



## **The Cross Thai-Cambodian Border's Commerce Between 1863 -1953 from the View of French's Documents**

**Nathaporn Thaijongrak,**

Lecturer of Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, Srinakharinwirot University

[mui\\_mig@yahoo.com](mailto:mui_mig@yahoo.com)

DOI: 10.26417/t3ed4309

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research aims to study and collect data with detailed information of the cross Thai-Cambodian border's commerce in the past from French's documents and to provide information as a guideline for potential development of Thai-Cambodian Border Trade. The method used in this research is the qualitative research. The research instrument used historical methods by collecting information from primary and secondary sources, then to analysis process. The research discovered the pattern of trade between Cambodia and Siam that started to be affected when borders were established. Since Cambodia was under French's rule as one of French's nation, France tried to delimit and demarcate the boundary lines which divided the community that once cohabitated into a community under new nation state. In each area, traditions, rules and laws are different, but people lived along the border continued to bring their goods to exchange for their livings. This habit is still continuing, even the living communities are divided into different countries. For such reason, it was the source of "Border trade" in western concept. The Thai-Cambodian border's trade during that period under the French protectorate of Cambodia was effected because of the rules and law which illustrated the sovereignty of the land. At the same time, customs have been defined including several details that have affected the traditional trade. The border's commerce was more sophisticated. The products had transformed according to the needs of the developed world market and social conditions.

**Keywords:** Border's commerce, Thai, Cambodia

## Introduction

Trade or commerce occurs with the evolution of human society. In Southeast Asia, people exchange their goods between ancient kingdoms for over centuries, as the same as the Thai-Cambodian trade, through various trails or routes which connects two lands together. However, when Cambodia became a part of French Protectorate in 1863 under Indochinese Federation, French imperialism arrived with the idea of nation state, which claimed absolute sovereignty within its borders. They delimited and demarcated state boundaries. The research aims for the awareness of the changing dynamics of border trade, after the birth of Southeast Asian nation states by using French documents from Center of Archives nationales d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Provence and Center of Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve. In which they had fulfilled some details which could not be found in both Thai and Khmer documents and other secondary sources for completed information with types of merchandise, trade routes, the adaptation of merchants and people at the border, which are the basis of the relation development with neighboring countries in terms of aspects of international relations, apart from political context. In addition, due to the fact that Cambodia was under French's rule, the official information or documents on border information were recorded in French. The French documents open up the perspectives or helped to educate the Thai-Cambodian border trade, and provide a basis for understanding the economic situation between the two countries in preparation for membership of the ASEAN Economic Community later on.

## Background

The Thai-Cambodian trade relations dated back in the 16th century from Ayutthaya period. Ayutthaya was one of the major important seaports of the region, many western countries made journeys to trade. Trade's role of Ayutthaya can divided into two parts: seaport and entrepot. The kingdom was the center to buy or exchange wild products from interior area of the continent, which were highly demanded in the global markets, also to distributed goods and products along the shipping route. Cambodia paid tribute in the form of such goods as well. Pepper was one of the most important spices to trade between Ayutthaya-Cambodia-France. Cambodia was the area where pepper was popularly farmed. In Chou Ta-kuan's report described "pepper planted in Kampot and sold in Ayutthaya with France as a monopoly, the pepper's trade made France a huge beneficiary".<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned above, Cambodia has been important to Siamese trade since ancient period. It is located along the Mekong River, a major trade route in the past. Cambodia links with the rich interior of forests and coastal trade. Trading network brought together Siam, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam along the Mekong River basin.

---

<sup>1</sup> Puangtong Pawakapan, Songkhram Kankha lae chatniyom nai khwamsamphan thai-kampuchea (Wars, Trade and Nationalism in Thai-Cambodia Relations). Bangkok: The Social Science and Humanity Textbook Project, 2011, p.7.

In Cambodia, there were many trade routes. People can cross between Vietnam and the left bank of the Mekong River, along the three little rivers to Mekong and the Northeast of Siam. From the right bank of the Mekong River, traders can travel straight to Korat Plateau into Nakhon Ratchasima, but through the dense jungles filled with wild animals and the disease of Dong Phrayayen mountains before entering northeastern Bangkok.<sup>1</sup>

Another route that connects to the inner Bangkok is Mekong river cruise from the south of Luang Prabang and made journey on foot through the mountains, follow by boat to Pichai. It took another twelve days by boat to Bangkok. The Phuan used this route to bring expensive exports goods to sell in the lower lands, such as ivory, gold, cinnamon, cardamom and rhinoceros horns. On the trip back, they bought salt from the Annam coast and Luang Prabang. Some merchants bought salt from Vietnamese merchants who crossed the mountains to distribute in the Mekong and the southern part of the Korat plateau. Products from Bangkok were shipped from China, Europe, India and Siam were then shipped to Laos via the Puans. Laotian merchants who trade and export goods such as frankincense, honey and gold would bring cotton and opium from back to India. Traders from Laos and Korat Plateau who often trade to Bangkok chose to travel through Prachin Buri and the Phanom Dong Rak mountain range (Surin), Tako (Sa Kaeo), Samed (Surin), instead of the mountains of Dong Phrayayen which was more difficult.<sup>2</sup>

The Alternative way was through Samed (Surin) and Tako (Sa Kaeo), which was also a tract of merchants who trade in Cambodia. Silk from the east of Pak Thong Chai District, Nakhon Ratchasima walk to Nangrong district, Buriram, went through south east of Bann Pra Kham or Bann Pha Kham and went southward to Som Poi. This is a cliff channel and a steep hill, when it reached the low land, merchants would walk to Ta Phraya in the Aranyaprathet border into Cambodia, across Angkor Thom.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Cambodia is also a route for goods from the Central Mekong to coastal cities. There are records of trade along the Mekong basin between Laos and Cambodia. Sombok, which is located between Laos and Cambodia, was a trade city in the 17th century when Cambodian merchants bought wild products from the highlands. Normally, the cargo were loaded into a boat or rafts until reached to Li Pee waterfall in the south of Laos, where the boat could not access, and then they changed to the land route with carts to Cambodia. These trade routes were used until in the late 19th century. Products from Laos and hill tribesmen were brought to Khmer merchants in Phnom Penh before being transported to the junk at Haitian.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

<sup>2</sup> Jit Phumisak, *Sangkhom thai lum maenam chaophraya kon samai si-ayutthaya* (Thai Society in the Chaophraya River Basin before the Ayutthaya Period, Bangkok: Fah diaw kan, 2004, p.302.

<sup>3</sup> Puangtong Pawakapan, op.cit.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Mouhot, *Henri Mouhot's Diary*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University, 1966, p.33.

In the northeast of Cambodia (Battambang and Siem Reap), was another route for transferring goods from Laos and hilltribes. Although there was an obstacle from Li Pee waterfall, but native traders often chose trail Battambang - Prachin - Bangkok more than the route that passes through Phaya Yen Mountain. Products from the eastern Cambodia also entered the seaports of Siam, Chanthaburi and Trad which is the hub for wild products from Cambodia and Vietnam before being sold to China.

Internal trade routes also helped to make the trade along the seashore bustling. John Crawford described the trade routes throughout the Gulf of Siam in the early 19th century, from Bang Saphan, Banglamung, Rayong, Chanthaburi and Thung Yai (Trad) in Siam until Kampot in Cambodia and Rach Gia, Camau or Long Xuyen and Saigon in Vietnam. It was estimated that in the early 19th century, there were about 40-50 Siamese junk ships traded on this route. Most of them were small boats with a tonnage of 60-100 tons. The Siamese junk that travels to China often visited these coastal ports such as Hue and Fofai to buy cardamom, ivory, leather, deer, and salted fish. On the other hand, they brought Chinese West and Indian goods to sell in Cambodia and Vietnam. There were also products made in Siam such as steels, wood, pans, tobacco, opium, and Cambodian rice. Foreign trade in the coastal cities of the port city was not very active; Henri Mouhot stated that the flourish trade in Kampot was not comparable to the port in Bangkok. Kmapot has about 300 residents, which were less than Chanthaburi province alone because this city was located far from the source of goods. Traveling from Kampot to Phnom Penh took up to 12 days using carts and was convenient only in the dry season. The trade in Kampot consisted of products such as ivory, rice, fish, cotton and rare woods.<sup>1</sup>

Trade networks in the Mekong region have resulted in both Siam and Vietnam trying to gain commercial advantages from Cambodia. During the political turmoil in Vietnam, the Tayson rebel (In the early Rattanakosin period) was affected to uncomfortable situation and faced problems in Vietnamese trade routes. Siam has benefited from such political turmoil. The hill tribesmen who imported wild products to export to Vietnam can not send their goods. French missionary record described that Vietnamese merchants in Tonkin had to trade with Laos instead to avoid the routes danger affected by the fighting in Vietnam. In such situation, Local traders, both Lao and Cambodians preferred to sell their goods in the Chao Phraya River basin instead, which was more peaceful.<sup>2</sup> At that time, Bangkok royal court became a monopoly on wild products in the Mekong region.

When Vietnam was able to restore its political and economic power, Vietnam's important sea port is Huatian or known as Banteay or Phatthamas Mas among Siamese, became the hub of the goods until the 1820s. Haitian was the port of Siamese

---

1 "Chotmaihet khong phuak bathluang farangset ton phandin phrachao ekkathat, khrang krung thonburi lae khrang krung rattanakosin ton ton" (Records of the French Missionaries during the Periods of King Ekkathat, Thonburi and the Early Bangkok), in Prachum Phongsawadan Part 39 (Collected Chronicles), pp. 93-94.

2 AOM, Indochine, Amiraux 12705, "Rapport sur le Cambodge, Voyage de Saigon à Battambang par Spooner", le 30 decembre 1862

junk ships to buy goods from Cambodia. Vietnam prohibited foreign ships traveling to Cambodia; also, they must do business deals through Vietnamese agents only. The French document stated that in 1862, goods leaving Phnom Penh paid a tax of 20 percent, half of the tax paid to the Khmer court. Once again, it has to be paid to the Vietnamese taxpayer at Chau Doc. The Siamese ships had to pay more for the Khmer and Lao goods that passed down the Haitian. Products from Phnom Penh became major export commodity of Vietnam to the Chinese market, including cardamom, fang, cotton, rice, ivory and leather. They were sent from cities in Cambodia, Northeast of Siam, South of Laos and South of Vietnam because Phnom Penh is located on the intersection of four rivers, which was more convenient to transport goods.

From the booming era of trading, traditional trade patterns were appeared to be the movement of traditional trade in this region eventually. They started to trade products which related to living and occupation. These goods were needed in the general market as in 1884, two Ubon merchants bought the buffaloes and sold them to Phnom Penh in the big caravan. They divided buffalos into herd of 200 and 300 respectively, controlled by 76 and 93 men guards. In addition, the currency of Vietnam and Laos was widely used in Cambodia and Thai currency is also used in Khmer Lake area.<sup>1</sup>

## Discussion

In the early Rattanakosin period, Siam started war with Vietnam with political and economic reasons. This area was then a significant hub as a fertile food resource of the region. There were rice growing areas and the Khmer Lake, which was a large freshwater fishery. The economic benefits of the land was what the French visioned for. French evidence has highlighted Cambodia's bustling trade, "Each year, there are eight million kilograms of fish exported, worth about two million dollars in that city. These fish are sold to markets in the Far East", "Cambodia's location is strategically important especially to Phnom Penh," and "It's located at the southern end of the four rivers." The city is thus connected to the Great Lake by the Mekong River to Cochinchina. The Quatre-bas point became entropot and natural military base at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

After seizing Vietnam, France has a policy of expanding its influence in the Indochina region. In French's perspective, Khmer region was important to France. On February 9, 1861 the French consul insisted on the need to make a treaty with the Khmer. With the cause from the stated record "Firstly, Khmer is a land with the Mekong flowing through, France hoped that the river might be the way from France to China, especially to Yunnan where France is expected to locate as the major trading market. Second reason, large-scale fishing activities made Khmer an important economic center. Last reason, Cambodia would help promote South Vietnam, which was

---

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

annexed to France in 1862 and officially in 1867 to be more stable and as a way for France to expand its territory to the north. Cambodia is also a major food hub. Because of the abundance of animals such as cattle, buffaloes, fish, this species will be used as a good food for French soldiers in the South."<sup>1</sup>

As a result, in September 1862, General Bonard was the leader to explore water route in Tonle Sap, along with two small boats, not far from Angkor Wat. In his point of view, the Cambodian construction of the economic prosperity of Angkor Wat has made Cambodia a very attractive economic destination for France.<sup>2</sup> He referred to a report by Spooner, a trader who surveyed in November 1862, claiming that Cambodia deserved restoration and effective governance which made France's trade effectively flourished in cotton, silk, indigo, turmeric, ivory and rubberwood. Bonard pointed out the importance of Cambodia trade in the Mekong delta as Cambodia was strategically essential in commerce with the junction of the Mekong, Bassac, Chi, Moun.<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Aubaret, the political secretary of Bonard, showed his opinion, "Trade in Cochinchina in the future depends on the Cambodian lowlands. With its flat geographic, interspersed with beautiful mountains and covered with abundance of natural resources, it will help Europe to prosper. Cambodia is at the center of its production".<sup>4</sup>

Bonard saw Siam as a major obstacle to the French advantage of trade in the region, because Siam occupied the territory that was considered to be the most fertile: Battambang and Siem Reap, which adopted the same culture and religion. Siam can easily assimilate their culture to Cambodia. Siam also took advantage of the possession of the Cambodian territory to use northern Cambodia as a trade route linking Mee Tho and Saigon. In addition, at that time, Siam was close to the British, in the French's view. It may have made British influence over Cambodian territory through the Siamese court as well. The French analyzed that they need political control in the Cambodian territory. Bonard's idea was approved by Chasseloup-Laubat, Minister of French Naval who considered it was necessary for France to extend its influence over Cambodia to eliminate Siam power out of the country.

However, the purpose of General Bonard was unsuccessful. He was retired in 1863. General Pierre Paul de La Grandiere, the French Governor (Indochine francaise), took responsibility from him. De La Grandiere has appointed Doudard de Lagrée to explore the geography of Cambodia. He created a report on the prosperous trade of the land: "From Cochinchina, goods sent to Phnom Penh were sugar, beet, weapons, medicinal materials, and Chinese goods and Cambodians sent rice paddies, cotton, woven fabrics made of silk, turmeric mat, hornbeam and salted meat back".<sup>5</sup> On August 8,

1 AOM, Asie, Indochine V (1862-3), Lettre du Contre-Admiral Bonard au Phya Phra Klang, le 10 deembre 1862.

2 AOM, Indochine, Amiraux 12705 "Rapport sur le Cambodge, Voyage de Saigon à Battambang par Spooner", le 30 decembre 1862

3 AOM, Indochine, Carton 45, Dossier C1 (222), Contre-Amiral Bonard au Ministère de la Marine Chasseloup-Laubat, 7 janvier 1863.

4 AOM. Indochine, Siam (1863-1864), B. 3 (1), Lettre du Contre-Amiral de la Grandière au Contre-Amiral Chasseloup-Laubat, 27 septembre 1863

5 Puangthong Rungswasdisab, Battambang kab polprayot tang setthakit kong Siam yuk ton Rattanakosin (Battambang and economic interest of Siam in the early Rattnakosin) in journal of Thammasat, 19 (3), 1993, p. 29.

1863, he brought two warships in order to make Cambodia a French protectorate. Norodom signed the agreement. Finally, Cambodia became a protectorate of France on August 11, 1863, except for Battambang, Siem Reap and Srisophon which were under Siamese rule.

Battambang, Siem Reap, a city rich in resources and a major freshwater fishery, still remained with Siam. Thais called this area the "Inner Khmer". The abundance of this area shown that "In the water there are fish, in the field there are rice; in the forest there are cardamom".<sup>1</sup> The product of rice in Battambang is enough for their own population. From the French documents stated that in 1862, Battambang was more densely populated than Phnom Penh. According to a survey of French colonial officials in 1862, they said that it was rich in wild cardamom and was located near Cardamom Mountain. Cardamom was regularly sent to Bangkok. Although Chanthaburi is another place that was a source of cardamom to the Siamese court, but their quality was not good enough compared with Pursat.<sup>2</sup>

French Documents in the 1860s indicates that caravan trips between Battambang and Siem Reap to the Thai's border was tax free. But on the other hand, goods leaving Battambang to other cities of Cambodia and Vietnam were subjected to a 10 percent tax,<sup>3</sup> which was not excluded from taxation at several points until to Vietnam, making taxation a major barrier trade between Battambang and other areas.

While trading in the Indochina region using the Mekong is more convenient and economical. Traveling from Battambang to Prachinburi required a cart that was only available during dry season and then cruised in Bang Pakong River for no less than 15 days, while cruising from Battambang to Tonle Sap took only 2 days. With no tax border, the cost of goods closed to the price of goods which were sent to sell or buy from Phnom Penh and South Vietnam.

The French documents of 1897 and 1906 indicated that the main export commodities of Battambang were rice, dried fish, buffalo, cotton and textiles. Import products included Iron and steel shipped from Singapore and Hong Kong, purchased through Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Saigon.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Battambang also collected taxation followed the Siamese policy, from ship which came from other parts of Cambodia and Vietnam to fishing in Tonle Sap. In 1868, King Norodom of Cambodia pleaded to France to allow Siam to abolish the fishing tax on the lake because the tax were troublesome for merchants and fishermen.<sup>5</sup>

---

1 AOM, Indochine, Amiraux 12705 "Rapport sur le Cambodge, Voyage de Saigon à Battambang par Spooner, le 30 decembre 1862"

2 Dourdart de Lagrée et autres. (1873). *D'explorations en Indochine effectue pendant les années 1866, 1867, 1868*, Paris: Librairie Hachette, p.222.

3 AOM, Indochine, Gouvernement General 47453 "Monsieur Breucq à Monsieur le Gouverneur General de l'Indochine Hanoi, le 30 mars 1906

4 AOM, Indochine, Amiraux 10120 "Lettres du roi Norodom a.s. du Grand Lac, le 16 septembre 1869

5 Amarawongwicht, "Phongsawadan huamuang monthon isan" (Chronicle of the Northeast), in *Prachum Phongsawadan Part 4*, Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1963, p. 221.



The boundary line came with the concept of modern nation state, followed by the exploration of area to create map and define the boundary lines to limit their sovereignty in each state with the application of Western-style modern law. The boundary line in Southeast Asia, especially the Thai-Cambodian border, was just happened in the modern state, but it showed the pattern of the border trade and movement of peoples and goods related to the history and the relations networks of people and goods before the birth of modern state.

When France occupied Cambodia with the concept of modern state, the boundary line between Siam and Cambodia, under French Indochina Federation was created. The border line conflicts has become a major problem in the history of Thai-French relations, and also linked to the Thai-Cambodian relations after the Independence of Cambodia. In 1877, France offered to construct telegraph line in Battambang and requested Siam to hire Mr. Pavia, French colonial officer in Cambodia to execute a survey with an agreement that after the end of this survey, Siam has to continue to employ France for telegraph operation system. On October 3, 1893, there were issues related to the 25-kilometer boundary. The treaty stipulated the 25-kilometer at the right bank of the Mekong River, Siem Reap, Battambang and Tonle Sap and delimited this area as a tax free zone, and for security issue to continue to do as previously. France asked Siam the requirement of consular in Battambang and Siemreap with the same consulate. Siam gave authority to France according to treaty of 1893, because of the unrest situation was due to often robbery escape to hide in the area. This led Siam to committed more intensive surveillance. Also, Siam insisted that in the treaty determined only the import and export goods between two countries.

In the negotiations for the treaty in 1902, France began to pay more attention to the inner Khmer which Thai refused to give up this territory to France. However, the problem of Khmer territory was related to the withdrawal of troops from province of Chanthaburi. In April 1903, France demanded to resolve the border issues from the Tonle Sap to the coast because of the confusion over the boundary territory. Thai responded by explore and survey border's area, but there was no clear evidence, they found only anthropological evidence of people living along the western side of the Banthat mountain, spoke Thai and the other side spoke Khmer. Thai and France agreed to create a joint committee on border demarcation.

In addition, border issues were also related to other problems. France wanted to build a railroad in the Mekong River Basin; Battambang area was under Thai sovereignty in 1901. Until 1903, France officially proposed a railway project to Siamese government, France wishes to build the line of Battambang-Phnom Penh. France insisted that the creation of railways was for trade interests, not only for France's benefits, but also Siam would gain benefit from this railway line. The transportation between Battambang-Phnom Penh mostly used by water way, it was not only convenient because they can use only in rainy season, in contrary, the railway can be used every



seasons. This line will helped Battambang more prosper and became more urban, but Siam was suspicious of French's policy. France assured that this railway will be built for commercial reason, and allow Siam companies to build railway in their territory or hire Thai-French to show the sincerity of France. Besides the railway, the water transportation between Battambang and Tonle Sap was one of the issues. In the late January 1904, France requested Siamese government to facilitate the navigation of the area. In Siamese view, they responded quickly to this issue. They believed that if the water way was more convenient, it may not be necessary to build a railroad.

However, even the attitude of the Siamese government was compromised, but the French trade commissioner, more aggressively, has appealed to the French government asking to annex Battambang and Siemreap into protectorate. The Battambang - Phnom Penh Railway will instantly belong to France. Normally, Cambodian in this area preferred to send goods to Siam more than Phnom Penh or Saigon. They pressured the French government to take over the lands around Tonle Sap into French Indochina, because this land was abundant and rice in the area would not be sold in Bangkok.

France demanded heavily to control Battambang, since they found that Trad, where they occupied did not provided sufficient economic benefits. Battambang was a fertile region. It was the mose successfully area to produce rice in Cambodia and was an economic center for fishing around the Tonle Sap, also, population immensely lived in the area. While Trad, most of the population is Thai and the population was not too much. France would like to exchange Trad with the Battambang area. In February 1907, Siam agreed and signed on the treaty to exchange Battambang, Siem Reap, Si Sophon with Trad.

After Siam lost territory of Battambang, trade between the Siamese and Cambodian states under France has become more tangible, apperent and organized, as the new national state borders became nation after Cambodia's independence by demarcation and delimitation the borders and mapping separated clearly nation between Cambodia and Siam. The ethnic problem was decresed as well. Customs system was created in ancient Thai territory of Battambang, from tax free to be taxable. However, the rules that follow the modern framework did not enormously change the way of life of border trade. It was just a pattern of change that is subject to more regulation. The emergence of boundary lines led to the determination of the extent of sovereignty, which defined spatial authority in a border trade pattern.

The emergence of boundary lines led to cross-border trade, which was moving across between people and goods in established boundaries. This territory has a historical development and network of people and goods relations since pre-modern state border towncontinued as a commercial center. The new patterns did not destroy relation of people's who live or trade near border. On the other hand, border trade continued as a way of border's people, goods were not limited to the laws and powers of the modern state, but trade was more universal and more complex. However, local

structures have been affected by the arrival of colonialism, or can be said of the concept of modern Western states. There were rules that regulate the crossing or passing of the lands, people and goods in each states. The emergence of rules, regulations and laws, affected to people in border regions who try to change and adapt new way of trade or commerce. The emergence of a modern state border happened along with the symbols of the state, such as police officers, customs officers were portraying a new regime. In addition, the authority of officers or people in the border became more complex in social context and indistinguishable

In the past, Dong Rek Mountain or the people living on the both sides of Thai-Cambodian border were considered as a mountain of combination between two parts of Cambodia (lower and upper). Along this mountain, there were many large cities such as Phimai, Korat and also the junction between Siam, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. Many historical accounts referred to trade routes in the Mekong River basin that used in peace situation. In addition, Cambodia also traded along the coast, where Sombok was the center for collecting goods from the land.

Most Thais and Cambodians along the border exchanged trade and kinship relations. Commodities traded was often daily consumer goods, including fish, salt, and livestock as a means of equipment in the profession. In the 1990s, there were published stories about the lives of people on both sides. Apart from of the way of life, similar culture and religion between two sides of Dong Rek, they also mentioned trading network throughout Dangrek. Each year, there were Cambodians traveling by carts across the mountains, taking products such as fish, dried fish, rattan products to sell in Thai side. The main trade along the Thai-Cambodian border, for example, consisted of three parts:

1. Cattle Trade - Most of the people in both countries are in agriculture sector. Buffalos or cows are valuable tools for farmers. Livestock farming is done along with rice farming. Northeast of Thailand is Cambodia's largest livestock market and neighboring country. There are traders from Vietnam buying cattle in Khukhan (Sisaket) and selling them to Phnom Penh.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, some merchants crossed over to pick up cattle in Cambodia near Dongrek Mountains. Khmers liked to sell cattles to Thai traders because they can sell high prices. The cattles are often stolen from the Cambodian side to the Thai side.

2. Fish and Salt Trade – Fish and salt are one of the basic foods. Tonele Sap is one of the largest freshwater fisheries in Southeast Asia, while Northeast of Siam is a large salt producer. Salt, which is used to preserve and cook fish out in various forms, dried fish, salted fish, especially fermented fish. Therefore, salt is the most important ingredient. The growing of fisheries around Tonle Sap is like the small household industry. Salt from Northeast of Thailand has played a role in helping Cambodia's fish

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Denes. (2006). Recovering Khmer ethnic identity from the Thai national past in ethnography of the localism movement in Surin Province. Itacha: Cornell University. p. 248.

industry since from the past. November to April is a season in which fish are abundant. During this period, there will be many immigrants from other areas, especially in neighboring around the lake. Caught fish will made to be dried. Villagers from Surin and Buriram will travel by carts to buy these fish for their own food supplies throughout the year.<sup>1</sup> Each year, caravans carrying wagons of salt from two provinces crossing to Cambodia, to the Tonle Sap for salt to be sold and dried fish and fishes return. The Importance of salt and fish trade of both Thai and Cambodian are remain trace until present. The largest Thai-Cambodian border trade market: Rong Klua in Aranyaprathet, Sakeow Province. It is the central market for border trading and as a salt storage.<sup>2</sup>

3. Gems trade - The creation of boundary lines as a whole did not created any barriers to trade between Siam and Cambodia. On the other hand, they found new products such as the discovery of gemstones in Pailin during the 20th century. Pailin has grown rapidly since the late 1950s after the First World War. Pailin has become a gem trading center in Cambodia and is a major exporter of gemstones to other urban markets. Pailin town is located in the east of Battambang Province, at the foot of the Dong Rek Mountain, adjacent to Thailand, and is located on a natural communication route between Battambang and Chanthaburi, the coastal city of Siam and Bangkok. Pailin is connected to Battambang by Highway No.2. The city's major resource is the gemstone, which consists of Sapphire, Ruby and Zircon that make Pailin's people can live apart from other parts of Cambodia.

The importance of sapphire in relation to Thai-Cambodian trade was began in 1872. When the Shan people from Burma began to dig for minerals, after the success of the discovery of many minerals in Chanthaburi and Trad, they figured that maybe they can find Ruby and Sapphire in Pailin, which are in the same line of gems. Pailin at that time, was in a dense forest and abandoned. Among all the stones, sapphire is the most discovered gemstone in this area and has a very fine texture.<sup>3</sup> Pailin prospered rapidly, just like gold rush period in California. The major markets for gemstones are Bangkok and Calcutta, India through Chanthaburi. According to French documents, "Chanthaburi is full of sapphires. Some shipped to Europe make merchants are rich". Cambodian ruby and sapphires are in demand around the world because of the good quality and color. These gems originated from Cambodia, but most people often call these gems as "Sapphire from Thailand" or "Siam Ruby", because part of the smuggled out to market in Thailand.<sup>4</sup>

Pailin has economic growth and can be self-dominant from the power of the state. This is an example of how spatial authority can not expand or tighten its power in that area. In 1915, Pailin was in a privileged state and auronomous city, even though

---

1 AOM, Indochine, Residence Superieur 210 " Délégué à resident Kampot à Commissaire de Police special Kampot

2 Ibid

3 AOM, Indochine, Rapport sur la région de Pailin, carton 665.

4 AOM, Indochine, Rapport sur la région de Pailin, carton 665.

Cambodia was under control of France according to the Treaty of 1907, but the Siamese court still demanded a tribute from Pailin.

When the border line up with the cost of transportation, gems trade was a case to concern. Geographically, Pailin is closer to Chanthaburi than Cambodia's Battambang province. The close relation between Pailin and Chanthaburi became huge concern to France. According to a report by French government official, Burnet in 1941, it stated that France had lost many profits from gems trading because road connecting between Pailin and Battambang was in bad condition and not convenient. Many gems traders choose to buy their gems in Chanthaburi. In his view, the route between Pailin and Chanthaburi took a long time and unsafe, sometimes carts could not travel. If France developed the road to be more convenient, it would make gemstone in Battambang cheaper than in Thailand. Also, it may helped traders turn to buy gemstones from Battambang instead of paying for travel and customs duties in Thailand. The importance of the gemstone in the border trade has begun to decreased as the sapphires in Pailin start to become increasingly rare. Since the 1970s, the gemstone trade market has been declining, and it has been virtually ineffective.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

The pattern of trade between Cambodia and Thailand began to change when borders were established. The delimitation of boundary lines divided the community that once cohabitated into a new community in established countries, but trade or commerce still continued. For such reason, "Thai-Cambodian trade" during the French was portrayed as a change of style with clearly defined rules and procedures, in accordance with the law, which demonstrated sovereignty. At the same time, customs tariffs have been set which have affected some traditional trade with new pattern and more complex. There are more characters associated with border trade. Products changed according to the needs of the developed world market according to the current social conditions.

## References

- [1] Primary sources at Center of Archives d'Outre-Mer
- [2] Primary sources at Center of Diplomatie at L Courneuve
- [3] Amarawongwichit, "Phongsawadan huamuang monthon isan" (Chronicle of the Northeast), in Prachum Phongsawadan Part 4, Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1963
- [4] Aymonier, Etienne. *Le Cambodge*. Paris: Ernest Leroux. 1904
- [5] Chandler, David. *Cambodia before the French: politics in a tributary kingdom, 1794-1848*. Michigan: University of Michigan, 1973
- [6] Chotmai het khong phuak bathluang farangset ton phandin phrachao ekkathat, khrang krung thonburi lae khrang krung rattanakosin ton ton" (Records of the French Missionaries during the Periods of King Ekkathat,

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on concepts of time throughout history cf. Klein (2009a: 5-38).

- Thonburi and the Early Bangkok), in Prachum Phongsawadan Part 39 (Collected Chronicles)
- [7] Chou Ta-kuan, The Custom of Cambodia, Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1993
- [8] De Lagrèe Dourdart et autres. D'explorations en Indochine effectuée pendant les années 1866,1867,1868, Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1843
- [9] Denes, Alexandra. Recovering Khmer ethnic identity from the Thai national past in ethnography of the localism movement in Surin Province. Ithaca: Cornell University, 2006
- [10] Jit Phumisak, Sangkhom thai lum maenam chaophraya kon samai si-ayutthaya (Thai Society in the Chaophraya River Basin before the Ayutthaya Period, Bangkok: Fah diew kan, 2004
- [11] Mouhot, Henri. Henri Mouhot's Diary. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University. 1966
- [12] Puangthong Pawakapan. War and trade: Siamese interventions in Cambodia, 1767-1851. University of Wollongong, 1995.
- [13] Puangthong Pawakapan. Songkhram Kankha lae chatniyom nai khwamsamphan thai-kampuchea (Warfare and Depopulation of the Trans-Mekong Basin and the Revival of Siam's Economy). Bangkok: Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 2014
- [14] Puangthong Rungswasdisab, Battambang kab polprayot tang setthakit kong Siam yuk ton Rattanakosin (Battambang and economic interest of Siam in the early Rattnakosin) in journal of Thammasat, 19 (3), 1993
- [15] Waraporn Ruangsri, Kharawan lae phokha thangklai : kankokoet ratsamai mai nai phak Nua khong Thai lae dindaen tonnai khong Echia tawan ok Chiang tai, Chiang Mai: Center of Asian studies, 2014