit missionaries led by Alexander de Rhodes sent word back to France of all that they had encountered, and of all that they believed to be profitable it seemed clear that there was much to gain from a campaign to establish a hold on business and trade within the region (Ferry 59). Many missionary accounts explaining the wealth of the region also followed. A bishop visiting Tonkin in 1669 sent a letter to Colbert that outlined a policy he believed would allow for the most success in occupation in the area (Ferry 60, 61). One account published in 1732 talks about the particular wealth of the Red River, the silk industry, and the natural resources one can find there (Ferry, 62).

Another significant component of the desire to colonize this region came from the proximity to Chinese trade and markets. By the mid 1800s, China was predominately closed off to outside trade. In an article that appeared in the 1852 edition of *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* by the editor, M. de la Roquette, he described the status of European trade with China and the need for more access to nearby markets as a means to

establish greater economic influence. The proximity alone to Chinese markets that the control of Tonkin would have given France was enough to justify colonization.

It was with great hope that the French dedicated further resources to consolidate control of the region. Colonization started with Cochinchina where the French believed they would find a strong agricultural society with the inhabitants strongly tied to the land (Lemier 12). In the years that followed France took control of Annam where they also discovered great agricultural resources, but with an agricultural basis for a society, there was a relatively small population spread out across the entire colony. In comparing the discoveries and resources of Indochina to those of the rest of the French empire, it was clear that Indochina was not the most desirable of colonies. In the monthly exploration publications in France the volume of articles written on the growth of the Indochinese colony was far smaller than that of the African colonies or even colonial developments made by other European powers. In 1889, a journal called *Bulletin officiel de l'Indochine française* was created that focused solely on the events of Indochina, but even in this journal there was very little focus on Tonkin as compared to the rest of the colony.

In comparing the frequency and quantity of articles published on each French colony it is evident that not only had there been very little learned about Indochina, but also that there had been very little wealth acquired. Up until Gallieni's conquest, Indochina remained an idealized location that hopefully one day would yield great dividends. However, there was very little evidence to that affect. Indochina's presence in these journals was characteristically short and undetailed. There were some exceptions to this. There did exist a type of travel journals that printed stories of what one saw upon arriving at many of the port cities in Indochina. These were positive accounts of the rich

culture and commerce at each location. It is necessary, however, to note the differences in these types of journals. The longer more detailed articles serve to create a picturesque location for travel and exploration. There is more detail on the beauty of the country and on the voyages experienced by wealthy government agents. The two types of publications serve different audiences. While it is important to note both types of accounts it is also necessary to realize that the more important information lies in the bulletins rather than in the voyage articles.

Another type of publication on the wealth of Indochina was Jules Ferry's *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patrie* published in 1890. This work, serving as a compilation of exploration documents stating the wealth of the region, justified France's decision to continue exploration and attempts at colonization. It is important to realize that such motivation discredits some of his work. He forms a body of work that supports his stance on the colony and thus a great deal of information might also exist supporting a removal of French presence in Asia. However, as it stands, it is also a work that demonstrates the immense potential of the region. That potential was the only thing that anchored France in Indochina. Again, the natural wealth of the nation is mentioned in his work, from the agricultural diversity to the mines that yielded coal and metals. It is clear that Annam and Cochinchine were rich in natural resources, but the real significance of the colony was Tonkin's commercial wealth.

Tonkin opened up an entire world of trade for France; this was the door to the most profitable provinces of China (d'Orleans 534). Bordering China in the north and the Red River flowing through the heart of the region, Tonkin was geographically advantageous to trade and commerce (d'Orleans 534). The Red River was wide enough

to accommodate a variety of boats as well as calm enough to ensure safe travels to a variety of different cities inland. Finally pacifying Tonkin meant full access to this river as well as the trade system already in place. It created an efficient trade in European goods that would otherwise have taken much costlier trips north to the more controlled and stricter ports in China (d'Orleans 544).

After Gallieni's efforts, Indochina experienced a significant economic period of expansion. In 1885 the total commercial movement in the protectorate of Indochina did not exceed 19 million francs (de Lanessan 177). In 1893, after Gallieni's first victory in pacifying the Tonkin, that number grew to 69 million francs from Tonkin alone and 95 million francs for the entire protectorate (de Lanessan 177). Imports also grew from 18.5 million in 1885 to 41 million in 1893, 37 million from Tonkin alone. Most significant was the growth in exports. In 1885 the protectorat was producing less than 700,000 francs in exports. By 1893, Tonkin was producing more than 12 million francs with Annam also contributing 2.5 million francs in the same year (de Lanessan 177). Evidently, there was a huge economic shift that occurred in 1893, largely due to the ability of the French finally to control the markets. The control of Tonkin also allowed the French to have access to dozens of Chinese products unique to their region including medicine, pottery, opium, paper products, tea, Japanese matches, Chinese tobacco, and Chinese sugars and molasses (de Lanessan 179).

It was finally in 1893 that the wealth of Indochina as a whole was realized. The previous accounts from missionaries and government officials then stationed in Cochinchine and Annam about the possible wealth and the great potential pointed to a land worthy of investment. However, it was unlikely that it would come to fruition until

Gallieni was able to establish his own military policy and strategy to conquer the region and pacify the Chinese pirates that unofficially ruled Tonkin.

CHAPTER FIVE

Political Implications

The challenge of how to manage the entirety of the French empire plagued the French government as early as the mid 1800s. By 1885 these questions had become far more important as the popularity and frequency of colonial expansion was beginning to slow. It was because of this constant debate over the colonial territories that the conquest in Tonkin by Gallieni became pivotal to the entire future of French occupation in Indochina.

These questions ranged greatly in terms of what the next step for France's government might be concerning the holdings. Some questions centered on the benefits of maintaining what France already had under its protectorate and the opportunity of further investing in those locations. Other political figures posed more dramatic questions such as whether or not France should choose to expand holdings to attain more land and thus more global power. No matter the level of conservative thinking it was very clear that France should not attempt to plant its flag in a new location. As it was, France was struggling to maintain its territories. It was important to focus on strengthening locations economically and politically before expanding.

Finally, another question also emerged: should France choose to abandon certain possessions? In 1888 when Paul Dislère, an engineer and administrator of the *École Coloniale*, published his book on the organization of the French colonies he attempted to shed more light on how, systemically, this question applied most directly to French

Indochina. At the time, Indochina was not necessarily profitable (Dislère 1). There existed few profitable resources in the southern portions of Indochina. Cochinchine mostly boasted large plains for growing rice. The population was scattered and small. Most importantly, there was a very small market for European goods (Ferry 112).

There are two models that Dislère offered in an effort to find a solution. He played off the idea of protectorate and sovereignty. Either France would continue to invest with no interests in profit from the country—that is, only continuing to hold power over the state in order to keep other empires from seizing control; or, France would take a more direct approach and attempt to assimilate its own commerce into the system already in place in Indochina (Dislère 4). There were both advantages and disadvantages to each model. It was clear that the public believed France was investing with no real return from the territory. However, with the latter model the French government would have to assume many more difficulties. A primary conflict would come from the foreigners in the region, the Chinese bandit pirates.

Until Gallieni's term in Indochina, there had not been much success against those adversaries. The pirates were not only smart, but they also had the support of Chinese officials. With the sheer force and power the pirates exerted over the region, the indigenous population was not willing to betray a more powerful group in order to aid the French until it became clear that the French would be victorious. Gallieni succeeded in engaging in conflict with the natives of Tonkin in order to gain control of the region. His success was also particularly important for popular political opinion back in France.

In 1890, Jules Ferry published his own option on what to do with Indochina. In his *Le Tonkin et la Mère-Patrie* he attempts to defend the decision of the government not

only to remain in Indochina, but to continue to pursue it. In doing so, Ferry managed to compile extracts from different publications that expressed how the majority of the wealth of the Indochinese protectorate lay in Tonkin. Like Dislère, he was also convinced that it was not time to leave Indochina but further to invest and take control.

Controlling Tonkin, however, was more than just an attempt at making the territory profitable; the French government needed a successful mission to control the region following the Tonkin Affair. In 1885, this affair caused Ferry to step down from his minister position as a result of the failed and devastating loss in Lang-Son. The volatility of the native people became the most prominent issue holding back a more complete dominance over Tonkin. The French government needed to reaffirm to the French that their efforts in Indochina were not for nothing (Ferry 4).

In pacifying Tonkin, Gallieni became the victor in securing this state for French control allowing for a more accessible system to the most promising region of the entire Indochinese territory. In doing so, Gallieni opened up the opportunity to have more control on regional investments and ultimately achieving the commercial success that had been part of the colonization vision since the first missionary trips to the region.

CHAPTER SIX:

Conclusion

The history of the colonization of Indochina is complex and marked with many obstacles characteristic to this region alone. While this is true of most colonies, the particular presence and resistance of the Chinese pirates in Tonkin plagued cultural, political, and economic advancement by the French in the region. Tonkin was the key to success. It was necessary to quell the pirate hostilities in the northern portion of the colony in order to fully benefit from the natural resources, commercial system, and geographic location of the Red River. Gallieni's success in pacifying the region is thus a significant portion of colonial history for the French presence in Asia.

In less than a year, Gallieni was able to step into the most hostile part of Tonkin and successfully lead campaigns to defeat the strongest and longest standing pirate presence. He reorganized his military force to take advantage of the native population who had significant knowledge of the area and of the adversary. He worked to empower the natives living in villages terrorized by violence and threats to property and family. Finally, he demonstrated a characteristic of the leaders who worked successfully to open up Indochina to colonization. Like De Rhodes and De Béhaine, Gallieni worked to learn about the Indochinese people. He inquired as to his adversary as to the demographic composition of the villages and of the image and perception held by the natives towards the pirate mob.

Gallieni's work in Tonkin was impressive. Quickly taking control of the situation, reorganizing his military columns, and working off of his prior success and experience, he managed to accomplish something that had been attempted for decades with little success. However, what renders his work significant and worthy of study is the political and cultural implications of French history. By succeeding in acquiring the economic and commercial hub of Indochina, Gallieni's work legitimized French presence in Asia. Tonkin was by far the wealthiest region of Indochina, and as such became the foundation necessary for continued expansion and growth for France.

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