
Transportation System in the Southeast before the French Colonization

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Abstract. Before the French arrived, road traffic in the Southeast was still very backward, mainly on village roads. The road routes formed during the Nguyen Dynasty not only served travel needs, but the connected roads also created favorable conditions for the development of economic, cultural and social activities. However, transportation under the Nguyen Dynasty at the end of the 19th century in Cochinchina in general and the Southeast region in particular was still based on waterways (river and sea). Transporting large tonnage goods is only carried out by river and sea. Roads, mainly village roads, became the main roads for moving from one village to another. In some regions, these roads are built on sections between rice fields. This causes a major obstacle to trade, cultural, diplomatic, security and defense exchanges.

Keywords: transportation system, Southeast, Vietnam, Nguyen Dynasty, French colonial period

Introduction

At the end of the 19th century, the Southeast was the first land to become a French colony, and was also the land that suffered the earliest and most profound consequences of colonialism. By the Nham Tuat treaty signed on June 5, 1862, the three Southeast provinces became "French Cochinchina". The land of Cochinchina became "French land", residents of the three provinces of Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong became "new subjects of Emperor Napoleon". Colonial rule was applied here in all fields of politics, military, economics, society... After completing the invasion and stabilizing the situation, the French colonialists focused on building infrastructure and develop transportation systems to make travel between provinces and cities in the Southeast region more convenient, promoting the central role of urban areas such as Saigon, Vung Tau, Thu Dau Mot, Bien Hoa... contribute to the socio-economic transformation of the Southeast region. However, before the French invaded and turned this place into a colony, Cochinchina had a rather modest transportation system including roads and waterways. The transportation system during this period was still quite backward, only suitable for a self-sufficient feudal economy and society.

Research Methods

Using the method of collecting secondary information to synthesize research works of domestic and foreign scholars on the land of Cochinchina and the Southeast, research articles related to Southeast traffic Nguyen Dynasty period at the end of the 19th century that the author has access to [There are many research projects that have been published that the author has not had the opportunity to mention in this article. The author will introduce it in another article] under the following aspects: perspectives and methods, sources of materials and research objects. Through collected historical sources, the article presents the current situation of the road traffic system during this period. From the research results, we draw general comments and assessments on the road traffic system in the Southeast region before the French colonialists invaded.

Research Content

Road Traffic

Roads during the period in the bibliographies of the Nguyen Dynasty were mainly recorded with the names station road, mandarin road (main road, mandarin road, mandarin road), and thien ly road. Thien ly road (thien ly route; thousand mile road) connects South - North. One of the greatest and most important achievements of the Nguyen Dynasty in road transportation in the 19th century was the completion of the Thien Ly road connecting palaces, towns/provinces along the territory of Vietnam. If calculated along the North - South axis, the starting point on the Thien Ly journey route is Lang Son town, connecting to the final point, Ha Tien land.

Under the Nguyen Dynasty, the Thien Ly Road from Gia Dinh to the capital Hue started from the north of Son Bridge (Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City today) to Binh Giang (Binh Dong Wharf, Cho Lon, Ho Chi Minh City today), the fields are muddy, the roads are not yet open, passengers who want to go to Bien Hoa or go to Bang Bo must take a boat. In 1748, commander Nguyen Phuoc Doan stretched ropes to open this road (today's Xo Viet Nghe Tinh road). When meeting a stream, he built a bridge, and in muddy places, he lined up and built up land. From Can Chi gate to Bat Quai citadel to Binh Dong wharf is 17 miles long. The northern bank is the border of Bien Hoa, where Binh Dong station is located, go north through Chau Thoi mountain to Binh Tien wharf, then pass Sa Giang wharf (Rach Cat) along the porcelain road to Dong Mon to reach Mo Xoai (Ba Ria). On this road, wherever large rivers meet, boats are placed, and the boatmen are also exempt from the epidemic.

In 1808, Le Van Chat was assigned by the royal court to repair the Thien Ly road from Quang Nam to Bien Hoa, under the command of Nguyen Huynh Duc. The section passing Bien Hoa town has stations: Thuan Bien (border of Bien Hoa and Binh Thuan towns), Xich Lam, Mo Xoai and Nha Be. By 1822, it was changed to 5 stations: Thuan Bien, Bien Thuan, Bien Long, Bien Phuoc, Bien Le and Bien Loc. Each station has 20 - 30 station attendants responsible for relaying edicts and official dispatches of the royalty. At that time, the express train from Hue to Gia Dinh took 4-5 days and nights.

Thien Ly route from Saigon to the west was carried out by Governor Le Van Duyet by order of King Gia Long in October of the year of the Pig (1815). Starting from Doai Nguyet gate in the west of Bat Quai citadel, through Tham Luong bridge, through Thi Suu wharf, through Lao Dong lagoon, bordering the porcelain road junction to Khe Lang to Kha Pha land (Cao Mien), until the big river 439 miles long. Where you meet a river, build a bridge, when you meet a swamp, build a land, and when you meet a forest, cut down a tree. The road surface is 6 meters wide (12.72 m), the road is clear for people and horses. From Kha Pha along the river south 194 miles to the post of Lo Yem, from Kha Pha north 49 miles to Che Lang camp used for military defense.

Under the Nguyen Dynasty, the road connecting Dai Nam with Cambodia was the "Porcelain Road" which was the lifeline between Gia Dinh and Nam Vang. On the Porcelain route, delegations of envoys and merchant groups traveled back and forth by buffalo cart, ox cart or packed horse, transporting goods between the two kingdoms. This road once witnessed the Nguyen Dynasty's troops coming to the rescue at the request of the Cambodian court to fight against the Siamese invaders.

When the French invaded the South, the map also clearly stated the name of Su Street. The road passes through Trang Bang, Suoi Cao, Binh Vinh (Ben Vinh?), Bau Don, Truong Mit. Part of the route coincides with provincial road 782 (old provincial road 19) and provincial road 784 (old provincial road 26). In addition, there are many horizontal branch roads connecting Thien Ly road and local traffic networks from one area to another. Some roads cross in the east-west direction, across Tay Ninh town, provincial road 781 (old provincial road

13) through Phuoc Tan border gate, from the town to Ben Keo. Thien Ly Road from Saigon - Gia Dinh to the South was built at the beginning of the middle of the year Canh Tuat (1790). Trinh Hoai Duc wrote about this road: "The main road from Chan Hanh gate through Hoa My bridge to Binh Dong river to Bien Hoa town. Wherever the main road on the right side encounters a curve, string a rope to straighten it, starting from Ton Thuan gate through Kim Chuong pagoda, from Saigon street to Binh An bridge through Tuyen Pagoda mound to Thuan An river. Thu Doan wharf takes you across Hung Hoa river, past Tran Dinh mound and then to Trieu mound. The road is 6 meters wide, with tamanu trees and jackfruit trees planted on both sides, which are trees suitable for this land. Bridges, culverts, boats and wharves are always being repaired, the road is wide and smooth like grinding stone, called Southern Thien Ly Road.

In 1835, Minh Mang built roads in the Cochinchina provinces to use for official reporting, overcoming the previous travel mainly by waterway. From Dinh Tuong citadel, there are 3 other important routes: the road from north of Gia Dinh citadel to Dinh Tuong, 10,800 truong long (from Saigon to Can Giuoc, Can Duoc, Go Cong, Cho Gao to My Tho); The road from the west gate of Dinh Tuong citadel to the border of Vinh Long province is 6,600 meters long (from My Tho along the Tien River to Cai Thia); road from the southeast of Vinh Long citadel to Dinh Tuong border (from Vinh Long to the ferry to Cai Thia).

Thien Ly road from the west gate of Dinh Tuong citadel to the border of Gia Dinh province is 5,600 truong long (about 95 km). Now corresponds to the road from My Tho City along Bao Dinh canal, through Tan Huong, Cai Yen river (Khanh Hau), Tan An town (Long An), Thu Thua town, Ben Luc town (along Ben Luc river to Saigon), Go Den, Dem market, Binh Dien, An Lac, Phu Lam market, Hung Vuong street, Nguyen Trai street and to Ton Thuan gate at the corner of Ly Tu Trong - Nam Ky Khoi Nghia street.

Since the Thien Ly road from Ben Nghe was opened towards the Mekong Delta (1790), markets such as Phu Tho, Tan Kieng, Dien Kien were connected to Binh Dien, Phuoc Tu market (Ben Luc), Cai market. Tai, Thu Thua market, Vung Gu market by road, giving these places the second strength in terms of transportation after waterway. Thien Ly road runs through economic centers and administrative headquarters: Phuoc Tu market is also the headquarters of Tan Binh district and Thuan An district, Cai Tai market is the district headquarters of Tan Binh district, Ky Son market is the district capital. Binh Phuoc district, Vung Gu market later became the capital of Tan An district, before becoming a town.

In addition to the Thien Ly Road, the Nguyen Dynasty kings also paid special attention to restoring and expanding the transportation network to promote reclamation, especially in the Gia Dinh region and the Mekong Delta. At that time, the six-province region of Cochinchina had thousands of kilometers of inter-district, inter-provincial, inter-regional, and inter-regional land roads, connecting the capital Gia Dinh with the eastern provinces of Cochinchina and Central Vietnam (Le Quoc Su, 1994).

Road transport vehicles

The road from Gia Dinh to Phu Xuan (Thien Ly road) was built by the Nguyen Dynasty with a system of station houses. This road route serves popular forms of transportation such as walking, horseback riding, elephant riding... of which mainly walking. Besides walking, the main means of transport on urban roads are rickshaws - vehicles with large round wheels, pulled by oxen or buffalo carts. These vehicles have roofs made of straw to protect from the sun. A pair of oxen can travel about 50km/day and can cross roads that other types of oxen cannot pass. Cows can also be replaced by buffalos, which walk slower, more evenly and with more endurance, or horses (small, pudgy, active and agile with sturdy feet). Besides, the means of transportation are horses, hammocks, palanquins, and stretchers for mandarins with some ox carts and buffalo carts transporting goods and food, while most workers carry loads on foot. The main difficulty on this route is that it has not been able to build many bridges across rivers

and streams, especially during the rainy season [Nguyen Dinh Dau, Some historical issues of Binh Thuan province during the reign of Nguyen Thong (1827-1884)].

Waterway

In Cochinchina, the network of rivers and canals is formed by the Dong Nai River and the Mekong River - the two largest river systems in Vietnam. Dong Nai River in the Southeast region exchanges water with the Mekong River system, forming a continuous river network of this land. Besides the natural river network, there is a network of canals that is of great concern. Both networks combine, forming an intricate and rich water transport system of the land known as the river region.

It can be said that the Vietnamese people have started digging canals and rivers by generations of immigrants since the 17th century, under the Nguyen lords. But for this work to be on a state-level scale, it only took place during the reign of the Nguyen kings. The Vietnamese came to the Southeast region to explore. They encountered and exploited favorable natural river conditions, so the reclamation was quite effective. And to make the river system more effective, they have tried their best to improve, dredge, open ditches, dig canals, and supplement nature's shortcomings. The waterway system includes canals in the Southeast that not only serve as irrigation for agriculture, but also serve as waterways for trade within the region and between localities.

Waterway transportation

Unlike road traffic, waterway traffic in the Southeast operates quite bustling and crowded at the confluence of rivers or estuaries, with boats and boats [Boats in the South include small boats. is a type of dugout canoe carved from a tree trunk or a log, about 3 meters long and wide enough for one person to sit; Bau boat is the largest sized boat, has a large carrying capacity and is often used for long distance transport, including sea travel] is the most effective means of promptly meeting travel and trade needs. Along the river wharves and estuaries of the region, there are always busy merchant boats, boats, vehicles... bringing resources from other localities to here, and from there they spread everywhere, especially in trade with the trading centers. Other commercial centers of Dang Trong such as My Tho, Ha Tien, Phu Xuan,... From the Southeast provinces, boats can go up the Saigon River to the West to Binh Phuoc, Tay Ninh, down the Saigon River to Gia Dinh, Dong Nai, Ba Ria,...

Comments

First, the road system, under the Nguyen Dynasty in the Southeast at that time, there were inter-district, inter-provincial, inter-regional, inter-regional roads, connecting the capital Gia Dinh with the Eastern and Western provinces. Regarding the Thien Ly road connecting North - South, the Nguyen Dynasty restored this road, every few kilometers, a translation station was placed, each station had a station attendant and horses to promptly transmit dispatches and carry them. palanquins or mandarins' furniture. Also from these service stations, due to the needs of the people, many markets, wharves and towns have sprung up. The common and easily recognizable characteristic of the road traffic system is that these roads often run along rivers or coastal areas to facilitate the combination of water and road traffic.

Second, the road system in the Southeast at this stage is mainly village roads that have developed into intra-regional roads. This road system is mainly dirt roads, small and narrow, only suitable for walking and rudimentary vehicles such as carts and horse carts. Especially in the Southeast, where there are many rivers and canals crossing, very few places have bridges, only for pedestrians or horse riders, to serve communication through the station service system connecting province to province other. Even long trips of officials are traveled by boat. Furthermore, roads at this time are not safe for pedestrians because "there may be congestion due to the threat of floods, wild animals and frequent robberies" (Le Huynh Hoa, 2009).

Third, village roads, district roads along with Thien Ly roads combined with the waterway transportation system contributed greatly to economic and political activities during feudal times. This transportation system helped the Nguyen Dynasty kings in managing the country, especially during the turbulent historical period. That is also the road serving travel, exchange and trade.

Fourth, during this period, due to technical limitations, most roads were built with soil. People often build up the road in the middle and dig water canals on both sides or one side of the road. Because they are dirt roads, combined with increasing travel demand and continuous floods every year across the country, the quality of dirt roads is generally low. To reinforce and strengthen the road, people can spread a little crushed stone, gravel, and rubble, then compact it into the road surface. Plant more trees on both sides of the road to prevent erosion due to floods and reduce landslides rock. But the dyke road section - an important traffic and flood control route, is often given careful attention and has its own dyke guardian in charge, always mobilizing workers to build dykes with public funds from the royal court and local contributions.

Fifth, due to the limited development of road traffic, waterway traffic plays a huge role in the lives of people in the Southeast. Its biggest advantage is that it can transport bulky goods and large loads at much higher speeds than by road. Waterway transportation plays a key role in trade and cultural exchange between the lowlands and the uplands, between the Southeast region and domestic regions and regional countries.

Conclusion

In general, the Nguyen Dynasty was conscious in building infrastructure. However, this infrastructure system can only serve the self-sufficient feudal economy of small farmers and serve military and communication functions. Economically, this infrastructure is only suitable for agricultural production (mainly wet rice agriculture) and domestic goods exchange. Therefore, when the French colonialists began exploiting Cochinchina, the first important thing was to invest in building infrastructure, first of all water transportation, to serve the needs of continuing to invade parts of the country remaining part of Cochinchina and exploiting the resources of this colony to serve the main country. From this point on, the road system in this land was expanded, creating an important breakthrough. Road projects are carried out by well-trained French engineers, with huge capital and modern construction methods.

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