

Land use and land cover changes during the second Indochina war and their long-term impact on a Hilly Area in Laos

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Abstrak

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Armed conflicts create drastic socioeconomic shocks that lead to land use and land cover changes in ways that are not yet well understood. Several studies have used satellite imagery to detect such changes during periods of conflict. However, there has been an insufficient examination of older conflicts before the 1970s. By examining older conflicts, we can examine the effects of conflict on land use and land cover over a long time span. This study reveals land use and land cover changes during the Second Indochina War (1960-75) and the wars immediate and long-term effects on land use and land cover by combining an analysis of aerial and satellite photographs with fieldwork. This study concludes that the war created an abnormal situation in which a large number of people from a different ethnic group came to live amongst the original inhabitants of the research site. This led to a unique farming landscape and vast areas of forest destruction. The study also reveals that forest destruction during the war was a significant milestone in the history of the vegetation of the research site, and the vegetative landscape has still not recovered to its prewar condition. These findings, as well as the results of previous research, suggest that we need to be more conscious of the effects of war on forest degradation in Laos.