

Agricultural Economic Activities in the Mekong Delta in the First Half of the 19th Century



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ABSTRACT: Agricultural economics is a matter of special significance for Vietnam because it is not only the main economic activity of the country but also the key of Vietnamese politics over the history. So, an overview of agricultural economic activities in Vietnam in general and in the Mekong River Delta in particular in the first half of the 19th century through the methods of exploitation and verification is required from the sources of ancient documents and records of the Nguyen Dynasty have scientific significance and profound practical value. The research results will contribute to the re-enactment of the agricultural economic picture of the Mekong Delta with specific features and at the same time contribute to clarifying the socio-economic situation of this land in the historical process nation. On that basis, the research content also summarizes practical lessons is to serve the research and solve the problem of agricultural economic management in accordance with the regional socio-economic development orientation current plain.

KEYWORDS: agricultural economy, Mekong Delta, agriculture, Nguyen Dynasty, the first half of the 19th century.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is inherently an agricultural country, so the issue of land, agriculture and rural areas has always been particularly important for economic development and social stability over each period of the nation's history. The existence of each state in the nation's history is always associated with the settlement of land problems, agricultural development and rural life construction as modernized by society itself. Therefore, historical research in general and the study of agricultural, rural and farmer issues in history always brings many valuable lessons useful for today's socio-economic development. Besides, the Mekong Delta not only has distinct characteristics of land ownership, but also contains many useful values in terms of farming, production and agricultural economic activities formed in history. Because this is the last land to be reclaimed during the reclamation process in the South, it is entitled to special policies of the contemporary state and this is the basis for planning land management policies agriculture and rural areas for the next development stage. In particular, in the first half of the nineteenth century, production and agricultural economic development in the region were strongly influenced by the management policy of the Nguyen Dynasty. So, the study of agricultural production and economic activities in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century will contribute to a clear picture of the agricultural production of the southern part of Vietnam in the history of the past, while at the same time clarifying the situation of agricultural economic development along with the impact on the society of this land in the process of national history. On the basis of historical research, practical historical lessons will be drawn to serve the research and solve the problem of agricultural production management and strategies to promote agricultural economic development in accordance with the current socio-economic development orientation for the Mekong Delta region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The agricultural economy of the Mekong Delta has been approached by many Vietnamese and international researchers. In-depth research works with high scientific value, referring to many aspects not only in agricultural economic activities but also around related issues such as land ownership, government policies, etc.

A study related to land issues, agricultural policy under the Nguyen dynasty is Understanding Vietnam's land regime in the first half of the 19th century by Vu Huy Phuc (1979). This study reflects the nature of land policy, agricultural policy of the Nguyen Dynasty, the impact and consequences of land policy on historical development requirements as well as on material life and meaning the class struggle of the Vietnamese peasantry.

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In the study of land in the South, Nguyen Dinh Dau's studies include: Public fieldwork in Cochinchina (1992), Research on geographical records of Nguyen dynasties - Ha Tien province (Kien Giang, Minh Hai) (1994), Summary of research on the Southern province of Nam Ky (1994)... which was compiled very elaborately and relatively completely on the land ownership situation of the South in 1836. Land ownership, each owner's name, from commune to village, from district to district, from district to province and from district to province have reflected a wide range of documents new research directions on issues: the process of reclaiming land and setting up hamlets and land use, farming methods and agricultural production in the ancient South; agricultural economic history; ownership and ownership regime land in the South... With a new approach and interpretation, the results of these studies have pointed out many contents that belong to or are directly related to the agricultural economic situation in the South in the first half of the 19th century.

Huynh Lua et al., published *History of the South of Vietnam Land Exploration* (1987), which systematically outlined the process of reclaiming Southern land from the second half of the 17th century to 1945. The authors presented it carefully the policies to promote reclamation work in the South in general and in the border areas in particular of the Nguyen Dynasty in the first half of the 19th century. The research work has contributed to providing useful information for the research content of the topic from an in-depth perspective.

Bui Thi Tan (2013), with her research on the Nguyen Dynasty and the reclamation and establishment of hamlets in the South, pointed out the efforts of the Nguyen Dynasty in implementing the policy of reclaiming and establishing villages in the South by various measures contribute to the process of expanding the territory, establishing villages, creating strong changes to farming, production and agricultural economic exchange in the South.

Tran Duc Cuong (2014) with his study on the history of formation and development of the Southern region (from AD to 1945) presented about the process of exploring, establishing sovereignty, building and developing the Southern land region through historical periods. It deals with agro-economic issues related to this land, which are important bases to help research on land issues in the Mekong Delta become more authentic, thereby contributing to asserting sovereignty of the Nguyen Dynasty for this land.

In addition, a number of articles published in specialized journals by Bui Hoang Tan (2015) with the topic of research on Long Ho Dinh and the role of economic connection in the Mekong Delta under the Nguyen Lords were published by Science Journal of Can Tho University, No. 41; Bui Hoang Tan (2017) in a study on the situation of ownership of public land in Ha Chau district, Ha Tien province through the study of geographical records in the 17th Minh Mang Dynasty (1836) were published by Journal of Science and Technology - Thai Nguyen University, 15 (175); Bui Hoang Tan (2017) with his research on Land Ownership in Ha Chau district, Ha Tien province through the 17th Minh Mang Dynasty (1836) were published by Historical Research Journal, 11 (499); Bui Hoang Tan (2017) with a study on the situation of land use in Ha Chau district, Ha Tien province through the 17th Minh Mang Dynasty (1836) were published by the Journal of Science and Technology - Danang University, 08 (117) has contributed to reflect many different aspects of the agricultural economic situation and land ownership of localities in the Mekong Delta.

According to research by Nguyen Phuc Nghiep (2011), Canals and canals in Tien Giang in the 17th - 18th centuries and in the first half of the 19th century, the Nguyen Dynasty had dredged a number of canals and canals in Tien Giang. Accordingly, the canal system in Tien Giang is gradually completed and expanded, which is extremely important not only for the socio-economic development of Tien Giang in particular but also has far-reaching impacts to the agriculture of the Mekong Delta in general.

Vu Van Quan (1998), with the topic On the causes of the outbreak of the Vietnamese peasant movement in the first half of the 19th century, this is a work that delves into the causes of the rise of Vietnamese peasants to revolt. Tax were the main cause of peasant uprisings in the first half of the 19th century.

According to research by Nguyen The Anh (1971), Vietnam's economy - society under the Nguyen Dynasty. The author has summarized the changes of economic and social life through the Nguyen dynasties. From there, readers will have a more objective view of the merits of the Nguyen Dynasty.

According to the research of Truong Huu Quynh et al., in the work The situation of land and peasant life under the Nguyen Dynasty (1997) presented the situation of Vietnamese land in the first half of the nineteenth century. It also mentions the situation of agriculture and peasant life under the Nguyen Dynasty.

According to research by Van Tao et al., (1997) on Rural Vietnam in the history has recreated a large, multi-dimensional picture of Vietnamese countryside from economic to political, from material to cultural... The advantages and limitations of the Vietnamese countryside, rural areas and agriculture as well as related issues affecting this process of rural mobilization and development, thereby contributing to supplementing awareness and experience in rural construction and management in Vietnam.

Foreign studies: The issue of agricultural production and economy in Vietnam from 1802 to 1945, although it has been studied by foreign scholars for a long time from different angles, the in-depth research on the activities agricultural production

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and economy in the Mekong Delta is still quite limited. Typically, before 1945, there were French scholars such as Yves Henry with the work *Économie agricole de l'Indochine* (1932), the author based on the results of actual investigations from 1928 to 1930 as a basis for presenting systematically in the agricultural economy activities between regions in Vietnam in 1930. Pierre Gourou's *Les Paysans du Delta Tonkinois: étude de géographie humaine* (1936) is the first research work on agronomy, household farming and systems agricultural system, analyzing the land and people of the North such as topography, delta climate, migration history and migration population, agriculture, industry, villages... but only to a certain extent.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study approaches in the direction of theoretical and practical research - solutions with the following main research methods: The historical method is the typical research method of the subject of historical research. The historical method is applied to faithfully reproduce the progress of things and phenomena in the correct time and space order as what happened in the past, specifically within the scope of the topic, the activities agricultural production and economy in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century. Through authentic historical sources, the research team applied historical methods to reconstruct the research contents on production activities and agricultural economic situation in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century truthfully and asymptotically with the objectivity of history.

Logical methods are applied in systematizing historical events, forming comments, making scientific evaluations about the researched problem in order to find out the nature, movement and development laws of the problem. study. In this paper, the logical method is applied throughout the entire content of agricultural economic activities in the Mekong Delta in order to systematize and connect the relevant research problem chains. On that basis, the study shapes scientific comments and assessments on specific characteristics of agricultural economic development activities in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century.

4. RESEARCH CONTENT

The change of administrative boundaries in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century

In 1802, Nguyen Anh ascended the throne, took the reign of Gia Long, founded the Nguyen Dynasty and built a unified country management institution in Vietnam. Accordingly, the administrative boundaries of the Mekong Delta had a certain change, from 1808 to 1832, Gia Dinh town was changed to Gia Dinh city, managing 5 towns in the south namely Phien An, Bien Hoa, Dinh Tuong, Vinh Thanh and Ha Tien. In which, the entire town of Dinh Tuong, Vinh Thanh, Ha Tien and a part of Phien An town belong to the present day Mekong Delta region. The territory of the towns of Dinh Tuong, Vinh Thanh, Ha Tien and a part of Phien An town in Gia Dinh became in 1808 as follows: Phien An changed to a town in the 7th Gia Long year (1808), including 1 palace, Tan Binh and Tan Binh. 4 districts are: Binh Duong, Tan Long, Phuoc Loc and Thuan An. The boundaries of the town include "*Bien Hoa town to the north*", "*Dinh Tuong township to the south*", "*to the east to the sea, the west to Cambodia*" [5, p.86]. Dinh Tuong town consists of 1 palace, Kien An and 3 districts: Kien Dang, Kien Hung, Kien Hoa "*Mau Thin year, Gia Long King in the 7th year (1808), in January, changed to Dinh Tuong town. , the land is wide and fertile, the water is adjacent to each other, the east is bordered by the sea; In the west, bordering with Cambodia, starting from Vam Dua, Rach Co, going to Bat Chien, Tuyen Uy, turning around snag to the north, crossing Hung Hoa river (known as Vung Cu river in the first two districts of Kien Hung and Kien Hoa) down the Tra Giang River, following the east to the Soi Rap estuary, a long river strip, the southern bank of which is the territory of Dinh Tuong town; south from Hong Ngu fort, Tan Chau, follow Tien Giang river to the north, circle to the east through Ham Luong river, straight to Ba Lai estuary; The northern bank of that river is the territory of the town.*" [5, p. 104]. Ha Tien was once the land of Mang Kham, in 1708, Mac Cuu submitted to Lord Nguyen. Since then, the land ruled by Mac Cuu belongs to Vietnamese territory and is called Ha Tien. At the beginning of the dynasty, Gia Long King basically assigned this land to the Mac family to rule. Ha Tien consists of 2 districts: Long Xuyen and Kien Giang with the border "*to the south by Vinh Thanh town, to the west by Siam, to the east by Gia Dinh citadel, to the north by Cambodia.*" [5, p.137].

After Gia Long King died in 1820, Minh Mang King ascended the throne to inherit the country's rule. In the 13th year of Minh Mang (1832), the town was changed to a province. The whole country has 30 provinces and 1 government of Thua Thien, of which Cochinchina is divided into 6 provinces, so it is called Nam Ky Luc Tinh. In order to strictly manage the territory, in 1836, Minh Mang King set up a land register in the whole Nam Ky provinces in order to establish and complete the social management apparatus from the smallest administrative unit in the village (commune) to the general, district, province. The six provinces include: Phien An (changed to Gia Dinh in 1836), Bien Hoa, Dinh Tuong, Vinh Long, An Giang and Ha Tien. Among the six provinces of Cochinchina at that time, there were four provinces in the Mekong Delta region including provinces: Dinh Tuong, Vinh Long, An Giang and Ha Tien. Ha Tien province includes An Bien and 3 districts of Ha Chau, Kien Giang and Long Xuyen. The boundaries of the province include: "*the southeast borders An Giang province, the southwest borders the sea, the north borders Cambodia*" [10. p.10]. In the 13th year of Minh Mang King, the town was changed to Dinh Tuong province with "*four sides are plains, rivers and*

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rivers converge, the left side connects with Gia Dinh province, the right side continues with two provinces of Vinh Long and An Giang, outside borders with the country of Cao Men, the right side borders on the country of Cambodia, the right side borders on the country of Cambodia, the right side borders on the country of Cambodia, the right side borders with the country of Cambodia, the right side with the provinces of Vinh Long and An Giang. southeast to the sea" [10, p.105]. Dinh Tuong province has 2 wards, Kien An and Kien Tuong, with 4 districts: Kien Hung, Kien Hoa, Kien Phong and Kien Dang. In 1832, Minh Mang King changed the name of Vinh Thanh town to Vinh Long and then changed the town to Vinh Long province with the distance "to the southwest bordering An Giang to be the mouth and teeth, to the northeast close to Dinh Tuong to be the county administrator" [10, p.148]. Vinh Long province has 3 districts: Dinh Vien, Hoang Tri and Lac Hoa with 8 districts including: Vinh Binh, Vinh Tri, Bao Huu, Bao An, Tan Minh, Duy Minh, Tuan Nghia and Tra Vinh. An Giang province has 3 districts: Tuy Bien, Tan Thanh and Ba Xuyen with 10 districts including: Tay Xuyen, Phong Phu, Ha Duong, Ha Am, Tan Thanh, Vinh An, An Xuyen, Dong Xuyen, Phong Nhieu and Vinh Dinh and Dien are "bordered to the east by Vinh Long and Dinh Tuong provinces, to the west by Ha Tien province, to the north by Cao Men" [10, p.191]. In addition, part of the land of Gia Dinh province at that time was also located in the Mekong Delta area, equivalent to a part of Long An and Tien Giang (land of Go Cong) today. Upstream and downstream of Vam Co Tay River (until the confluence of Bao Dinh River), together with Bao Dinh River is the boundary between Gia Dinh and Dinh Tuong provinces.

Agricultural production in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century

❖ Rice cultivation

Under the Nguyen Dynasty, policies on reclamation as well as irrigation work were always concerned and paid attention by the court, so the problem of agricultural cultivation, especially in the Mekong Delta, had positive change and achieve some remarkable results, thing. Experiencing the process of researching and surveying the topography, especially for the area of Ha Tien province, the highlight in this period was the cultivation of fields and the gardens, typically in Ha Chau district, in Ha Tien province.

For arable land, so mainly rice cultivation. As for the garden, this is cultivated land for gardens, so it mainly grows different types of agricultural products and fruit trees, otherwise it depends on the soil in each area. From there, it can be seen that most of the rice fields here are high mound fields because the terrain is mainly hilly and newly reclaimed. After cultivation, rice varieties gradually become diverse such as: Sticky rice, plain rice.... Or for Vinh Long province, the situation of rice is also extremely diverse such as "there is winter rice, bird's claw rice, Huong gourd sticky rice, wax sticky rice, charcoal sticky rice" [10, p.175].

In An Giang, which is one of the provinces in the Mekong Delta region, so at the beginning of the 19th century, along with the expansion of the reclaimed area, agricultural production was promoted. In which, rice is the main crop in the agricultural production process in An Giang. According to the 1836 documents, the whole old An Giang province "had 35,489 hectares of rice cultivation. That area is divided into two types of fields: wet fields, low fields called Thao Dien and mountain fields, mound fields or high fields called Son Dien. Thao Dien has 1,273 hectares, accounting for 3.6% of the province's rice fields; and Son Dien is 34,193 ha, accounting for 93.3%" [3, p. 167]. Thus, the high mound field accounted for the vast majority of rice growing area in ancient An Giang. About rice varieties in An Giang are as diverse as other provinces, as according to Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi mentioned this issue: "In the first half of the 19th century, rice had many things, troughly two types: Nep rice and Te rice. Nep rice, these two types differ in whether they are flexible or not. Te rice is a non-sticky rice, the grain is small, the substance is soft and fragrant, and the grain has a beard. Nep rice is a kind of rice with sticky resin, round seeds but big" [6, p. 153].

In the early stages of farming, farmers often use very rudimentary tools, mostly self-tipping, weeding, mulching, and reaping. Only one crop can be produced each year in the rainy season such as "Wet rice cultivation in Ha Chau depends on natural factors, rainwater is the main source of water for rice cultivation, so the rice planting season depends on the terrain and weather. The time to sow seed in June, transplant rice in July, August and harvest around December and January next year" [14, p. 25 – 32]. In An Giang, "The planting season at that time was to wait for the rainy season to fall before sowing, so sowing in June, transplanting in August and harvesting in December and January" [7, p. 58]. Therefore, the crops of the year are all based on climate, weather or hydrology. In many places, production is carried out according to shifting cultivation, every "three or five years they change to another place" [6, p.155]. Thus, the farmer left the old field to find another place to reclaim and start over. Rice cultivation techniques are still based on the application of traditional wet rice cultivation techniques from previous centuries.

In the first half of the 19th century, almost rice farmers did not use chemical fertilizers to fertilize their rice like today, because most of the fields here have just been reclaimed, so they still retain natural fertility soil, grass and straw... this is considered a natural and essential source of fertilizer to supplement nutrients for rice fields. With techniques such as deep plowing and thorough harrowing, farmers always pay attention because this is an important step to prepare the field. For animals such as buffaloes and cows, they often take advantage of pulling power to plow and harrow to serve as a means to increase the fertility of the land, contributing to the lushness of rice and the absorption of nutrients from the soil. In some places where the population

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is still small and the settlements are scattered, in the condition that human resources are not much and capital is lacking, farmers will carry out irrigation work on a small and medium-sized scale, as if they were able to dig a small amount of water. Small canals carry water into the fields, for the purpose of washing alum and improving the soil. The above activities are initially effective, turning some dry or flooded lands into lush green fields.

Later, many problems in agriculture were also gradually overcome, which is reflected in the popular folk with the saying *"One water, second part, three needs, four varieties"* this has become the theory for the agricultural production, especially in the field of rice cultivation and this is considered the experience that farmers have long accumulated in the cultivation process. The production process is carried out according to the sequence from sowing, plowing, transplanting rice, weeding, dropping manure, watering ... gradually the problem of propagation is also promoted and that is shown as follows *"farmers have obtained 65 varieties of plain rice and 27 varieties of glutinous rice: among these, there are varieties of rice that are short 3-4 months (from transplanting to reaping) or less, only 40 days (loose)"*. [9, p. 449].

Although there are improvements, in general, agricultural farming techniques are still traditional and simple. Cultivation techniques and plant care also depend heavily on natural factors such as soil, weather, rivers, etc. Therefore, cultivation has many new features in plant varieties and increased productivity. compared with the previous century, but basically, farming techniques are still backward and have not brought many new breakthroughs in agricultural production. But at present, the Mekong Delta is known as an extremely important rice-exporting area, not only meeting the domestic demand but also the world. However, in the process of developing rice farming system, it is always affected by factors from nature and society. Therefore, when understanding those influencing factors, farmers are always creative and proactive in catching the development trend of the new production system to be able to propose plans as well as measures effectively to organize production effectively and sustainably.

❖ Planting other crops

From taking advantage of the ability of soil and weather, farmers have planted many other food crops such as potatoes, corn, beans... First comes corn, which is considered the second strongest food crop after rice for some provinces in the Mekong Delta. From the 18th to the 19th century, maize was mainly grown on the fields of the Tien and Tien rivers. Almost in An Giang, *"planted mainly three types: yellow corn, white corn, and yellow corn. white"* [6, p. 154]. *"The type of white corn has long and large fruits, thick seeds; It has a pleasant aroma when eaten. Corn is planted in April and harvested in July"* [6, p. 157]. In Ha Tien, maize is usually planted in March and harvested in July of the same year. Basically, in addition to growing rice, maize is also commonly grown in localities.

Potatoes are also quite popular crops. For some provinces in the Mekong Delta, typically in Ha Tien, potato planting time falls in March and harvest time in July. As for An Giang, in addition to the rice cultivation area, *"the province has 11,774 hectares planted with other crops, of which 3,073 hectares are planted with potatoes and beans, accounting for 26.10 percent"* [3, p. 136]. In which, *"two districts of Dong Xuyen and Tay Xuyen have 2,321 hectares of land for growing potatoes (Dong Xuyen 2,579,2 ha, Tay Xuyen 741.8 ha"* [3, pp.136, pp.221-242]. In the village, *"potatoes are grown a lot in the hamlets of Binh Thanh Dong, My Hoi Dong (An Luong Canton), Long Son, Phu Lam, Tan An (An Thanh Canton), Kien Long, My Chanh, Toan Duc, Toan Duc Dong (Duc Dong Canton) of Dong Xuyen district"* [7, p. 69]. There are many types of potato plants such as sweet potatoes, waxy or pink potatoes, sweet potatoes and sweet potatoes. Potato planting time is mainly from April to October, but some varieties are planted from April to July and have been harvested. For Vinh Long province, the types of potatoes are diverse and typical such as *"sweet potatoes, waxy potatoes, red potatoes, white potatoes, water potatoes, lobsters, tubers, ground tubers, cassava roots"* [6, p. 175].

Besides, beans are also one of the crops that are very familiar to farmers. From the 18th - 19th centuries, during this period, beans were grown very popularly, typically in some places such as An Giang, the cultivation of a variety of beans such as *"green beans, soybeans, black beans, white beans, cowpeas, machete beans, pork soybeans, longan peanuts, longan beans, peanuts"* [7, p. 70]. Beans are grown mainly in high mounds along the Tien or Hau rivers, the production season is from April to July. Beans are grown a lot in the districts of Dong Xuyen, Phu Lam, Tan An, Kien Long, My Chanh... In Vinh Long, there are quite a few types of beans such as *"yellow beans, black beans, white beans, green beans, white beans, cowpeas, long beans, pig teeth beans, Huong Dai beans"* [6, p. 175].

Sugarcane is also widely grown in the Mekong Delta. For Ha Tien, in some districts of Long Xuyen, two cantons of Long Thuy and Quang Xuyen, there are 4 types of sugarcane including: pink, white, blue, white roses are intercropped with *"shoulder sugarcane, 6, 7 inches wide. The thing that can press honey, only white sugarcane species with chalk skin can do it"* [6, p. 159]. These types of sugarcane can be processed into various types of sugar *"cane sugar is only produced in Phuc Chinh district, Bien Hoa town, in addition, it is boiled to make alum sugar, lung sugar is not included, only the amount of granulated sugar sold to boats is counted. wholesalers, each year can sell up to 50,000 kilograms"* [6, p. 159]. Sugarcane planting time is usually from March to July. According to the documents, *"there is 19.1 ha of sugarcane growing area, accounting for 0.16% of the province's cultivated*

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land; most grown in Dinh Khanh total, Vinh Dinh district" accounting for 3.6% of the province's rice fields; and Son Dien is 34,193 ha, accounting for 93.3%" [3, p. 136]. Only one place in Phu Lam village of An Thanh canton, Dong Xuyen district, can grow 0.97 ha.

In the 18th - 19th centuries, mulberry trees were planted for the purpose of developing mulberry cultivation for silkworm rearing as in An Giang province, "the area for mulberry cultivation is 380 ha, accounting for 3.32% of the province's cultivated land area" [3, p. 136], concentrated mainly in two districts of Dong Xuyen and Tay Xuyen "Dong Xuyen district planted about 207 hectares in the villages of Tan Hung (total An Luong), Tan An, Vinh Lac (total An Thanh), accounting for 54.3% strawberry area of the province. Tay Xuyen district planted about 100 hectares, accounting for 26.3%, planted in the villages of Vinh Nguon, Vinh Thanh (total of Chau Phu), Thoai Son, Vinh Phu (total of Dinh Phuoc), Binh Lam and Binh My (total of Dinh Thanh of Dinh Thanh district)" [7, p. 73]. This is a district with fertile soil that has created favorable conditions for the development of silk industry. Besides, strawberry farming in Ha Chau district is also focused. Usually, mulberry trees are planted at the beginning of the rainy season and after two months the first crop can be harvested. After a year of harvesting, the mulberry tree will be cut across the base to grow new branches and continue to pick leaves.

Besides, fruit trees are also extremely rich and diverse in types such as: bananas, oranges, mangoes, longan, star fruit, plums, pomegranates, betel nut... persimmons, fragrant old bananas, seed bananas and honey bananas. In particular, bananas and orange bananas are more fragrant and delicious. There are varieties of mangoes such as Thanh Ca mango, rice mango, Tuong mango, sticky mango... In addition, the soil here is also suitable for growing other fruit trees. According Truong Quoc Dung, "Son Tra is also a type of mango, the branches and leaves are small, the fruit is smaller than that of the mango, in Ha Tien it is very sweet but fragrant, in Quang Binh back to the north it is fragrant but very sour" [2, p. 162].

In addition, in Ha Chau province, pepper is also grown, so it has created a typical product of Ha Chau because the pepper here has an aromatic and spicy taste that is both strong and full of flavor. In the first half of the 19th century, areca is also an important agricultural product, with an area of more than 35 acres, only after pepper. These have become specific to Ha Chau district, Ha Tien province. In addition to cultivation, during this period, residents of the Mekong Delta also raised large livestock such as buffaloes and cows to serve as traction in the agricultural field, especially rice cultivation.

In general, agricultural farming techniques are mainly in the traditional way, so the techniques of growing and caring for crops are still highly dependent on natural factors such as soil, weather, rivers, etc. Therefore, it can be seen that although there are many new features in the agricultural field, in terms of plant varieties and productivity compared to the previous century, there are no breakthroughs.

❖ Salt field

This salt field is a low and flat piece of land, the core purpose of this field is to use salt from salt water or from sea water. Particularly for salt farming techniques, it depends on places where the climate is usually warm and dry. In which, 3 main factors are considered to affect the process of harvesting salt fields: high temperature, strong wind and low humidity.

Under the Nguyen Dynasty, the South had an area of over 70 acres of salt fields, also known as salt fields, concentrated mainly on the two coasts of Bien Hoa and Ha Tien. In which, Ha Tien is known as one of the provinces with the largest salt field in the Mekong Delta. For Ha Tien province, Ha Thanh is "the only total in the district with an area of 1.5 acres of salt fields" [14, p. 27]. Due to the advantage of the coastline, the majority of residents in Ha Chau still exploit salt fields, although the area of salt fields is small, salt in that period was considered as one of the main sources of salt. Great benefit here. Regarding taxes, every year "Each acre of salt field must pay a tax of 7 square salts" [1, p. 150] or in a number of works mentioning this issue as follows: "Salt fields are privately owned and taxed at the rate of 7 salt per acre, equivalent to 245.7 kg of salt" [14, p. 27]. The salt field is divided into many pieces, in fact, many households have only a few meters of salt field, but not even 1 sao of salt field. That's when briefly generalizing about the general situation of salt fields in this period.

Some comments on agricultural economic activities in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century

In the first half of the 19th century, the Mekong Delta's economy underwent some important changes. Ownership in land is divided into state ownership and private ownership. As for privately owned land, it is the majority, but it is fragmented and not highly concentrated. Therefore, it has not met the needs of economic development in agriculture. As for the land owned by the state, it has not been thoroughly and formed on a large scale. The influence in land ownership has partly affected activities in agricultural production. Mainly small-scale agricultural production activities, mainly by households. This is also the cause of food shortages when there is social change. Such fragmented and decentralized production has resulted in a shortage of agricultural output to supply the agricultural market. In fact, the change in land ownership in the Mekong Delta in the first half of the nineteenth century could not facilitate the development of the agricultural economy.

Agricultural Economic Activities in the Mekong Delta in the First Half of the 19th Century

Under the rule of "agriculture as the economic foundation" of the Nguyen Dynasty, agriculture was brought to the forefront. The Nguyen Dynasty tried and introduced many policies to develop agriculture such as unifying the unit of land area, re-measure the field, set up a book to fill in according to clear regulations set forth, etc. There are also measures to support and supply the people when there are famines, crop failures, natural disasters, etc. These have extremely positive impacts on the agricultural economy, contributing to stabilizing the life. people's life. However, it is necessary to recognize the science and reality of the policies of the Nguyen Dynasty when applied to each locality. Each locality has advantages to develop and shortcomings to overcome, each locality is different.

The Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century was an agricultural area with an important strategic position for the Nguyen Dynasty. Therefore, the Nguyen Dynasty used many other solutions to implement agricultural policies for this delta such as encouraging reclamation, investing in irrigation, etc. These policies on the one hand represent the role and responsibility of the Nguyen Dynasty in ensuring the conditions to promote the development of agricultural production. On the other hand, through these policies to strengthen the power of the state and the position of the Nguyen Dynasty. From the research results, the agricultural economic activities of the Mekong Delta have reflected the management policy of the Nguyen dynasty towards the agricultural economy with many different directions. In the field management policy, it has brought a lot of positive factors in agricultural cultivation, creating a lot of human resources for the locality, contributing to stabilizing people's lives and socio-economic development. However, these policies are not really scientific and feasible when applied to each locality, even becoming a barrier in agricultural economic development. The barrier here is the development and integration of trade with the outside when the Nguyen Dynasty enforced the policy of "no trade with foreign countries", "respect agriculture, limit commercial development"... The historical lessons drawn for this reality need to create all conditions for the country's economy to develop in the context of integration. The Government needs to determine the key position of the key economic sector of each region and each locality so that it can be scientifically and feasible for economic development. Accurate identification of key economic sectors in each locality and region will be the decisive key in comprehensive socio-economic development.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on reliable scientific historical sources, the research team has determined the boundary of the Mekong Delta in the first half of the 19th century, this land belongs to 3 provinces: Vinh Long, An Giang, Ha Tien and Tan An of Gia Dinh province. After many times of changing the names and administrative boundaries of the provinces, it is still basically compatible with the land of 13 provinces and cities today: Long An, Tien Giang, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, Tra Vinh , Hau Giang, Soc Trang, Dong Thap, An Giang, Kien Giang, Bac Lieu and Ca Mau and Can Tho city. This delta region has an important strategic role in economic development and national security and defense in the South of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty. The Mekong Delta of Vietnam in the first half of the 19th century was an agricultural region of great importance strategic position for the Nguyen Dynasty. So, the Nguyen dynasty used many other solutions to implement agricultural policies for this delta, such as encouraging reclamation, investing in irrigation, etc. The Nguyen Dynasty created favorable conditions to promote promoting the development of agricultural production with the diversity and abundance of plant varieties, in which rice still dominates and is the main product of the agricultural economy in this delta. The study of the agricultural economic situation in the Mekong Delta in the second half of the 19th century through ancient bibliographic sources not only contributes to a re-drawing of the picture of the agricultural economic situation along with other important points. its characteristics but also suggest more related issues about agricultural economy and rural life of the delta that need to be discussed in the current context of development and integration.

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