

NGUYEN TRUONG TO (1828-1871). Reformist intellectual in nineteenth-century Vietnam. A native of Nghe An Province, Nguyen Truong To was born in a scholar-gentry family that had converted to Catholicism. Prohibited from taking the civil service examinations because of his religion, he studied in France and became an admirer of Western culture. On his return to Vietnam in 1861, he served the court in negotiations with the French after the latter's seizure of the southern provinces.

After the Treaty of Saigon in 1867, Nguyen Truong To submitted several petitions to the court suggesting reforms that were needed to prevent the collapse of the empire. His suggestions ran the gamut from politics to education and economic reform, and included the separation of powers, educational reform,

the sending of students abroad, and the modernization of agriculture and industry. It was To's belief that Vietnam needed to conciliate France in order to buy time for self-strengthening. Arrested on suspicion of treason in 1861, he was released to join an educational delegation to France. He died of illness in 1871.