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REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1901

ON THE

TRADE AND COMMERCE OF THE CONSULAR
DISTRICT OF CHIENGMAL.

REFERENCE TO PREVIOUS REPORT, Annual Series No. 2717.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty,
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Reference to previous Report, Annual Series No. 2717.

*Report on the Trade and Commerce of the Consular District of
Chiengmai for the Year 1901*

By MR. CONSUL BECKETT.

(Received at Foreign Office, January 5, 1903.)

There is nothing of importance to record as to the trade of Northern Siam during 1901. What has been said in the report for the year 1900 might well be repeated for the year under review. An increase over 1900 in the bulk of trade has been observable, especially as regards teak, owing to the abundant remains of 1900 and the fair floating season of 1901.

General
remarks.

Exports to and imports from Burma, that is to say along the routes converging on Moulmein, for which alone statistics are available, show a general increase. The exports, as usual, far exceed the imports, the balance of imports being made up of Bangkok goods introduced along the waterways.

Increase in
exports and
imports.

The articles exported to Burma which show an increase are teak, cash and cattle.

Exports to
Burma.

The value of Salween teak, as entered at the Kado duty station returns, has risen from 75,733*l.* in 1900 to 188,103*l.* in 1901, which as far as can be ascertained from previous statistics is a record, and represents an increase of 125 per cent. over and above the average of the preceding four years. In other words the output for 1901 is more than double that of the average. That this satisfactory result should be attained in face of serious geographical and other difficulties connected with teak operations on the Salween side, even more than on the Menam side, and in spite of the continued prevalence of elephant stealing, to which reference will be made later, must be regarded as a tribute to British enterprise and energy.

Teak :
Salween side.

The arrivals at Paknampho duty station of Menam-floated timber were :—

Menam side.

From—	Number of Logs.
Meping and Me Wang	27,870
Me Yom	32,913
Me Nan	3,387
Total	64,170

Prospects of
teak trade
for 1902.

A total which is well above the average of the preceding 10 years, and nearly approaches the figures for 1893 (73,000 logs), which held the record until 1900. Timber despatched from Paknampho during the season of 1901, *i.e.*, May to November, amounted to 62,000 odd logs, of which nearly 70 per cent. belonged to British firms. The stock of logs, drift or rafted, remaining in the main rivers, Meping and Me Wang, amounts to some 77,000 logs, and in the Me Yom and Me Nan must also be considerable. The arrivals at Paknampho during 1902, therefore, whilst hardly attaining the standard either of 1900 or 1901, may be expected with an average rainfall to reach, if not exceed, the average of previous years. The early rains of May and June have been bad, but the rises in the main streams during September and October have been satisfactory. A good deal also depends on the supply of raftsmen at Raheng and the lower reaches, a great many having been taken during the early rain for military duty in connection with the disturbance, caused by bands of malcontents in the provinces of Lakhon and Phrè from July onwards. These malcontents retired northwards on the approach of various bodies of Siamese troops from Bangkok, but are still a continual menace to the peace of the larger towns. Forest operations will, doubtless, suffer in common with the whole trade of the country from the general dislocation and disorder caused by these disturbances. But, provided the late rains are good, the arrivals of logs at Paknampho during 1902 should not fall far short of 50,000.

Changes in
forest
administra-
tion.

An event which caused not a little commotion in timber circles during the year was the withdrawal of Mr. Slade, the Conservator of Forests, from the post of Director of the Siamese Forest Department, which he had held since 1896. By the Conservator's efforts, backed by the goodwill and assistance of the British Consular authorities and of the British timber companies, order and system on fixed principles had been slowly but surely evolved out of the former existing conditions, in which neither order nor system nor fixed principles played a part. Loosely worded leases, obtained from the local chiefs for ready cash, were exchanged for stringent leases granted by the Minister of the Interior at Bangkok containing severe restrictions, which rendered timber operations increasingly difficult and less remunerative. A small nucleus of a Forest Department was formed with European officers. But it soon became apparent that to carry out this new forest policy and enforce the terms of the new leases equally on all engaged in the timber trade in Northern Siam, irrespective of nationality and jurisdiction, the powers held by the Conservator in his relations with the Bangkok Government and the staff of forest officers and subordinate officials at his disposal were very far from adequate. In fact, it was found that the system, which had been created largely at the expense of the British firms, who, being the largest holders of ready cash had no cause to regret the continuance of the old system, could not be effectively carried out with the material at the Conservator's command. Efficiency

Return of
Mr. Slade
to Burma—
causes and
effects.

and equality of treatment demanded that the number of European forest officers should be increased two or threefold, that Siamese assistants should be attached to each officer to be trained in forest work, and that the Conservator, as the Chief of the Department, should be vested with full powers similar to those enjoyed by the chiefs of other Government Departments in Bangkok. Seeing that the forest revenues reaped since the inauguration of a Forest Department had vastly increased to the benefit of the hereditary chiefs of the Northern States, and of the Bangkok Exchequer, who shared in the division of royalties, there could be little opposition to these necessary demands on the score of expense. They were, however, not conceded, and the Conservator feeling himself powerless under present conditions to preserve that standard of purity and efficiency in forest administration, which he so much desired, returned to Burma. He had evolved a workable scheme of forest administration out of a mass of conflicting interests and heterogeneous elements, he had been the principal instrument by which, in spite of strong local opposition, the control of the forests had been transferred from the hereditary chief owners to a central authority at Bangkok, and he had simplified the collection of royalties and assured a permanent revenue to the State. It is to be regretted, therefore, that reasonable demands, put forward by him in the interests of his Department as necessary for the completion of his work, were not entertained. By the British timber companies, on whom the brunt of reform fell most heavily and whose hearty co-operation, though often running counter to their own interests, went far towards enabling such reform to be successfully achieved; the loss of the Conservator with his knowledge of their needs and appreciation of their difficulties, gained after six years' residence in Siam, will be severely felt.

Elephant stealing was prevalent to a remarkable degree during 1901, and still continues to be a serious source of anxiety to both companies and foresters. Regulations were in 1897 made by the British and Siamese authorities in conjunction with a view to the repression of this class of crime, at least as regards those animals that were taken across the border. These were, later on, supplemented by other regulations, laying down definite rules for the purchase and sale of elephants, and imposing penalties on all persons in possession of elephants unprovided with sale papers executed under certain fixed conditions before the proper local authorities. Unfortunately it is a fact that in spite of the insistence of the British Consul these regulations, sufficient as they are if properly carried out for the purpose of checking theft, have been continuously ignored by the Siamese authorities. The number of elephants owned by British foresters stolen during the year on the Salween side cannot have been less than 30, and on the Meping side not less than 20, representing a loss approximately of 125,000 rs. (8,300L.). The area of theft is confined at present to the region lying between the Meping and the Salween, and the Karen tribesmen are the chief offenders. Their villages, though somewhat inaccessible, ought to be and are well-known to the

Elephant stealing.

Preventive measures taken but not carried out.

Area of theft.

Reasons for
continuance
of evil.

nearest "Kwen" or district official. But this official is neither provided by the commissioner of his district with a copy of the regulations in force, nor has he the means at his disposal to enforce them, presuming, as is so frequently not the case, that he has the intelligence or energy to do so. The same remarks applies to other regulations which have from time to time been issued. In no single instance has the assistance rendered by the Siamese officials led to the discovery of the elephants stolen or of the thief, nor, considering that the direction usually taken by the thieves is often proved to be towards the British States of Karenni, Maing Hang and Maing Pan, can credit be given for assistance rendered by the Sawbwas of those States. In short, recovery, when effected, has been due to the activity and energy of the British forester himself or of the search parties sent out by the British companies in whose employ the forester is. The British Consul has arranged with the Siamese High Commissioner that detailed lists of all British owned elephants, working in any particular forest or district, be deposited with the "Kwen" of that district, and has made other suggestions which would, if intelligently carried out, go far to alleviating the evil. The British firms and foresters have done all they can on their part. The evil, like its fellow evil of dacoity, will, it is to be feared, continue until greater and more intelligent administrative cohesion exists between the different officials forming links in the recently introduced village system, or until the present unworkable skeleton of this system is filled up with a more intelligent class of officials, more carefully selected for their knowledge of the country, and taking a more sympathetic interest in the commercial welfare of the districts under their charge.

Prices of
elephants.

The sales of elephants were less numerous than in 1900. Prices, though showing a downward tendency, still remained preposterously high, and good big workers were scarce.

Khamu
labour
market.

The supply of Khamu coolies, which had fallen off considerably owing to the restrictive measures introduced by the French authorities, was inflated by the entry during 1901 of some 1,700 men from the eastern bank of the Mekong. Prices accordingly fell from 110 rs. (7*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*) and 120 rs. (8*l.*) to 80 rs. (5*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*) and 90 rs. (6*l.*) per annum, with food added on a two-year contract.

Trade
between
Kengtung
and Siam.

The trade between Kengtung and Northern Siam is increasing. A visit was paid during the year for trading purposes to the towns of Lakhon, Chiengmai and Chiengrai by Sao Nang Wen Tip, the enterprising and sharp-witted half sister of the Kengtung Sawbwa. This visit was of some importance as marking the commencement of new relations between the States of Northern Siam and Kengtung, and the end of the old period of distrust and suspicion which made free commercial intercourse impossible.

Abolition
of certain
illegal tolls.

Certain tolls on foot-fees on pack cattle coming into Siam from Kengtung, which had been levied for many years by the Chiengsen authorities, and were a distinct burden on the Shan and Lu packmen, were abolished.

Certain illegal tolls levied by the Mehongsawn authorities on traders coming up the Salween River and the Me Pai Stream to Mehongsawn were also discontinued.

Large numbers of traders came into Siam during the year from British territory, and the number of those holding British passports had perceptibly increased owing to the representations made by the British Consul as to the necessity of such passports if traders wished to escape payment of the capitation tax of 4 rs. levied on Siamese subjects, or to claim Consular protection.

Increase in number of traders visiting Siam with passports.

The continuance of the regulations with regard to Siamese passports in Siamese territory, and the unsympathetic treatment of holders of British passports by the unintelligent officials, already referred to, were the cause of much irritation on the part of those chiefly affected, namely, the Shan pack traders and piece-goods hawkers.

Irritation caused to holders of British passports.

A recent Consular visit to Chiengrai, the trade centre on the Me Khok, through which the Yunnanese and Kengtung trade passes into and from Siam, indicated the potentialities of trade in Northern Siam if intelligently encouraged and stimulated by the construction of cart roads, developing in progress of time into light railway communication with Chiengmai, Lakhon and Phrè, and connection with the projected main line from Bangkok to the north. This line, as originally surveyed some two years ago, was planned to run from Paknampho to Utardit and Phrè, thence westward to Lakhon-Lampang. The most feasible continuation from that town to Chiengrai was at that time considered to lie by way of Muang Ngao, over easy and very slight rise to Prayao in the valley of the Me Ing. Permanent surveys are now being carried on, and are almost completed, and the importance which the Siamese Government attach to a main line connecting Bangkok with Chiengrai is shown by the recent visit, towards the end of 1901, of the Director-General of Railways to the north of Siam as far as Chiengsen. These permanent surveys, it is understood, favours a direct route running from Paknampho, along the west bank of the Me Yom, thus avoiding Raheng and the narrow and difficult watershed of the Me Ping, and tapping the broad plain around the populous towns of Sawankalok, Pichai and Pitsanulok, northward in a direct line to Lakhon-Lampang, which is likely to be the centre of the northern railway system. From Paknampho to Lakhon-Lampang by this route will be 203 miles. Branch lines, probably on narrow gauge principles, can be made later if needed from a point near Muang Long to Phrè and Nan on the north-east, and from Lakhon-Lampang itself to Chiengmai, 63 miles west. The main line will then be extended, not north-easterly by way of Muang Ngao and Prayao, but rather north-westerly along the Me Tui, an affluent of the Me Wang, and across or through the very slight watershed separating the Me Wang from the Me Lao in the Mekong basin, into the broad, fertile and populous valley of that stream, where construction would be free from engineering difficulties right up to the walls of the city of Chiengrai. The distance from Lakhon-Lampang to Chiengrai by

Chiengrai as a potential trade centre.

Importance of railway connected between Bangkok and north of Siam. Probable route to be taken by future railway.

Paknampho to Lakhon-Lampang.

Lakhon-Lampang centre of northern railway system.

Branch lines to Phrè and Chiengmai. Main line extension from Lakhon-Lampang to Chiengrai.

Features of
Chiengrai
trade.

this route should be some 130 miles. Next to Chiengmai, Chiengrai is the busiest town of the north. It is the meeting place of Yunnanese muleteers from Talifu and Yunnan, bringing tea, lead, opium, iron pots, felt cloth, hats, and taking back piece-goods and other European wares; of Lus from Muang Long and the Sipsongpanna States, bringing ponies, buffaloes, beeswax, strong home-woven cloth, called "pha ham," extensively used for coats and trousers by the Laos of the north, and taking back cutch, lacquer, sticlac, and other local produce; of Shans, from Kengtung, with leather sandals, hats and lacquered goods, in exchange for salt, dried fish and cotton goods; and Laos, from Luang-Prabang, who bring in their long dug-outs salt, silk, beeswax, chillies, sturgeon roe, iron hoes, &c., and buy or barter these for a stock of the ever-needful cottons. The aggregate trade at present cannot be less than 1,000,000 rs. (70,000*l.*). But beyond the stimulus it would give to this trade, the chief benefit of railway connection between Chiengrai and Lakhon-Lampang will be to bring the produce of the vast and fertile Chiengrai and Chiengsen paddy plains to the inhabitants of the Lakhon-Lampang region, whose rice land is becoming less productive each year, and where scarcity of that staple article of food is even in the best years a source of continual anxiety. How great the benefit will be may be proved by the fact that over the Chiengrai Plain the paddy crop yields on an average 200-fold as compared with 80 or 90-fold in the best seasons at Lakhon-Lampang, and that the price of unhusked rice is 12 rs. (16*s.*) per 100 baskets, as compared with 55 rs. (3*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*) in an average year. The altitude of Chiengrai is 1,147 feet, a difference of some 300 feet as compared with Lakhon-Lampang, and of some 1,700 feet as compared with Kengtung, to which point, by way of the frontier station of Hawng Luk, further extension, if desired, could, with little difficulty in the matter of gradients and natural obstacles, be effected, and thus finally form a juncture with the Taungyi extension from the Burma side, now in contemplation.

Plains of
Chiengrai and
Chiengsen as
a source of
rice supply.

Feasibility of
further
railway exten-
sion from
Chiengrai to
Kengtung.

Road-making
a most
satisfactory
feature of
the year.

The Chiengmai authorities showed most commendable activity during the year in making roads throughout the province. Of these the most important was the main thoroughfare to Chiengrai and Chiengsen. The existing bridle track was widened and cleared, and a great deal of useful work done in throwing temporary bridges and causeways over the more impassable ravines and swamps. The road is now completed to Chiengsen, with the exception of the 12 miles across the rice plain immediately outside Chiengmai city, doubtless owing to difficulties connected with the expropriation of the landowners. The lack of bridges over the few streams intersecting the road, and the steep gradients in places where the desire for directness has overcome the want of engineering skill on the part of the Siamese and Lao road-makers, render this road as yet unavailable for cart traffic. But the improvement already effected reflects much credit on the Siamese Commissioners who conceived the idea and the Lao chiefs and people who assisted in carrying it out.

A substantial bridge of timber over the Me Khok at Chiengrai town is in course of erection under the supervision of the Siamese Commissioner there. This bridge, when completed, will be an incalculable boon to the thousands of caravan men and their mules and ponies who meet at Chiengrai; for the broad waters of the Me Khok are fordable only during the period of lowest water, and even their packs have often to be removed and ferried across by boat.

Bridge across Me Khok at Chiengrai in course of erect.on.

These praiseworthy efforts to improve communications engender the confidence that the other drawbacks to trade to which attention has been drawn above are capable of removal, if only the executive officials had some guiding and advising hand to direct and control them and persuade them that the true "Rachakan" or Government business consists not so much in perfunctory duties performed to win the approbation of their superiors and their own self-aggrandisement, as an honest desire to secure the true welfare of the people committed to their charge.

General and intelligent encouragement of trade will follow improvement in communication if executive officials are properly advised and directed.

The judicial system has undergone considerable improvement during the past two years. The old "Sanam" or council of local chiefs and elders, where decisions were given after long delays without any reference to law or form of procedure, and with the right of appeal to the Chief of the State or the High Commissioner, has given place to the "San Monthon" or Divisional Court, the "San Muang" or Township Court, and the "San Kwen" or Petty Magistrates' Court, exercising a graduated civil and criminal jurisdiction, and provided with written rules of procedure, printed forms and tables of fee stamps, with the Divisional Court as the Court of Appeal of First Instance, and the Bangkok Appellate and "San Dika" Courts as the Courts of Final Appeal. The special Judicial Commissioner of Division presides over the Divisional Court and is also Judge of the International Court, or more correctly speaking the Anglo-Siamese Court established by the Chiengmai Treaty of 1883. Finally, and this is the most important reform of any, the judiciary has been severed from the executive, and whereas some three years ago the writ of the highest judicial officer was subject to the sanction of the High Commissioner, now the writ of the Judicial Commissioner is absolute throughout the division. The present Judicial Commissioner, to whose efforts in face of many obstacles these reforms are due, was educated at Edinburgh and holds the diploma of the law school at Bangkok. The Judges of the Lower Courts have in some cases also passed through this school; but one of the chief difficulties in the way of a satisfactory organisation of either the judicial or executive departments is to secure a supply of better educated officials, and to induce the latter, in spite of the not inadequate salaries offered, to exchange a comfortable existence at Bangkok for what they consider to be a life of exile as a Government official in the provinces of this division.

Reforms in judicial system. Nature of reforms.

To whose efforts reforms are due.

Chief difficulties in way of satisfactory organisation of judicial and executive departments.

The rainfall for the year was 44.80 inches, which represents an average fall. A table comparing the rainfall in the various months of 1900 and 1901 is annexed.

Rainfall.

Prospects of
rice crop
for 1902.

The prospects of the rice crop for 1902, though at one time ominous owing to the deficient rains of July and August which delayed planting, have improved considerably as a result of good late rains. Most of the areas under cultivation have now been planted though somewhat late, the fear of famine has happily been thus averted, and greater confidence is shown by a decline of 50 per cent. in present prices, but unless there is sufficient rain to mature the crop the outlook will not be hopeful. Paddy growers do not expect to realise at best more than two-fifths of the full yield. Prices therefore during 1903 will range high.

Trade report
delayed.
Reasons of
delay.

It is necessary to add that the delay in drawing up this report is due to the inordinate stress of public business in this Consulate, from April, when His Majesty's Consul returned from an extensive tour in the western and northern portions of this Consular district, to the end of July, when the disturbances referred to in a previous paragraph broke out. From that time onward a still further strain has been added and much time spent by His Majesty's Consul in travelling through the jungle to various seats of the disturbance remote from Chiengmai, and arranging matters in connection therewith.

Annex A.—RETURN of Principal Articles of Export from
Northern Siam to Burma during the Years 1900-01.

Articles.	1900.		1901.		
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	
Teak	Cubic tons	18,920	£ 75,733	30,024	£ 188,103
Silver cash	Rupees ..	534,867	35,658	..	42,183
Cattle	Head ..	3,747	12,302	5,126	19,051
Silk, raw	Lbs. ..	1,450	1,292	..	..
Ponies and mules ..	Head ..	290	965	149	650
Elephants, &c. ..	" ..	12	260	281	421
Silk manufactures ..	Lbs. ..	87	178	347	110
Other articles ..	..	..	3,621	..	754
Total .. ..	..	..	180,009	..	251,272

Annex B.—RETURN of Principal Articles of Import from Burma to Northern Siam during the Years 1900–01.

Articles.		1900.		1901.	
		Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
Silver cash	Rupees ..	726,587	£ 48,439	..	£ 53,088
Cotton manufactures..	Lbs. ..	51,296	11,955	298,779	21,490
	Equiv.cwts.	458			
Apparel .. ..	.. ..	..	4,016	..	3,848
Silk manufactures ..	Lbs. ..	784	3,744	5,616	6,812
	Equiv.cwts.	7			
Hardware	Lbs. ..	23,290	2,703	51,017	1,257
	Equiv.cwts.	208			
Jewellery .. ..	.. ..	..	1,832	..	1,979
Woollen manufactures	Lbs. ..	2,688	1,718	9,609	2,227
	Equiv.cwts.	24			
Chinese and Japanese ware..	.. ..	..	1,366	..	546
Other articles.. ..	.. ..	..	17,232	..	24,151
Total .. ..	.. ..	..	93,005	..	115,398

Annex C.—RETURN of Principal Articles of Export to Burma via Raheng route during the Years 1900–01.

Articles.		1900.		1901.	
		Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
Silver cash	Rupees ..	265,515	£ 17,701	..	£ 17,073
Cattle	Head ..	658	1,985	1,839	5,842
Silk—					
Raw	Lbs. ..	1,650	988	6,007	1,053
Manufactures .. ..	.. ..	81	564	226	723
Ponies and mules ..	Head ..	5	40	8	45
Other articles .. ..	.. ..	..	157	..	211
Total .. ..	.. ..	..	21,435	..	24,947

Annex D.—RETURN of Principal Articles of Import from Burma
via Raheng route during the Years 1900-01.

Articles.	1900.		1901.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
Silver cash Rupees ..	79,960	£ 5,331	59,399	£ 3,960
Jewellery .. .. ..	..	3,816	..	7,454
Silk manufactures .. Lbs. ..	560	2,931	5,142	6,988
	Equiv. cwts. 5			
Cotton „ .. Lbs. ..	11,984	2,835	166,464	12,681
	Equiv. cwts. 107			
Woollen „ .. Lbs. ..	2,016	1,593	5,635	1,855
	Equiv. cwts. 18			
Chinese and Japanese ware .. .. ..	..	1,588	..	700
Apparel .. .. ..	..	1,484	..	2,709
Hardware Lbs. ..	9,072	922	39,168	1,450
	Equiv. cwts. 81			
Other articles.. ..	..	3,695	..	3,971
Total .. .. ..	..	24,195	..	40,768

Annex E.—TOTAL Amount of Rainfall at Chiengmai during
the Years 1900-01.

Month.	Amount.	
	1900.	1901.
	Inches.	Inches.
February.. .. .	Nil	0·57
March	0·33	0·29
April	3·19	0·55
May	6·40	7·80
June	11·21	5·29
July	11·52	5·93
August	13·63	10·90
September	17·61	8·23
October	4·10	2·60
November	2·17	2·60
December	0·60	Nil
Total	70·76	44·80

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