

Racial and Religious Harmonisation

In addition to the two families who ran the transportation businesses, two other Vietnamese families lived in the village: one as a tailor and the other as a farmer raising pigs, growing vegetables, and selling Vietnamese foods. The Vietnamese were still considered more foreign than the Chinese, as the Vietnamese did not practise the same Buddhist religion and did not go to the same pagoda. The last ethnic group consisted of two Muslim families whose main occupation was selling beef exclusively. The distribution of work was that the Chinese would deal with pigs and the Muslims with cows, as the Islamic religion prohibits Muslims from eating pork. In Cambodia, we called the Muslims "Cham" or "people from Champa," emigrants coming from an early neighbouring Hindu Kingdom that turned to Islam in the central part of Annam, which Vietnam annihilated in the 17th century. According to a history book, the last king of Champa, with most of his men, fled under pressure from the Annamites into Cambodian territory in

1720¹. The Muslims were completely integrated into the Cambodian community under the official name "Islamic Khmer." The Cham, or Islamic Khmer, enjoyed the same rights as the Cambodians. In Snay Pol, the three communities cohabited peacefully and enjoyed excellent inter-religious and inter-racial relationships.

¹D G Hall, A History of South-East Asia, Third Edition, London, 1968, p. 194