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## Policy of Reclaiming and Economic Development of the Nguyen Dynasty in CON DAO (XVII Century to the First Half of the XIX Century)

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**Abstract:** Con Dao is an archipelago consisting of 16 islands, large and small, located on the sea route from West to East, from North to South in the Southeast of Vietnam today. As an archipelago with rich potentials, it is located in a very favorable geographical position in terms of geopolitics and geoeconomics, so Con Dao holds a particularly important position not only for the Nguyen Lords in the process of territorial expansion and career establishment in the South, but also Western countries (especially Britain and France) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From very early time, Westerners and Vietnamese residents in the step of finding a livelihood appeared in Con Dao to exploit products, so since the seventeenth century, the Nguyen Lords, in the process of expanding their territory to the south, have been aware of the particularly important strategic position of this archipelago, and they have implemented many policies in an organized and organized the system to conduct reclamation, economic development, and assert its sovereignty in Con Dao.

**Keywords:** Con Dao, Reclamation, Economy, Sovereignty, Nguyen dynasty.

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### INTRODUCTION

Today Con Dao is an island district in Ba Ria - Vung Tau province, in the southeast of Vietnam, including 16 islands with a total area of 72.81 km<sup>2</sup>, of which the largest island is Con Dao with an area of 52 km<sup>2</sup> (Institute of Geography, 2010, p.1022), stretching northeast to southwest with coordinates 8034'-8049'N-106031'-106045'E (Pham Duc Manh, Pham Thi Ngoc Thao, 2012, p.7), 185km from Vung Tau city and 230km from Ho Chi Minh city (Institute of Geography, 2010, p.1022). Although not large in area, far from the mainland, but Con Dao has been identified as a front-line position and plays an important role as "natural hedge" in the Southeast of Vietnam. Historically, the name "Con Dao" originates from the Malay word "Pulau Kundur" (ie "pumpkin islands"). This place is also known by the French as "Poulo Condor" and the Vietnamese called "Con Lon" (ie "snake island").

Due to the concept of the Eurasian maritime route connecting the Pacific Ocean with the Indian Ocean, Con Dao was known by Western expedition teams from very early on. According to many Western sources, in 1292, Italian explorer Marco Polo, on his way back from China to Europe, arrived in this area and there are records that confirm the existence of the archipelago. a "stopover" on a route from north to south, east to west (Henry Yule, 1921, p. 276-277). In 1516, the Portuguese navigator - Fernão Perès de Andrade went to Con Dao and said that European sailors often visited this place to get fresh water, look for sea turtles and pick wild grapes. From the mid-60s of the sixteenth century, Con Dao was recorded by the poet Luís Vaz de Camões in the epic "Os Lusíadas" when his Portuguese national expedition visited this area (Nguyen Dinh Thong, Nguyen Linh, 2010, p. 20-21). All the Western writings at that time from history to literature show the natural features and favorable geographical location of Con Dao (Luu Van Quyet, Phan Thi Anh Thu, 2021).

Due to the richness and diversity of natural resources, it was located in an important position on international trade routes, since the middle period Con Dao was not only a favorable place to build centers. trade or transshipment warehouse linking the East to the West but also helps to connect and shorten the journey to countries within Asia. From the end of the sixteenth century, in the process of expanding the territory to the south, together with the exploitation of the wild lands in the South, with strong thinking and sense of the sea direction, the Nguyen lords (then Nguyen dynasty), paid special attention to exploiting material resources, reclaiming, developing economy and asserting its sovereignty in Con Dao, thus implementing the policy of promoting trade, expanding relations with many countries in the region and the world.

Research on Con Dao through historical periods still has many issues that need to be further explored and studied to clarify, in which, economic aspects, but directly the process of reclamation and development The economy through which asserted and defended sovereignty over this archipelago in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries though has been studied, but still has many "gaps". There have been a number of studies on Con Dao published by authors such as Henry Yule (1921), Cortambert E. & Rosny L. (1862), Demariaux, JC (1956), Maybon, CB (2011), Maybon, CB (2011), Li, T. (1998), Nguyen Dinh Thong (1996), Le Huu Phuoc (2006), Luu Van Quyet, Phan Thi Anh Thu (2021), Huynh Trung Kien (2012), Vo Van Sinh (2012), Pham Xanh (2012), Pham Duc Manh & Pham Thi Ngoc Thao (2012), etc. However, these works mainly focus on the Con Dao prison system and the anti-prison movement of Vietnamese political prisoners, or about the potential for tourism development of the group. This island,... Aspects of the geopolitical and geo-economic position of this archipelago as well as the reclamation and economic development process in Con Dao in three centuries (XVII-XIX) though it is also mentioned but not systematic and not comprehensive. These are the issues we will focus on clarifying in this study. At the same time, our initial assessment and comments were also given; Thereby, the article also relates to the role and position of Con Dao in Vietnam's development strategy in the current period.

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To carry out this research, we use historical research methods, logical research methods and economic research methods to clarify the international and regional context in the seventeenth century, the strategic location of Con Dao The island, as well as the process of implementing the reclamation and development policy of the Nguyen lords (then the Nguyen Dynasty) in Con Dao in the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries. Besides, the article also uses interdisciplinary / transdisciplinary research methods such as analysis, statistics, comparison, comparison, ... to be able to authenticate and evaluate research problems scientifically and in a scientific and more important way.

### **Strategic Location and Potential of Con Dao**

Since the medieval period of world history, Con Dao has been known as an important "military frontier" in the East Sea. With the advantage of being an archipelago gathered by many small islands and a closed system of mountains and forests, Con Dao is quite similar to the military bases that float on the water, creating a continuous position in defense and attack. In addition, since it is less than 100 nautical miles from the mainland, Con Dao is extremely convenient to move and gather forces when needed (VNU HCMC - USSH, 2012, p.277).

In 1678, the British explorer William Dampier, when coming to Con Dao, remarked: The location of the island (Con Dao) is very convenient to go to and from Japan, China, Manila, Dang Ngoai, and Dang Trong such as all areas on the easternmost coast of mainland India whether passing through the Gulf of Malacca or the Gulf of Sunda between Sumatra and Java (Francis Drake & William Dampier, 1879). In Asia, due to limited maritime technology, the voyages from India to China at that time had to go through Con Dao and this was the gateway to Chan Lap, Champa, Dai Viet. (Lu Huy Nguyen & Giang Tan, 1987, pp. 24-25). Due to this great advantage, from the end of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, Western countries identified Con Dao as the most ideal location to act as a means to invade Asian nations.

Not only holding the role of "military spending money", Con Dao is also known as a key "trade gateway", the most suitable area to build trade centers or goods transit warehouses. between the East and the West. In 1868, Véret - an employee of the French East India Company, reminded the government of this country to soon occupy Con Dao to establish international trading establishments because: Ships from China, Dang Ngoai, Macao Manille, Dang Trong, wants to do business with India and has to be very close to the island; British and Dutch ships wishing to go to the Chinese sea also had to stop by here both back and forth. This path is exactly the same as the Strait of Sonde and Malacca. Furthermore, Con Dao has the same latitude as southern Bantam, where the Dutch built their trading house (Jean Paul Morel, 2010, p.8).

Not only dominates in international maritime trade, the position of Con Dao also helps to connect and shorten the itinerary to countries within the Asian region, specifically from this island, reverse merchant ships. North East Asia countries (Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan) will reach the North, while in the South you will see

Southeast Asian countries (Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand). At that time, Con Dao was both favorable for Westerners to establish commercial relations with their neighbors in Dang Trong, and ideal for them to build barracks for the purpose of protecting trading establishments, warehouses and his dock (Francis Drake & William Dampier, 1879). As described by the French naval painter Jean Paul Morel: Poulo Condoro (Con Dao) is the most suitable island for establishing a trading post because it is right at the estuary of Chan Lap with a width of about six miles in circumference., with 3 good harbors, many streams with a small river, this place owns the most beautiful vegetation in the world (Jean Paul Morel, 2010, p.8).

Due to the convergence of so many available natural advantages (geographical location, climate, water resources, tropical forests, seafood and gemstones), Con Dao soon becomes a destination for goods trading between traders. in the region with China, Dai Viet Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand; at the same time providing maritime services for Western traders (Luu Van Quyet, Phan Thi Anh Thu, 2021). From the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century, the British East India company and the French East India company sent people many times to explore Con Dao with the intention of building their own trading system. The presence of two employees Véret (French) and Williams Dampier (British) in Con Dao in 1686 and 1687, respectively, for the purpose of field surveying, mapping in the West-South Bay on the island (Nguyen Dinh Thong & Nguyen Linh, 2010, p. 21) demonstrated the relatively early start of Western countries in their plan to occupy this vital area.

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Also very early (around the end of the sixteenth century), the Vietnamese residents in the step of finding a livelihood were present in Con Dao to exploit the products and then, the Nguyen lords on their way to The South has implemented many policies to exploit the rich resources of Con Dao as well as to reclaim, develop economic, assert and protect sovereignty over this archipelago.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study mainly uses historical methods, and qualitative analysis including synthesis, and inductive methods.

## **POLICIES OF NGUYEN LORDS AND NGUYEN DYNASTIES IN CON DAO**

### **Reclamation Policy, Economic Development, Affirming Sovereignty of Nguyen Lords in Con Dao**

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Dai Viet (Vietnam) gradually lost its prosperity, economic decline, bureaucrats were harassed, people's lives were difficult, and power struggles between feudal groups took place continuously. After the overthrow of the Le dynasty, Mac Dang Dung encountered fierce and persistent opposition from former Le gods. In 1554, Trinh Kiem was assigned a military power by King Le. Trinh Kiem gradually eliminated the influence of the Nguyen forces to usurp power. In order to avoid killing himself, in 1558 Nguyen Hoang asked King Le to come to defend the land of Thuan Hoa (including present-day Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue provinces) (Vo Van Sinh, 2012, p.78). This is the beginning of Vietnam's territorial expansion into the South in the following periods.

More than 10 years after entering the town of Thuan Hoa, in 1570, Nguyen Hoang was officially assigned by King Le to Tran Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. Shortly thereafter, Nguyen Hoang embarked on building an independent government, gradually separating from its ties with the surname Trinh and King Le in the North. In order to create a solid social base, in the Southern region (including Con Dao), Lord Nguyen has implemented a special incentive policy for the exploitation of wasteland. In the book Gia Dinh's good news, Trinh Hoai Duc reflected this situation: people in this area can freely go to reclaim land in other areas, whoever wants to go where, where to reclaim optional. After selecting the land, just declaring to the authorities to own the land, the government does not measure how much area it is, no matter how good or bad the land is. The landowner, depending on the size of the land, is willing to pay more or less taxes voluntarily (Trinh Hoai Duc, 2004). In the face of the wave of migration to the South looking for land to live more and more of farmers, people hiding from soldiers, poor craftsmen,... Lord Nguyen allowed people to organize the migration and established communes, villages and wards. and hamlet of the Vietnamese in the South. This policy was implemented in a long and consistent manner as a method of reclamation by Lord Nguyen in the Southern region (Luu Van Quyet, Vo Van Sen, 2021).

With a strong sense of sea direction, Lords Nguyen paid special attention to exploiting material resources, developing their economy and asserting their sovereignty over the archipelago in order to implement policies to encourage trade, actively expanding relations with many countries in the region and the world. With a favorable geographical location and abundant resources, Con Dao always played an important role in the process of opening the realm of Nguyen lords and then the Nguyen Dynasty. In Gia Dinh's good news, Trinh Hoai Duc mentioned Con Dao as an inseparable part of the South with important military features and the abundance of local products: "In the middle East Sea, from Can Gio port port, sailing to the sea in the east direction, the sun rises for two days. The 100-mile large island has mountain fields where rice, corn, potatoes, and beans are grown, but not much.... The real estate here is horses and buffaloes, the mountains do not have tigers, ... People and soldiers there often take nests. Tortoise, cinnamon, and cochlea, then give them to Lord Nguyen according to the seasons, while the rest catch seafood such as fish and shrimp for living.

The Cau fruit here is big, with pink skin, and the taste is sweet and fragrant, until early spring, when Cau in Gia Dinh has not yet produced results, Cau here can be used, people bring it to sell at very high prices" (Trinh Hoai Duc, 2004, p. 48). Right in the early period of opening the realm to the South, the exploitation of resources in Con Dao was concerned and implemented in an organized and systematic way by the Nguyen Lords. In addition to increasing foreign trade, more importantly, through regular exploitation in Con Dao, the Nguyen lords also aimed to raise the sense of territorial sovereignty on these islands. Le Quy Don, in Phu Bien Phu Luc, said the measures that Lord Nguyen has taken such as: Establishing naval teams, personnel regulations, time to go back, the amount of food to bring, to the islands. as far as Hoang Sa, Truong Sa, Con Dao ... for territorial management, exploitation of products and goods in shipwrecks in Con Dao (Le Quy Don, 1997, p.116).

In order to exploit effectively economic resources in Con Dao, the Nguyen government established a new unit called the Bac Hai team in charge of the management and exploitation of Con Dao archipelago and residential islands. Ha Tien (in Kien Giang province of Vietnam today), the Bac Hai team was under the management and control of the Hoang Sa team: The Nguyen surname placed the Bac Hai team, not many people, who volunteered to go, then granted sent out paper, exempted money from collecting money and patrol fees, allowed to take small fishing boats to Con Dao archipelago and other islands in Ha Tien to collect items of shipwrecks and tortoise, abalone, sea cucumber, ... (Le Quy Don, 1997, p.120).

In the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the strong development of the international trading system positively influenced the foreign trade activities of the Nguyen Lords. The Nguyen Lords have used the seafaring experiences of the Cham community (Chiem Thanh), along with other communities living on the coast, to exploit the potential of the land they govern, especially the rich potentials of the archipelago (including Con Dao) are aimed at economic development, promoting commercial relations, and cultural exchange on the sea. In this context, the Nguyen lords government, on the one hand, maintained an open foreign policy, but at the same time was always vigilant and promptly proposed effective methods to protect territorial sovereignty on islands.

During the process of geographical discovery in the XV-XVI centuries, some western countries found a new way to the East when the land silk road was monopolized by the Arabs. The pioneers among these are Tay Ba Nha, Portugal, the Netherlands, ... creating the golden age of foreign trade at sea. From the seventeenth century, England and France began to look to the East (including Vietnam) and the most popular way to approach the East was by sea. With a strategic location in the East Sea, Con Dao is one of the ideal stations for stopping, boat assembly, avoiding storms, building bases, ... In 1687, Willam Dampier was an employee of the company. Dong An Anh (English East India Company, EIC) visited the West Bay - Nam Con Dao (Vo Van Sinh, 2012, p. 80). In 1702, Dong An Anh company landed on Con Dao, deployed to build flagpoles and fortresses to assert sovereignty here. This event is recorded in many important documents of the UK, such as the Dictionary of "Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias" confirmed in June 1702, the Dong An Anh Company was based in Con Dao; The book "Tableau de la Cochinchine", published in 1862, by Cotembert and Rosny also affirms:

"In 1702, the British placed on the coup of this group of islands a trading post" (Cortambert E. & Rosny L, 1862, p. 6). In order to soon complete the construction of military works in Con Dao, the East India Company brought 45 Europeans, 7 to 8 black soldiers and 15 to 16 Macassars (mercenaries in Sulawesi province, Indonesia) (Lockyer Ch, 1711, p. 78). Dong An Anh Company opened a trading station to trade with other countries around the region: "There are Chinese boats carrying bricks and tiles here in exchange for British goods because the capital is low but the profit is much" (People's Bank, 2007, vol.2, p. 217).

Before the British action, Lord Nguyen organized the chase, forcing the British to flee Con Dao after their first warehouse was set on fire and most of the Europeans here were also destroyed (Colquhoun AR, 1885, pp.353-354). The Dai Nam book actually records about this event as follows: Year of the Horse, the reign of Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu in the 11th year (1702), the enemy was an Englishman with 8 boats to park in Con Dao, Lord Nguyen sent someone to find a way. Except for them (NHBND, 2007, vol.2, p.115). This event was later mentioned by Paulin Vial - director of the Southern Bureau of Internal Affairs: "This island is in front of the mouth of the Mekong River, a century ago it was occupied by the British, but left after seeing can't keep it. One of their small garrison, a short distance from shore, on the long distance of merchant ships from China to Malaysia was the target of relentless attacks of the natives. The An Nam kings (Nguyen lords) were still the rightful owners of those archipelago" (Paulin Vial, 1997, p. 82).

Although he succeeded in removing British troops from Con Dao, more than 60 years later, Lord Nguyen had difficulties in the country due to the Tay Son uprising (1771). In the step of fleeing the Tay Son army, in 1783, Lord Nguyen (Nguyen Anh) had to bring his family and lineages to Con Dao and pray to the French to regain the throne. As a result, in 1787, the "Treaty of Versailles" was signed by Lord Nguyen with Count De Mantmarin (representing King Louis XVI of France). According to the Treaty of Versailles, the Nguyen government ceded the sovereignty of the Da Nang estuary and Con Dao archipelago to France in exchange for 4 warships, 1200 infantry soldiers, 200 gunners, 250 black African soldiers and ammunition for the plan to attack the Tay Son house (Ta Chi Dai Truong, 1973, pp.182-183). However, because the feudalism in France was overthrown in the bourgeois revolution (1789), the Treaty of Versailles was legally invalid.

Thus, with the promulgation of many policies to conduct economic reclamation and development in Con Dao, from the seventeenth century, Nguyen lords have asserted their sovereignty over this archipelago. By the end of the eighteenth century, in addition to the garrison force garrisoning and exploiting products, there were a few inhabitants in Con Dao, mainly those who for special reasons could not live on the mainland. the whole family came here to start a career. According to a statistic, as of the beginning of the eighteenth century, there were about 60 families living in a small village in Con Dao. In a letter written on March 15, 1789 to Count Luydécno in Paris, Governor-general Pondich-ery stated: clearly in Con Dao all Europeans had left and there were only less than 60 families living there (A. Septant, 1997).

### **The Nguyen Dynasty Strengthened its Defense and Boosted Socio-economic Development in Con Dao**

In 1802 Nguyen Anh defeated Tay Son and founded the Nguyen dynasty (1802-1945). One of the objective requirements of the society at that time was to quickly recover the socio-economy, especially to develop agricultural production, which was destroyed by the war. For the archipelagos, the Nguyen emperors especially attached great importance and issued many policies to continue exploiting and protecting sovereignty there.

For Con Dao, the Nguyen had established a permanent garrison here with many weapons to be ready to fight when attacked. In addition, the Nguyen dynasty built fortresses, increased the number of troops, set up a room closely and set up patrols in critical areas in Con Dao. In the book of Dai Nam, it was written, in 1805, King Gia Long said: "Con Dao, Phu Quoc are all vital places, people are crowded, often with hidden enemies, so the citadel chooses land to build fortresses., whether to supply firearms, weapons, boats, and troops to keep them, ... ordered the coastal villages to be ready for weaponry ships, if you saw enemy boats near the shore, immediately join together to contribute. fishing power" (People's Bank, 2007, vol 2, p. 265). In 1836, King Minh Mang built a stronghold and a fortress in Con Dao "... Con Lon island (Con Dao) in Vinh Long, Phu Quoc island in Ha Tien, there are posts to divide soldiers. week prevention, to prevent uncertainty. Like that, we keep the coastline in place that makes the bad guy terrifying and impenetrable. If the martial arts are corrected, the outsiders can see it dissipates their evil hearts" (NHBND, 2007, vol 1, p.134). The fort system in Con Dao is described as follows: "The four sides of the fort are 12-foot long, 5-meter high, and 6-foot-3-foot wide. Front and back post both open a door. The fort was built on the south side of the fort. Delegate the province and employ 500 people in total to work" (People's Bank, 2007, vol 2, p. 246).

In addition, every year the Nguyen Dynasty organized many groups of soldiers to take turns exploiting natural resources and products in Con Dao. In the 19th Minh Mang year (1838), the king sent soldiers to take the nest in Con Pha: "... Gia Dinh province sent soldiers and boats to take them to Con Dao island together with the garrison to get the nest ..." (Le Quy Don, 1977, p.231). In the year of the pig (1839), King Minh Mang ordered soldiers to go to Con Dao and Phu Quoc to find products, swallow nests, and incense: "The envoy, the History of Tran Thien, saw the Yen soldiers to go get the nest in Con The island...., Standard for the place where the swallow nest is produced, every year, the soldiers on the island go to find them and pay, if they dare to hide it, they will be punished... (Le Quy Don, 1977, p.233).

In order to continue to exploit this potential archipelago more effectively, the Nguyen dynasty implemented a policy of "shallow retreat", using soldiers to clear land in areas near the base for self-cultivation. raising troops and graves of people, organizing the concentration as a form of barracks to establish reclaimed plantations. These people are called militias. The main task is concentrated agricultural production, but when needed they can also be used in battle as soldiers on active service. The types of fields reclaimed by the soldiers are called "bureaucrats and barracks". When the land is reclaimed, it belongs to the state ownership. Plowing is done by soldiers together (Luu Van Quyet, Vo Van Sen, 2021). The harvested paddy is imported into the warehouse. During the Minh Mang period, this activity was promoted, plantations were established in many special places in the border areas and islands such as Ha Tien, Con Dao, ... In the year of Minh Mang in the twenty-first year (1840), the king deceived: "Con Dao has a large and good land, can cultivate and cultivate, but the population is still sparse, went down to Du and allowed the soldiers to keep it on that island on normal days Have something to do, to bring power to open ... " (NHBND, 1969, vol 22, p.138). Also in 1840, King Minh Mang sent lure to the provincial authorities, requesting that the chief of soldiers stationed in Con Dao tried to urge the wild fields to self-sufficiency (NHBND, 1969, vol 22, p.140). Obviously, Minh Mang's plantation policy had certain effects, turning the garrisoned army in charge of guarding and patrolling the island region into an army responsible for reclamation and economic development. in Con Dao. At the same time, with this policy, the Nguyen has attracted peasants and other social sectors to Con Dao, contributing to exploiting the potentials of this vast archipelago to achieve higher understanding.

In order to reduce the burden on the state, the Nguyen dynasty proposed a policy of sending prisoners to reclaim in some places with difficult conditions such as island border areas and a regime of reward and punishment for those who went exploring. The goal of this policy is to promote reclamation, increase food production, create tax rents for the feudal state, and at the same time to ensure security and defense, as a solid support for the government. Implementing the above policy, the Nguyen dynasty sent those convicted of opposing the court or participating in embezzlement of public funds,... to Con Dao. The book Dai Nam actually records about this event as follows: "Gia Đĩnh had to deal with rebels who were the invaders to the sutras, the king sent the court to search at the righteous house. The heads were all imprisoned, while slaves formerly exiled in Southern provinces (Bien Hoa, Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong) now send them to Con Dao ..., many times bring the prisoners with light sentences, remove Key chains were brought there (Con Dao), to make a living, people gradually grew more and more. According to a statistic, during this period, in Con Dao, there were about 210 prisoners were detained (Pham Thi Hue & Nguyen Xuan Hoai, 2012, p.66). The king ordered, allowing these inmates after their exile to become civilians living here. In the So of Vinh Long province, which was submitted to King Minh Mang in October of the year of Canh Ty (1840), it was written: The people in Con Dao were quite large (250 people) along with the number of criminals who had been defrauding and distracted (210 people). ) simplified or

someone has expired, according to the registration of the population. Among those soldiers, 50 people were selected to be a Thanh Hai team, sent out jobs and every year, they sent the nest to pay, and gave together with the number of prisoners who were dependent on the book to be An Hai village. Duy considered that the land area on the island was not much (the people previously declared openly to fill out 150 acres, the garden land planted more than 8 acres, the land for growing sweet potatoes more than 21 acres. while it is abandoned, the forest can provide 180 acres of land, but some places have not yet come to live (Pham Thi Hue & Nguyen Xuan Hoai, 2012, pp. 66-70).

Another measure in the exploitation of the annual potential of Con Dao that the Nguyen Dynasty (especially under Minh Mang) was to step up the (voluntary) migration policy to Con Dao in order to preserve the land and keep the village. reclaiming, exploiting products, developing economic ... To encourage people, the Nguyen dynasty created favorable conditions related to procedures for people to voluntarily go to Con Dao to reclaim, such as: go reclaiming freely choose the land to explore; allowing people to go wild to set up villages with simple procedures; tax exemption for settlers for three years or more; to lend to people agricultural tools, buffaloes and cows, rice seeds, finance money, sometimes even not to the poor. "If the people who go to the wild do not have buffalos to plow, plant and seed rice, the officials must allocate them" (NHBND, 2007, vol 1, p. 241). The book *Dai Nam thuc luc* found:

In 1840, King Minh Mang said: "Let the 5 provinces of Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong, Gia Dinh, Bien Hoa and An Giang recruit people in the province, regardless of boys and girls, old and young, who volunteered to go to the island to do business. will be financed, each of 10 mandarins or 3.5 mandarins ..., again to the provinces of Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong, Bien Hoa, An Giang all have to question in the county whether there are widows, widows, orphans. The elderly have no children, are poor and cannot rely on anything, if anyone voluntarily goes to Con Dao to make a living, then no man, woman, old person, young person, and anyone who wants to bring their wives I will go together. The provincial authorities consider granting each person 10 mandarins to make capital.... The scavenging of remains must be according to people's hearts, not forced, and how many people can be recruited for motorboats to take away (NHBND, 1969, vol 22, pp.16-17). In addition, the Nguyen dynasty also provided the islanders with seeds, buffaloes and cows, and farm produce; buy cattle such as goats, pigs, chickens, dogs ... and give them to the breeders: Con Dao has just started to reclaim and expand, the livelihood of the people there is not much, before going down to Du for that province to buy buffaloes. plowing, farming tools, seed paddy and sowing seeds granted to the people in the island to plow and indiscriminate as long as there is no vacant place left in the land (NHBND, 1969, vol 22, p. 65).

With the above policies, the Nguyen dynasty brought a large number of people to Con Dao to exploit the great potential of this archipelago and created a solid social base for the military. stationed. By 1840, in Con Dao, outside the guard force, civilians from 5 southern provinces appeared voluntarily to migrate to live. Therefore, the population on the island is increasingly crowded, the reclamation and economic development are increasingly promoted: the population in Con Dao has up to 200 people, the reclaimed area is estimated to be 150 acres (People's Bank, 2007, vol 3, pp. 710-711). According to a statistic, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the population of Con Dao was up to 1,000 people, including 3 elements: civilians, guard soldiers and criminals who were taken to reclaimed island (Nguyen Dinh Thong, 1996). In this period, Con Dao established a village called An Hai and a residential hamlet in Hoa Cau. The people here make a great contribution to the productive life on the island, maximize the resources in Con Dao, contribute to protecting the important fortifications in the southeastern country of Vietnam (Huynh Trung Kien, 2012, p.108)

From the first half of the nineteenth century, the Nguyen court fell into a deep and comprehensive crisis. On September 1, 1958, the French opened fire to invade Vietnam. In April 1961, the French invaded Dinh Tuong, then urgently invaded Con Dao due to fear that the British would soon return to occupy this archipelago. In November 1861, Bonard - the captain of the French Admiral gave an order to land on Con Dao, and Lespès Sebastien, the naval lieutenant, Lespès Sebastien Nicolas Joachim immediately after that, made a "Declaration of Sovereignty", officially completing the goal of occupying a key position. (Vo Van Sinh, 2012).

In the strategic vision of French traders and politicians, Con Dao is vital in helping this country dominate the maritime route from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean; at the same time guaranteeing the exclusive right to exploit capital in Asia. Although the initial perception is so, after the official occupation of Con Dao (1861), France changed its plan to build this place into a trading post or military base due to limited financial resources. In fact, during the first occupation of Vietnam, France faced many difficulties due to the fierce struggle movement of the Vietnamese people. The security situation in the newly occupied French regions is also unstable due to gambling, looting and murder ...

In that context, the suppression, arrest and detention of anti-French rebels and French protectionist policies in Vietnam overwhelmed the mainland prison system. To solve immediate difficulties, France urgently built a large-scale prison to consolidate its dominance in the colony. At that time, it was the geographical location far from the mainland plus the rich resources of Con Dao that the French considered as the most suitable for establishing a prison and applying the regime of hard labor - using strength. labor of the prisoners to exploit the products on the island, thereby, enriching France. With that realization, in 1862, Governor Louis Adolphe

Bonard signed a decision to establish Con Dao prison. From that time until 1954, Con Dao officially became "hell on earth" - the place where Vietnamese patriotic people were imprisoned. In 1954, when the US replaced the French to dominate South Vietnam, Con Dao's strategic geographical position continued to be requisitioned by the US for the purpose of detaining Vietnamese Revolutionary soldiers. Con Dao, accordingly, continued to be a typical prison in the US imperial prison system in South Vietnam until the twentieth century (Luu Van Quyet, Phan Thi Anh Thu, 2021, p. 234).

## CONCLUSION

Thanks to the recognition of the location and favorable natural conditions of Con Dao, as well as the very permissive (both forced and encouraged) policies for the people to reclaim; taking advantage of the poor people's labor force and ability to exploit natural resources; employ soldiers to reclaim land, develop agricultural economy in the residential area and graves people to establish reclaimed plantations; to reclaim the prisoners, ... of the Nguyen lords and later the Nguyen dynasty, but the reclamation and economic development in Con Dao has been expanded and developed steps. It can be said that the enforcement policies in Con Dao for nearly three centuries (from the seventeenth century to the first half of the nineteenth century) of the Nguyen were aimed at expanding land and exploiting rich resources., to assert sovereignty and ensure national security in the southeastern sea and islands of Vietnam. However, from the second half of the nineteenth century, the Nguyen court fell into a crisis, unable to protect the country. Then in 1861 when the French captured Con Dao and then the US, Con Dao became a prison - "hell on earth" to imprison Vietnamese revolutionary soldiers who love their country.

Since 1975, Con Dao has been completely liberated and has become one of the most beautiful and potential islands in the world, playing the role of a "shield" to protect important seaports and important regions. economic point in the South of Vietnam. Con Dao's strategic geographic location is now being promoted effectively by the local authorities and people to turn this place into an "island tourism belt" - connecting the East Sea of the country with Gulf of Thailand area. With its new position, Con Dao has been rising day by day in the middle of the sea to deserve the position of an economic - political "front-end" on the Asia-Europe maritime route since the seventeenth century and a war zone. strategy to promote the development and integration of Vietnam in the twenty-first century. Along with the sea tourism space, the mountain, forest eco-tourism space, the space of spiritual cultural heritages (the prison system) has made Con Dao an attractive and attractive tourist destination.

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