

VIETNAM - CHENLA KINGDOM DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP UNDER THE NGUYEN DYNASTY (1807 - 1820)

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Abstract

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the Chenla Kingdom developed as a vital and decisive role in the Nguyen dynasty's southern border defense strategy in the southwestern region of Vietnam. A special defense relationship with the Chenla Kingdom was established and maintained by the Nguyen Kings from Gia Long, all of whom attempted to do so on the basis of the protectorate policy that Vietnam had established on this country during the course of the power interaction with Siam. Vietnam and Chenla defense relationship was viewed as an efficient way to maintain both the peace in Chan Lap and a balance in the Vietnam - Siam relationship. Vietnam is a key player in that relationship, engaging in a variety of initiatives to maintain a peaceful space in both Chan Lap and Vietnam. It is the purpose of this essay to shed light on the defense cooperation between Vietnam and the Chenla Kingdom during the Nguyen Dynasty under Gia Long (1807-1820).

Keywords: Nguyen dynasty, Chenla Kingdom, Siam, defense relations.

Introduction

Historically, Vietnam and Chenla are two neighboring countries, sharing a land border of more than 1,000km. Over the centuries, the people of the two countries have built close ties. The diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Chenla from the beginning to the first half of the nineteenth century were a diversified relationship established in many aspects. Vietnam formed this relationship on the basis of continuing the tradition of peace and friendliness of its predecessors in history; simultaneously developed due to the impacts of regional and international historical contexts. The diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Chenla also took place in different forms and levels, including a period when Vietnam imposed a protectorate policy on Chenla land in a completely different way from the way China did to Vietnam. The profound nature of Vietnam's protectorate policy towards Chenla under the Nguyen dynasty was nothing but the creation of an alliance to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of each country. Therefore, the diplomatic relations at that time were inseparable from the defense relationship between the two countries.

External factors leading to Vietnam - Chenla defense relationship under Gia Long (1807-1820)

The countries of mainland Southeast Asia entered the nineteenth century with the struggle of bitter wars lasting from the previous century. Spread across the territory of countries from Burma, Siam, Chenla, Ai Lao (Laos) to Vietnam, peaceful times were like weak sunlight in the stormy days of war. In that historical context, the diplomatic relations between the three

neighboring countries Vietnam - Chenla - Siam also began to change according to the strength of each country.

Chenla was recognized as a bridge connecting two neighboring countries Vietnam - Siam, with Vietnam to the East and Siam to the West. Chenla had rich lands connected by the flow of the Mekong. Tonlé Sap Lake provides abundant aquatic resources, creating favorable conditions for fishing industry to develop quite well. In addition, Chenla also had a rich source of precious forest products such as sandalwood, nutmeg, antler, ivory, agarwood, etc. The Iron Mountain (Phnom Dek) provided a lot of minerals, of which the most valuable ones are gold and silver (Nguyen Van Luan, 2017). Chenla owned part of the Gulf of Siam (now known as the Gulf of Thailand), the important trading road for Chenla to trade with many other countries independently. The waters of Chenla hold a prime position in controlling the Gulf of Siam. These are geopolitical advantages that not all countries in the region have. Therefore, Chenla quickly became a strategic location for the competition of influence of the two rising nations in the early 19th century, Vietnam and Siam (Trocki, 2009, p. 339).

Vietnam and Siam in feudal times were two neighbors that did not share a land border but shared a close relationship with Chenla. In contrast, Chenla was a feudal country with close neighborly relations with both Vietnam and Siam. In the position and state of being sandwiched between Siam and Vietnam, Chenla became a bridge in the neighborly relationship following the process of "Eastward advance" of Siam and "Westward advance" of Vietnam. The relationship between Vietnam - Chenla - Siam is both delicate and complicated.

For these reasons, both Vietnam and Siam considered the influence of Chenla on political and diplomatic issues to have a direct impact on the defense policy of the two countries. Therefore, the two sides wanted to use Chenla as a "shield" to protect the border in power disputes with mainland Southeast Asian countries. These factors have created an extremely complicated power interaction situation between the three countries of Vietnam - Chenla - Siam.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Vietnam - Chenla - Siam triangle relationship took place in an uncertain manner with great turbulence affecting the forces among the three countries. The foundation of this relationship was established in the context that Vietnam had unified and become stronger, having important influences and dominating the political life of a part of the Chenla ruling class. Meanwhile, Chenla was weakened, and was no longer able to self-control and in danger of being invaded at any time. The Princes were not capable of leading the country nor were they able to defend their own thrones. The rotten dynastic dynasties, the successive wars for power, and the attacks from the outside made Chenla completely lose its ability to defend itself, so it accepted the "protectorate" of Siam and Vietnam. By contrast, the kingdom of Siam entered the flourishing period of feudalism and expressed its ambition to expand outward by invasion operations into three main targets, namely Chenla, Ai Lao and Viet Nam. All forced Vietnam to establish a special relationship with Chenla to turn this land into a buffer zone to protect the independence and self-reliance in the South of the country.

In that context, Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty took important military steps to strengthen the southern border as well as increase diplomacy to increase influence over Chenla. Therefore, Chenla became an important factor, a strategic link in the defense of territorial integrity against the "Eastward" ambition of the Siamese. This is a vital condition for the development of Vietnam.

The relationship between Vietnam - Chenla - Siam in the early 19th century was rooted

in a series of important events in the past. From 1777, the fall of the Dang Trong government ruled by Nguyen Lords led to the change in the forces of Vietnam - Chenla - Siam. Vietnam was no longer able to maintain its influence on Chenla land. Therefore, from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, the Bangkok government controlled and established a protectorate in Chenla. The Chenla Kings during this period were all consecrated in Bangkok. Under the reign of King Siam Rama I (1736-1809), Chenla king Ang Eng (1772-1796) had to give two provinces namely Battambang and Siem Reap to Siam.

The diplomatic relationship between Vietnam - Chenla - Siam at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a direct result of military and political developments in Vietnam, Chenla and Siam during the late eighteenth century. At this time, the Tay Son uprising was successively victorious, and the Nguyen lord's government was annihilated. In early 1775, Lord Nguyen Phuc Thuan and his family crossed the sea to Gia Dinh. After Nguyen Lu's attack at Gia Dinh, the Nguyen army was defeated. Nguyen Phuc Thuan and Nguyen Phuc Duong were both killed. Nguyen Anh escaped, then relied on the landlord class in Gia Dinh to continue fighting.

Seizing the opportunity, in October 1781, Siam invaded Chenla under the orders of King Taksin. Two generals Chao Phraya Chakri and his brother Surasi controlled the troops to pull into the land of Ang Eng, which was under the protectorate of Lord Nguyen. In January 1782, Nguyen Anh immediately commanded Nguyen Huu Thuy to bring 3,000 troops to Chenla to rescue. In Chenla, the General of Siam made peace with Vietnamese General and then brought his troops back to cause a coup in the Taksin dynasty. At the same time, Nguyen Hue brought his army to the south to destroy the Nguyen army. After Nguyen Anh fled to Hau Giang, the Tay Son army recaptured the South and built a friendly relationship with Chenla with the intention of allying with them for fighting against Nguyen Anh. Chenla divided his army to catch Nguyen Anh's Siam team and almost caught Nguyen Anh. Nguyen Anh escaped to Phu Quoc Island. While bringing troops in to catch Nguyen Anh, Nguyen Hue also sent the army to replace Nguyen Anh's mandarins to protect Chenla. (Le Thi My Trinh, 2009, p.147)

In 1783, in the critical situation that Java invaded Chenla, Chenla sought reinforcements from Tay Son. In December 1783, Tay Son sent the General Truong Van Da with troops to drive away the Javanese and liberate Chenla. However, before that, when Chenla was in turmoil and King Ang Eng ran to Siam, King of Siam appointed Chao Phraya Abhaya Bhubet to be the Regent to rule Chenla (National History of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.220). When the Tay Son army arrived, Chao Phraya Abhaya Bhubet, who had been recognized by Siam as the Regent here before, rushed over to ask for help. Tay Son army confronted Siam army. Truong Van Da heard that Siam's army would advance along the Laotian route to beat Quy Nhon, so he decided to declare war. Siam also demanded that Tay Son return the enemies of Siam that Tay Son held. Consequently, the Tay Son – Siam war broke out. Tay Son was surrounded by Siam, the two sides fought several times. Finally, Truong Van Da withdrew from Phnom Penh on January 6 1784 (Ta Chi Dai Truong, 2013, p.120). The right to proclaim protectorate over Chenla still belonged to Siam.

Since recapturing Gia Dinh, Nguyen Anh sent envoys to Siam many times so that King Ang Eng could return home to be the king of Chenla. In February 1794, the Siamese took Ang Eng home and withdrew Chao Phraya Abhaya Bhubet to keep Battambang. King Ang Eng sent envoy to express his gratitude to Nguyen Anh. In November 1797, King Ang Eng died, his son Ang Chan II (1791-1835) succeeded to the throne (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.361). King of Siam sent an emissary to ennobles, and therefore Ang Chan II had to

accept submission to King of Siam. In 1807, Ang Chan II decided to give up his submission to Siam, and sent his servant to ask for submission to Vietnam, following the custom of tribute every three years (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.707). Since then, Vietnam began the process of having a strong diplomatic and defense relationship with Chenla.

From 1807 to 1811, King Rama II constantly exerted pressure on Chenla to discharge the duties of King Ang Chan II. However, with the help of Vietnam military, Chenla could eliminate the danger, protect the border, and avoid wars with Siam. Ang Chan II was getting closer and closer to Vietnam and separate from Siam.

As for Ang Snguon (Ang Chan II's younger brother), in 1811, after being unable to be the Second King of Chenla, he fled to Pursat and continued to join forces with Siam to cause the 1811-1812 Rebellion in Chenla to fight against Ang Chan II. This rebellion made Chenla increasingly weak, Ang Chan II had to flee to Gia Dinh and ask for help from the Nguyen Dynasty. The new governor of Gia Dinh citadel at that time was Nguyen Van Nhan, who brought this matter to the court. King Gia Long issued an imperial edict:

Your brothers don't get along, which cause a big concern among citizens. Now that the king has relied on me, I will have a solution to settle the situation. When there is no concern, your return to your country will be feasible. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.835).

At the same time, King Gia Long sent a letter to blame Siam for causing troubles. King Siam sent the envoy to meet and ask for reconciliation. Gia Long blamed:

Your country raised an army for no reason and forced Ang Chan to leave, and now you use an excuse to reconcile? Chenla will forever be my servant, and therefore I will take the responsibility. Go and tell your King that Ang Chan II has to return. If your King stops lying to me and causing trouble for Ang Chan, good relationship with neighbors and other small countries will be maintained. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.840).

It appears that Gia Long's reprimand implicitly threatened Siam and implied that Chenla belonged to Vietnam. The following year, King of Siam sent the emissary to deliver a message to him, saying:

Previously, the Ang Chan II brothers did not get along with each other, preparing their weapons to fight, harming the flesh and blood grace of the two great countries, I advised them make peace with each other. Unexpectedly, Ang Chan II was skeptical and brought his family away. The Siamese army sealed the treasure, repaired the ramparts to wait for their return without any other intentions. Now, when Ang Chan II ran to Gia Dinh to ask for help from your Majesty to handle the situation, King Siam did not dare to disobey orders. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.846).

In 1813, under the order of King Gia Long, Le Van Duyet and Ngo Nhan Tinh brought 13,000 sailors to Siam to take Ang Chan II home. At the same time, in order for Ang Chan II to wholeheartedly trust Vietnam and know why Siam had to escort him back, Gia Long persuaded Ang Chan II that:

Bringing the King back was not the intention of King Siam. The reason why Siamese had to escort you is to avoid conflicts later. If the Siamese are distrustful and cause strife, it's their fault. I have considered everything carefully, please don't get me wrong. (National History

of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.846).

Ang Chan II returned to Longvek citadel. Although Siam did not dare to resist, it still kept its troops in Battambang, saying that the land was given to the Ang Chan II children, but mainly waiting for the opportunity to defeat the Vietnamese army. Gia Long wrote a letter to blame:

Siam King originally wanted Ang Chan II and Ang Snguon to solve the feud for their brotherhood. Now that Ang Chan II has returned to the country but Siam has not disarmed, what is the reason? If it is for saving people or helping neighbors, it would be a great thing. If you leave resentment behind, wouldn't it be wrong to put up your troops? Let alone Ang Snguon betrayed Ang Chan II to keep the country, the guilt is unforgiveable. I and Siam King ignored because he was young and immature. Now that Ang Chan II is grateful to Siam King for mercy, did Ang Snguon not think of the country's forgiveness but still clinging to such a path? Think about it, if every enemy wants to kill him, in which country can he hide? (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.851).

The strong words in the letter along with the prestige of the Vietnamese army made the Siamese army not dare to move, so they withdrew.

In 1814, after completing his mission, Le Van Duyet was commanded to withdraw his troops to Gia Dinh. Nguyen Van Thoai was ordered to stay with 1,000 troops to keep Phnom Penh and protect Chenla. In September 1814, King Gia Long appointed Nguyen Van Thoai the protector of Cambodia, and Tran Cong Dan as a military officer. Nguyen Van Thuy and Tran Cong Dan were sometimes too arbitrary, oppressing Ang Chan II, which made the Chenla people suspicious. Therefore, King Gia Long asked Nguyen Van Thoai not to interfere with the national issues of Chenla country. Only petition and official documents should be carefully reviewed before sending (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 883). This proves that Vietnam's protectorate of Chenla did not go beyond the main purpose of supporting military and national defense, helping to stabilize the situation on the border, and maintaining internal peace for Chenla. Ang Chan II relied solely on Vietnam, so he did not want to establish relations with Siam. Siam wanted to show its power many times, sending envoys to Vietnam to request Ang Chan II to respond:

Vietnamese government treated Chenla very well, and I would be really grateful. But Ang Chan II was originally under submission to Siam, if Ang Chan II did not want to build relation with Siam, Siam would not sent back Ang Snguon. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.885).

Also in 1814, Siam sent more troops with 300 soldiers and 50 boats to Battambang. Gia Long believed that Vietnam and Siam had a friendly relationship, the two countries were in peace so he did not want to raise the turbulence and make war. He issued a decree for Ang Chan II:

It's been a long time since your country has to show submission to Siam. Now, although the King does not personally visit, you should send the envoy to pay a visit like before. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.992).

After receiving the letter, Ang Chan II did not dare to disobey orders and immediately sent envoy to Siam to resume the relationship between the two countries (Le Thi My Trinh, 2009, pp.150 - 151).

Thus, by 1813, with the rebalancing of forces in the diplomatic relations between Vietnam - Chenla - Siam, as well as complicated developments in Chenla, the Nguyen Dynasty implemented a protectorate policy directly in Chenla in order to turn Chenla into a "fence" for Gia Dinh, contributing to maintaining the independence and territorial integrity of the Southern Vietnam.

During the protectorate, Vietnam always tried to minimize interference in Chenla's internal affairs. The Nguyen Dynasty always told the protectors to let King Chenla handle the affairs of his country. In 1817, Ang Chan II brought the corruption of Chen Lap's servant (Cao La Ham Bien) to the court and asked Vietnam for advice. Gia Long said:

This is the internal affair of your country, there is an official order of Chenla. Your King does not need to ask for permission, just refers to the law of your country. (National History of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp.943 - 944).

At that time, under great pressure from Vietnam and Siam, Chenla was forced to submit to both countries at the same time. This is consistent with the power balance of the three countries in the situation that Western forces begin to infiltrate and strongly threaten the independence of Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, Chenla and Siam. From here ended the period of Vietnam's protectorate of Chenla, but the imprints on defense relations between Vietnam and Chenla in the period 1807-1867 are undeniable.

The foundation and development of the defense relations between Vietnam and Chenla under Gia Long (1807-1820)

Since the Nguyen Dynasty was established in 1802, the issue of border protection was paid special attention by the Nguyen kings. On the southwestern border, where it borders Chenla and Siam, the defense was carefully planned. Diplomatic work was considered a means for the Nguyen Dynasty to exert external influence to strengthen the national defense. Among the factors that directly affected the defense issue in the southwest of the country, Chenla was a very important external factor. This kingdom was not only identified by the Nguyen kings as "fence" but also as a strategic location for direct interactions between Vietnam and Siam in an effort to establish and maintain a lasting influence over Chenla. The Nguyen Dynasty always acknowledged the important role of Chenla in the defense of the Southwest border.

Because of the important role of Chenla in defense policy on the southwestern border, the Nguyen Dynasty had continuously conducted activities to promote the defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla under King Gia Long (1807-1820). The reign of King Gia Long was considered to be the beginning of the defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla under the Nguyen Dynasty with a lot of important activities. From 1806, King Chenla Ang Chan II (1791-1835) changed his direction from serving Siam to serving Vietnam.

In September 1807, Chenla King, Ang Chan II, sent his servant to ask for enthronement and submission to King Nguyen. Gia Long approved and issued the seal "King of Cambodia" to prepare for the enthronement. According to the Kham Dinh Dai Nam, "The seal is made of gilded silver, with a knob in the shape of a lion, and a bronze box containing the red seal ink (The Nguyen Dynasty's Cabinet, 1993, p. 542). This event was similarly recorded by the Chenla historian: "Vietnam recognized the new King when Cambodia accepted to be a vassal of Vietnam, paying tribute once every three years" (Le Huong, 1970, p.97).

The Nguyen Dynasty had the "Silver-gilded seal with a camel-shaped knob" cast, and at the same time asked the Ministry of Rites prepare the rituals for the enthronement. (National

History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.707)

This was an important diplomatic event, so the Nguyen dynasty informed Chenla of the time when Vietnamese envoys came to Chenla to prepare in advance. The seal "King of Cambodia" was brought by the Vietnamese embassy to Chenla and proclaimed King Chenla at Longvek citadel. This event was not merely a diplomatic event of the Nguyen Dynasty to the King of Chenla, but officially opened the defense relationship between the two countries in a mutual relationship to balance forces with the kingdom of Siam.

After this event, King Gia Long sent two armies to stay on duty in Chenla, the An Bo team led by Hoang Van Linh and the Cuong Bo team led by Tran Quang Luong to capture the situation in time and inform the command center in Gia Dinh (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.738). Any issues related to the military and defense of Chenla, the king of this country informed and consulted the Hue Royal Court.

In 1810, three younger brothers of Ang Chan II, Ang Snguon Ang Em, Ang Duong returned from Siam. Because they wanted to fight for power with Ang Chan II, they went to Siam for help. Siam forced Ang Chan II to divide the land among the brothers. At the same time, King Rama II also forced Ang Chan II to send 10,000 troops to Siam, of which, 3,000 troops went ahead to Bangkok to wait for orders to fight with the Burmese army in Mueang Thalang. Ang Chan II suspected Kralahom Moeung of treason, colluded with Siam, so he killed him and hurriedly sent the envoy Ma A Man Si to deliver a letter to Gia Dinh asking for help:

Last year, I sent Ang Snguon, Ang Em, Ang Duong, and Kralahom Moeung and Chakrei Pen to Siam, now Siam has ordered Uat Vo Thi to bring them back, causing division in Chenla land for Ang Snguon to be the second king, Ang Duong to be the third king; asked for ten thousand soldiers to fight Burma. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.779).

When the envoy of Chenla arrived, King Gia Long said: "Your country is a small country but dare to cause a strife with Siam. If Siam brings troops to fight, how can your country fight against?". The envoy said: "My country would like to bring all the small troops to fight the Siamese army. If it is not enough, then please ask for the majesty of the court" (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.780).

This shows that Ang Chan II always wished to find support in Vietnam to fight Siam. Therefore, what King Siam did was not difficult to understand. Siam wanted to retaliate for the fact that Ang Chan II abandoned his submission and turned to Vietnam. Moreover, Siam helped Ang Snguon, Ang Duong with the aim of finding pro-Siam factions, reducing Vietnam's influence on Chenla; at the same time looking for opportunities to interfere deeply in Chenla's internal affairs.

Before Ang Chan II's disobedience to Rama II, as well as Chenla's attitude of falling completely towards Vietnam, there was a great discord between these two countries. In that confrontation, Chenla proved to be weak compared to Siam, so he needed military help from Vietnam. In History of Cambodia, David Chandler shows the same thing:

After 1810 King Chan and his advisers were swept up into a game of power politics that they had little chance to change and no opportunity to win.... In Vietnamese terms, Cambodia was a fence, a buffer state, To the Thai, the Cambodians were fellow Buddhist children basking in a fund of Chakri merit who could provide cardamom for the court and

manpower for Chakri wars. The Thai demanded service and friendship, but they were usually unable, given the way they organized their armies and the distance between Bangkok and Phnom Penh, to provide protection. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, provided protection of a sort. (Chandler, 2007, p. 138)

Faced with the risk that Siam could attack Chenla at any time, King Gia Long sent Nguyen Van Nhan to Phnom Penh, strengthening border patrol to regularly monitor Siam's every action. Dai Nam Thuc Luc records:

(Gia Long) sent Van Phong to patrol the border to help. He should arrange 15 seagoing boats, 30 battleships, more than 2,000 soldiers, divided into three groups, sending Tri to lead the forward, Phong to lead the middle, and to lead the rear, to go straight to Tan Chau to guard. Also, he sent Dinh Tuong, Bui Duc Man, and the military governor, Nguyen Van Ton Quan, to lead the troops of the two provinces of Tra Vinh and Man Thit to follow. If Chenla is in danger, they immediately move to La Bich to help. The Siamese knew that our army would come first and would not dare to do anything, Chenla could keep it unscathed. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp.799-800)

Nguyen Van Nhan brought troops to Longvek and told the people that: "Recently because King of Chenla was newly crowned, there was discord in the country, the court sent a general to protect" (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.804).

Siam General Chao Phraya Yommaraj Noi saw that the Nguyen army had strengthened their defenses, so they were stationed in Battambang and did not dare to move. The balance was established, the national security of Chenla against the threat from Siam was eliminated. In 1811, Chao Phraya Yommaraj Noi sent a letter to Ang Chan II saying, "In the past, because of the invasion of Myanmar, I asked for aid. Now, Myanmar has retired, so we stopped asking for troops" (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.805). Seeing that Siam no longer had a harsh attitude and wanted to show King Siam that the purpose of Vietnam bringing troops to Chenla was to rescue when there was a crisis, King Gia Long sent a letter to rebuke King Siam (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.812).

King Siam received the letter, saw that the skillful words could not be refute, secretly withdrew his army. Gia Long saw that the matter had been resolved well, he ordered Nguyen Van Nhan to withdraw his troops to Gia Dinh to complete the strategic mission of Phnom Penh. Ang Chan II used the excuse that the country was just at peace, there was still instability, and asked the military to stay and protect. King Gia Long then sent Nguyen Van Ton to bring 1,000 soldiers of Uy Vien garrison to station themselves there (Truong Thi Yen, 2017, p. 451). After that, King Siam sent an envoy Phi Nha Phi Nhat to Vietnam to offer gifts and requested Vietnam to tell King Chenla to go to Siam to attend the funeral of the Rama I. King Gia Long considered this unreasonable to refuse (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.810). King Gia Long told Ang Chan II:

Your country is still weak, so you can't compete with the Siamese. Now the country of Siam has a funeral for the Rama I, you had better send envoy to the funeral ceremony, to show the filial piety. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.811).

The content of the letter shows that King Gia Long, though tough in Siam's use of aggression, also clearly shows peace; especially always wanted to reconcile the relationship between Siam and Chenla.

In 1811, due to Siam's unsuccessful help to win the throne with Ang Chan II, Ang Snguon escaped to Pursat with many escaped criminals of Chenla, repaired their weapons for self-defense and asked for three lands including Krakor, Khlong, Kray for living. After that, Ang Snguon asked Siam for help. King Rama II sent General Chao Phraya Yommaraj Noi stationed in Battambang to wait for orders to attack Chenla. Ang Chan II saw that the situation was critical, so he sent letter telling the situation urgently to Gia Dinh citadel. Governor Nguyen Van Nhan brought the matter up. King Gia Long sent Nguyen Van Thuy to bring troops to Longvek to aid. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp. 829, 830)

In March 1812, the war between Siam and Chenla began to become tense. Siam's general Chao Phraya Yommaraj Noi divided his army into two ways and headed straight to Longvek palace under the guidance of Ang Snguon (Khin Sok, 1991, p. 75; A. LecLère, 1914, p. 437). Ang Em and Ang Duong both ran to the Siamese. Ang Chan II left Longvek citadel and ran back to Phnom Penh and was taken by Nguyen Van Thuy to Gia Dinh. Nguyen Van Thuy was ordered to send troops to Lvea Aemto help the Chenla people move inland. Ang Chan II was forced to write a letter to the Nguyen to ask for reinforcements to fight Siam and Gia Long agreed. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp. 834, 835).

Before the support of the Nguyen army for Chenla, the Siam army temporarily stopped fighting to review the situation to avoid confrontation with the Nguyen army. Moreover, at this time Siam's army was also at war with Myanmar (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 839). In early 1813, King Rama II sent an envoy, Chau Phraya Maha Animat, to Gia Dinh citadel to present his credentials and went to Hue to pay homage to King Gia Long with the intention of finding a political solution for Chenla.

In March 1813, King Gia Long ordered Le Van Duyet and Ngo Nhan Tinh to bring more than 13,000 marines to take Ang Chan II home, accompanied by the Siamese emissary, Chau Phraya Maha Animat. After Ang Chan II returned to Longvek citadel, the Nguyen army found Longvek small and difficult to resist if Siam troops attacked, so General Le Van Duyet proposed to repair Phnom Penh citadel to bring Ang Chan II home:

If Siam wanted to get Chenla, they had to use Ang Snguon, but if we wanted to protect Gia Dinh, we would have to use Ang Chan II... Now, when our troops are stationed for a long time, it would be a waste. If we returned, Ang Chan II would not be protected. The citadel of Longvek is narrow, not enough to hold. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.861).

At the same time, Le Van Duyet also asked to build Lvea Aem as a reserve for weapons and food. Realizing that these things were very beneficial to the defense of the two countries, helping Chenla to defend was also helping himself, King Gia Long ordered Le Van Duyet to command the construction of Phnom Penh citadel, Lvea Aem citadel and An Bien fortress to help Chenla stop the enemy.

In 1814, after the work was completed, Le Van Duyet withdrew his army to Gia Dinh, leaving only more than 1,000 troops commanded by Nguyen Van Thuy to support the defense of Ang Chan II and guard the Siam army. Simultaneously, King Gia Long also sent a letter pressuring the Siamese army to withdraw to Battambang (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp. 860, 861).

In addition, in order to strengthen defense communication and timely information between Vietnam and Chenla, Vietnam had cooperated with Chenla to build communication

stations from Chenla to the Vietnamese border, including station from Cam Ba River to Xi Khe, Quang Hoa, station from Trang Tan to Thach Yen, station from Lo Yem citadel to Che Lang. Each station arranged 50 station attendants to exchange information between the two countries. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 860)

With the protection and help of Vietnam, peace in Chenla was basically reestablished until the end of King Gia Long (1820). As the ambassador of Chenla once stated that: "Our country can keep the land and the people safe, all thanks to the grace of the royal court (Nguyen dynasty) to protect". (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 824)

In addition to coordinately construct military works on Chenla land, the people of Vietnam and Chenla under Gia Long - Ang Chan II also jointly built a number of strongholds and excavated water works to serve the nations at the border of the two countries. In 1815, the Nguyen Dynasty built Chau Doc fortress with the purpose of supporting Ha Tien to support Phnom Penh when there was a problem. King Gia Long mobilized 5,000 Vietnamese militiamen and sent a letter requesting King Chenla to send 2,000 people to help. By 1817, Chau Doc Fort was built and completed. This is considered a key military base for the defense of the southwestern border, creating a continuous defense position with Chenla. (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp. 917, 941)

The typical waterworks serving important national defense work on the Vietnam - Chenla border area with the cooperation of the military and people of the two countries is Vinh Te canal. This waterworks was started digging at the end of 1819, under Gia Long dynasty and lasted until 1824 under Minh Mang dynasty. To complete this work, the Nguyen Dynasty mobilized a total of more than 90,000 militiamen, of which more than 30,000 people were sent to help by the Chenla militia (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 997; National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, pp. 259, 260, 331, 335). Vinh Te Canal acts as a military line capable of inter-defensive between Gia Dinh and Phnom Penh in the event of a war with Siam. In addition to military purposes, this project also creates a waterway to promote border trade between the two peoples.

Some comments on the defense relationship of Vietnam - Chenla under Gia Long (1807-1820)

The defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla during the Nguyen Dynasty's implementation of the protectorate policy of Chenla in the period 1807-1820 had a strong impact on the balance of forces in the power interaction Vietnam - Chenla - Siam. This complicated triangle relationship was sometimes mellow, sometimes tense, leading to wars for many years in lands of Chenla and Vietnam. In those wars, Siam's army with ambitions of influence and territory was always the first aggressor in the role of an invader. Chenla sometimes cooperated with Vietnam against Siam, sometimes with Siam against Vietnam for the purpose of survival. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese army with the righteousness in protecting national independence and territorial integrity always won in these wars.

During the formation and development of defense relations between Vietnam and Chenla, Vietnam has always adhered to the principle of establishing a peaceful space for co-existence. But when conflicts become irreconcilable, leading to war, they resolutely fought to the end to protect the country and people, firmly preserve national independence, and maintain the Chenla "fence" in order to create a forward base for the southwestern border region in the face of the invasion.

A prominent feature in the defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla is

Vietnam's military presence in Chenla land. If today, within the framework of international law, it is a rare phenomenon for one country to station troops on another country. But from the middle of the nineteenth century backwards, this was a common phenomenon which shows the complexity of relations between feudal countries.

The fact that King Gia Long allowed the Nguyen army to keep Chenla was recognized for many reasons. First, whenever the country was in danger of being threatened and attacked by Siam, King Chenla Ang Chan II would send letters asking for help and protection from the Nguyen army as in 1811, 1812, 1814 (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 140). But when the situation of Chenla stabilized, the Nguyen dynasty all withdrew their troops. In March 1811, King Gia Long issued an edict to King Chenla saying: "Now the country of Chenla is in peace, there is no need for the troops to stay. If there is urgent need to send troops, it is not too late" (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 813). This has shown the goodwill to try not to interfere deeply in the internal affairs of Chenla of Vietnam.

The second thing is the threat and constant pressure from the Siam army outside the border. The Siamese army always cherished the ambition to capture and re-establish the protectorate of Chenla, and at the same time were always in a position to attack from the Battambang border. Moreover, within the ruling class of Chenla, the forces opposing King Ang Chan such as Ang Snguon, Ang Em, Ang Duong always relied on Siam's forces to revolt, making the situation of Chenla always unstable, which was an opportunity for Siam to break into Chenla. Therefore, the Nguyen dynasty must have a strong army to help Ang Chan II stabilize the country and prevent the Siamese army to push the war far away. The Nguyen Dynasty once affirmed: "Chenla country belongs to our country (Vietnam), eternally devoted. Now because the country is weak, the court sent a protective officer, it is a goodwill. But placing the protectorate is to keep that country alive, not to govern it." (National History of the Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 883)

The defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla is an important part of the Nguyen army's struggle against invaders to protect the Fatherland and the Vietnamese people. It is a sacred cause that has a strong impact and is closely related to the protectorate policy on Chenla land. In the defense and fight on the southwestern border front of the Nguyen army and people, they fully demonstrated the patriotic tradition of fiercely fighting to protect the country and the rivers against invading foreign forces. At the same time, it also shows the consistency in the national border protection policies of the Nguyen dynasty in the policy of creating a "fence" on the southwestern border of the country.

The Nguyen Dynasty's policy of "protectorate" of Chenla strongly influenced the defense relationship between the two countries. At the same time, this relationship has a strong impact on the "Push to the east" policy of the Siamese. Therefore, the confrontation situation between Vietnam - Siam is inevitable. The two wars between Vietnam and Siam clearly demonstrated the great influence of defense relations between Vietnam and Chenla on the maintenance of peace, independence and territorial integrity of Vietnam and Chenla during this period.

The development of defense relations between Vietnam and Chenla has left many important achievements, effectively serving the national defense of Vietnam and Chenla. For Chenla, the defense promotion of the Nguyen Dynasty for Chenla helped the kingdom build and strengthen strongholds, military facilities, army force as well as learn many strategies from the Nguyen Dynasty's military. In addition, the greatest achievement that Chenla and Vietnam enjoyed together was a space of basic peace and stability established and maintained for most

of the time from 1807 until the French colonialists had invasion of the two countries.

Conclusions

The defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla strongly influenced the diplomatic relations between the two countries under King Gia Long (1807-1820). This relationship was strongly built and developed under the reign of King Gia Long, Minh Mang and Thieu Tri under the Nguyen Dynasty - Vietnam, with the position of a capable country, has continuously donated human and material resources to Chenla through protectorate policies to help Chenla stand firm against foreign invasion and internal rebellion from Siam and other domestic opposition. In the opposite direction, Chenla, in a state of weakness in many aspects, was not strong enough to stand up to two powerful neighbors, Vietnam and Siam, so it had to depend on Vietnam and Siam in each historical period.

The defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla has a completely different nature from the defense relationship between Siam and Chenla. This difference is reflected in the fact that Vietnam established close defense relations with Chenla for the ultimate purpose of self-defense. Vietnam supported Chenla and strengthened its defense to protect this country from wars with Siam. This means that the Vietnam - Chenla border will be safe. Only in this way can Vietnam's independence, peace and territorial integrity be maintained. Meanwhile, history has shown that the defense relationship of Siam – Chenla takes place in the direction of completely control. For Siam, the successful invasion of Chenla was considered a prerequisite for them to establish a military springboard, a forward base in the invasion of Southern Vietnam. From that, it can be affirmed that the defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla under the Nguyen dynasty made an important contribution to the defense of the country and the people of both countries under King Gia Long.

In general, defense relations between Vietnam and Chenla in the first half of the 19th century were established and maintained continuously towards peace and stability of the two countries. In the process of that relationship, Vietnam is an active factor, deciding to create a strategic balance with Siam in the territorial disputes in Chenla land. Meanwhile, the defense of Chenla depends almost entirely on Vietnam. To survive the military challenges coming from Siam, Chenla always sought support and help from the defense relationship with Vietnam (Chandler, 2007, p. 141). However, any diplomatic relationship has positive and negative points to constantly improve to move forward. The defense relationship between Vietnam and Chenla cannot stand aside from that rule. But from the ancient twist of history, each country will find its own valuable lessons on the path of national existence and development.

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