

Title: The Cần Vương Movement: An Insurgency Doomed to Fail
Presenter: Anaïs Trinephi, Saddleback College
Mentor: Margot Lovett

The Cần Vương movement (translates to “aid to the king”) was a large-scale Vietnamese insurgency between 1885 and 1889 against French colonial rule. It was launched on July 7th 1885 by the Vietnamese emperor, Hàm Nghi, and the regent, Tôn Thất Thuyết after the imperial city of Huế was overtaken by the French on July 5th, 1885, forcing the emperor along with some nobles of the court to flee the city and live as fugitives in the countryside. The movement managed to unite populations from various social classes in Vietnam against a common threat, the French. Nobles, scholars, and peasants worked together towards a common goal: To expel the French from Vietnam and to reinstall the emperor on the throne (Fourniau 44). The resistance to French colonization took form in promoting traditionalist and nationalist values and rejecting Western culture, particularly religion. However, the lack of organization and flawed strategies of the movement led to the massacre of thousands of Vietnamese Catholics and the ostracizing of already marginalized groups in Vietnam such as the Chinese, the Mường, and the Chams (McLeod 668). In the end, the French rallied all of these minorities and turned them against the Vietnamese with bribery. Furthermore, the poor communication between rebel villages enabled the French troops, who had superior weaponry and were more numerous, to capture Emperor Hàm Nghi leading to the decline of the movement.

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