

# Practices and Acquisition of Rights to Land in a State-Established Community on the Thai-Cambodia Border

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The purpose of this article is to study the practices in a state-established community on the Thai-Cambodian border using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice as an analytical framework based on social capital and symbolic capital in order to acquire the rights to residential and agricultural land. This study made use of qualitative methodology and the phenomenological approach. Research participants included household representatives and state officers. The study was conducted in the Thai Romyen community (pseudonym), a state-established border community made up of households from Ban Kruat Self-Help Settlement Village. In 1980, the community was appointed as a Thai-Khmer border self-defence village; as a result, the community land was divided into residential areas, reserved areas for all members, and bunkers surrounding the community to keep the residents safe in the event of battles. The study results revealed three major practices of community residents in acquiring their rights to land. The first is the practices of being a member of the self-help settlement village to acquire 25 rai of land for making a living. These practices were based on social capital, that is, the network of relatives and people from their natal villages. The second is the practices of getting married to earn the right to residential land in the Thai-Khmer border self-defence. Marriage practices were grounded on social capital and could convert to symbolic capital through obtaining a marriage certificate. Third, the practices of utilising the bunker area were based on the social and symbolic capital of being a state-established border community. The practice of community meetings enabled residents to reach common agreements and to negotiate with

the local government. Furthermore, residents also built houses in the bunker areas and applied for house registration numbers, electricity, and running water to emphasise the security of their rights in using the bunker areas. Such practices reflected the power of the local community that had the strength to act in the border context.

**Key words:** *Practices, social capital, symbolic capital, state-established community, border.*

## Introduction

Border Studies is an academic field that evolved greatly from the 1980s to the mid-1990s and largely employed central and marginal analysis. Later, in the late 1990s, globalisation drew attention to the study of activities and powers at the borders. Since the 2000s, Border Studies has begun to analyse the practices of the states, people, and border crossings (Sangkhamanee, 2008). Giving importance to practices, the new generation of geographers has classified borders into two categories: (1) cross-borders and (2) inner-state integration. Both categories are linked with the integration or exclusion of people, causing them to look more for relationships across borders (Taweessit & Krisanajutha, 2012). Political scientists realise the importance of power at the border and define the border in two different dimensions. The first dimension emphasises state power and points out that borders are under the control of the state and that borders are constructed through political interventions to deal with the overlapping of the power/authority over the areas (Pitiphat, 2010). The second dimension focuses on various relationships among different actors, not just the state that exerts power. Sociologists point out that borders are complicated, both in terms of “thoughts” and “practices.” A border is an area of engagement between the power of the central government and that of the local one (Manorom, 2011). Moreover, all border studies must take account into the hybrid culture emerging from the interaction of diverse dimensions, such as state power, paths of action, the existence of the state, networks of cross-border society, and the practices of people and communities (Kolossoff, 2005). This article applies the notion of the border that emphasises various relationships and diverse sources of power, including that of the local community. Although controlled by the state, local people refuse to acquiesce but have various practices to confront and negotiate with state power. This shows the interactions between agency and structure, which means the state power through its regulations, rules, and path of action in the border field.

A border community established by the state, the Thai Romyen community (pseudonym) in this case, is different from border communities in general, especially in terms of the presence of state power, interactions between the state and those who live in the community as well as those who cross the border. This is because the existence of a border community is usually linked with the state, various kinds of capital, and transnational interactions (Martinez, 1994;

Flynn, 1997). In this study, the state's management of border areas is not limited to physical territory; it also includes people's thoughts and imaginations (Sangkhamanee, 2018). Thus, this article emphasises both the state's actions in controlling a border community and the practices of people in the community that reflect their encounter and negotiation with the state. The Thai Romyen community was established in 1980 after a battle along the Cambodian-Thai border. It is made up of members of Ban Kruat Self-Help Settlement Village. The community was founded according to the national defence strategy. Thus its establishment was as significant as that of the border area. This article aims to present the ways in which residents of a state-established community turn rules, regulations and other matters that the state used to manage and transform them into various types of capital to stand up to and negotiate with the state.

### **The Objective of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the use of social and symbolic capital in the practices of people in the state-established community on the Thai-Cambodian border.

### **Literature Review**

This article employs Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1997) as the analytical framework. Bourdieu proposes that practice is a "strategy" that people use to negotiate with social rules. The practice is the result of interactions between capital and habitus occurring in the field that has different regulations and structures. "Field" according to Bourdieu is the social world divided into a variety of distinct arenas or "fields" of practice. In this study, the field is the state-established border community. For Bourdieu, "habitus" refers to the deeply embedded habits, skills and dispositions determined by both the "structure" and actions of an individual that have continuously been repeated for a long time. Habitus affects the social actions of an individual and the ways that individuals perceive the social world around them. Bourdieu categorises capital into four types: (1) social capital; (2) symbolic capital; (3) economic capital; and (4) cultural capital. Social capital means social relationships/networks or social structures, such as the networks/relationships of relatives and neighbours. Social capital is derived from perception and recognition. It may come from economic or other existing capital that can return to its original form. Economic capital refers to assets and production inputs. It can be converted from other forms of capital. Finally, cultural capital comes in three sub-forms: objectified, institutionalised, and habitus. Cultural capital and habitus are made up of and maintain each other (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Moreover, a sub-form of cultural capital is habitus, which can occur and change under the context of the particular culture. Thus, habitus is a precondition for the existence of cultural capital (Prasongbandit, 2010).

This article aims to reveal that the practices of people settling and living in a state-established border community so as to access resident and farmland are based on the various kinds of capital possessed under the border field. The analysis of practices takes account of acting power and methods (Bourdieu, 1997), and it emphasises social capital and symbolic capital, the major forms of capital affecting practices. According to Bourdieu, economic and cultural capitals (including habitus) are also linked to practices. However, in the context of Thai Romyen community, which has not been established for long and is composed of poor people who seek land on which to earn their living, economic and cultural capital cannot be clearly seen.

Following Bourdieu's frame of analysis, this article considers both structure and agency by looking at state actions and regulations and people's strategies in negotiating and encountering them. It points out how and in what ways people use the various kinds of capital that they possess in their practices and what the results of such practices are. Through exploring "structure-agency" interactions, this article shows how the residents of the Thai Romyen community transform the limitations of being under state regulations into the capital of various forms to support the practices beneficial to themselves and their families. This transformation shows the power of the local community that exists along with state power in the border area. It also emphasises the fact that even in the state-established community, the state cannot control people completely.

### **Research Methodology**

This study applied a qualitative research methodology and the phenomenological approach. The research site was the Thai Romyen community in Jantoppet sub-district, Ban Kruat district, Buriram province. Research participants, purposely selected, included representatives of households, members of the state-established border community, and state officials. The primary method employed for data collection was that of in-depth interviews. The main points of the interview consisted of the reasons for becoming members of Ban Kruat Self-Help Settlement Village in 1969 and the state-established border community in 1980, various practices to acquire rights to resident and farmland, and different forms of capital having a connection with such practices. In addition, data collection was also conducted via participant and non-participant observation to obtain information on social activities and interactions between village residents and local government officials. Fieldwork was carried out in the period June – December 2018. The triangulation method was used for data verification. Content analysis was employed to explain the phenomena under Bourdieu's analytic framework of practices.

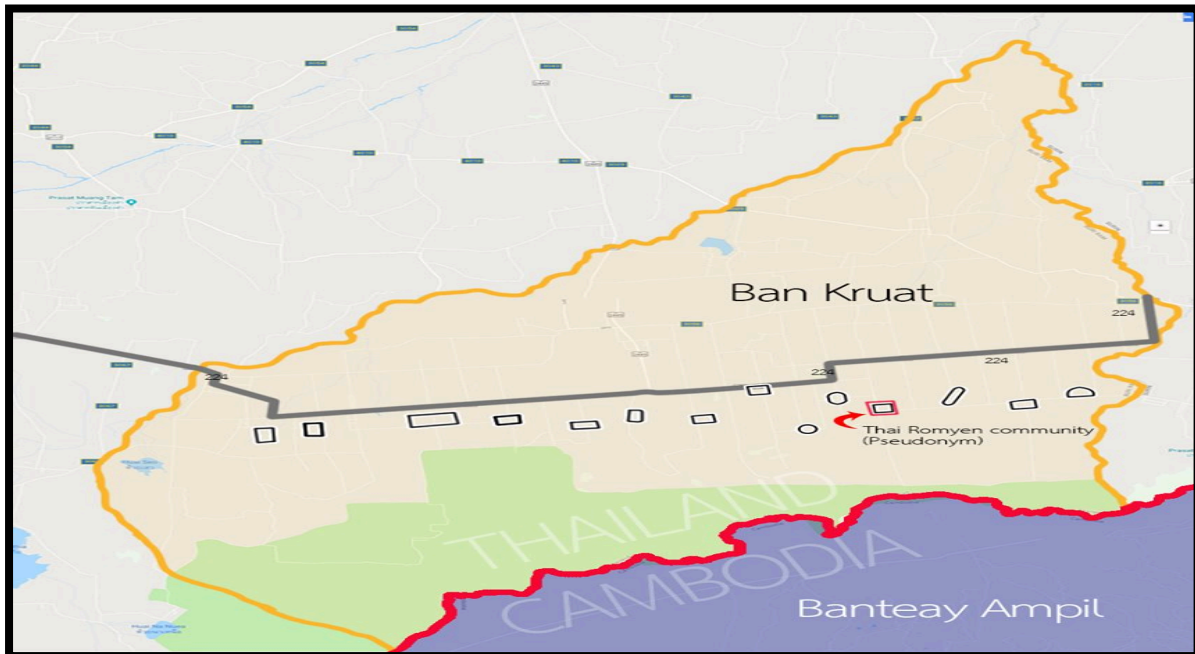
## **Research Findings**

Research findings are presented in two related parts: development of the state-established border community and practices to obtain rights to resident and farmland:

### ***Development of the State-Established Community in the Border Area***

The development of the Thai Romyen community can be divided into major periods. The first period began in 1969 when Ban Kruat Self-Help Settlement Village invited people to apply to become members. Most of the applicants were farmers of Isan and Thai Korat ethnicities from nearby areas who also persuaded their relatives and people from the same villages to join them. Therefore, in the beginning, people's houses were scattered throughout the allocated lands, such as on Sai-ek Road, Sai-to Road, and Sai-tree Road. Later, the names of these roads became community names. Since most of the people were relatives or came from the same villages, there was a social network that connected them. These people lived in the southern part of Ban Kruat district adjacent to Ta Phraya National Park and Cambodia. Since the allocated lands were located along the border, the community was affected by clashes between Thai military forces and joint foreign forces, especially in 1975-1978, when foreign forces in cooperation with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) robbed the villagers, causing some households to return to their domiciles and the whole village to be evacuated. The event led to the establishment of Thai-Khmer border self-defence villages in the second period in 1980. It was during this time that Thai Romyen community was designated, together with other communities in Ban Kruat, as a state-established border community. There were a total of 18 state-established border communities along the Cambodian-Thai border. Of this number, there were two communities in the sub-districts of Sai Takoo, four communities in Prasat, six communities in Bueng Jaroen, two communities in Nong Mai Ngam, and four communities in Jantoppet sub-district (Ban Kruat Self-Help Settlement Village, 2016), as shown in Figure 1 below.

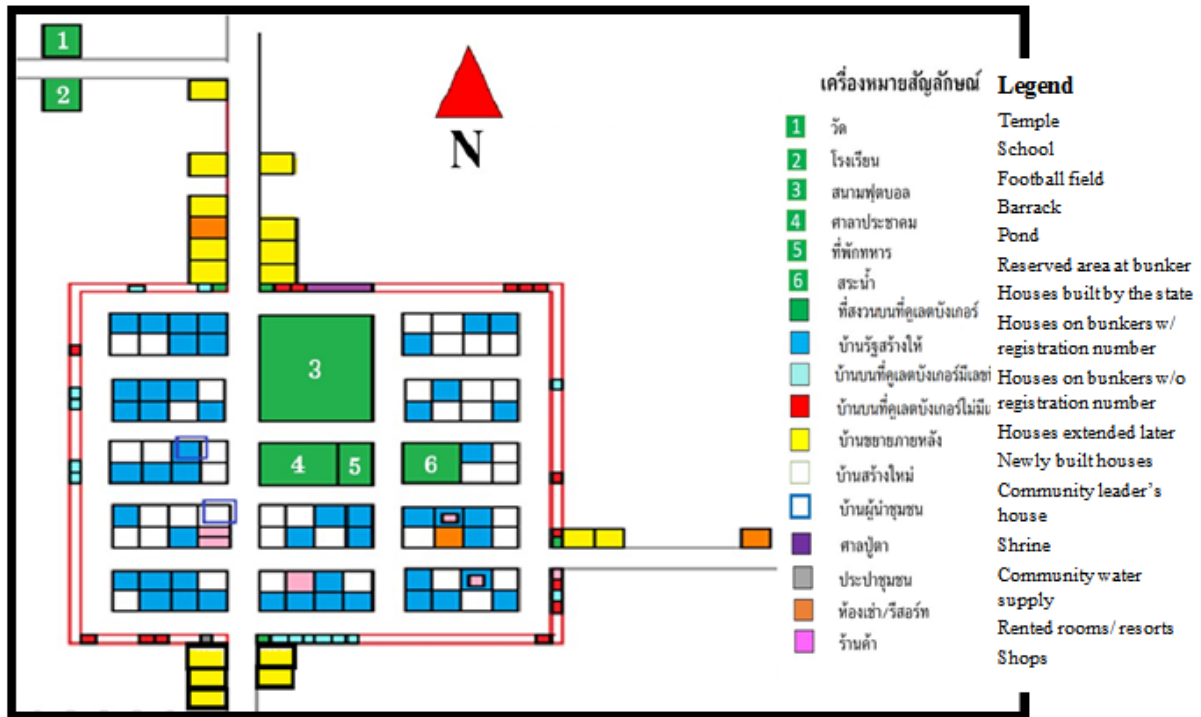
**Figure 1.** State-Established border communities in Ban Kruat district of Buriram province



The state-established border communities like the Thai-Khmer border self-defence villages had the following characteristics: they consisted of residential areas, reserved areas for the benefit of all members, and bunker areas. These communities were designed in circular, short oval, long oval, or rectangular shape. The Thai Romyen community was rectangular in shape and was surrounded by bunkers. The bunkers were large dugouts about three meters high and 20 meters wide. They were used to protect the community in the event of clashes. Later, when it became peaceful, the households started using the bunker areas, and eventually, the community agreed that there should be certain measures to ensure that these areas were used equally. That was the starting point of some important practices that will be discussed later in this article. Apart from being surrounded by bunkers, the Thai Romyen community had public areas that all members could use. Houses in the community, shown in Figure 2, included houses constructed by the state, those built by the people themselves, and those built in the bunker areas.



**Figure 2.** Community site map of the Thai Romyen community



Residents of the state-established border community used those special characteristics mentioned above to claim certain rights and negotiate with the local government. Moreover, it was found that many households in the community were related or came from the same villages. Later, social networks emerged as a result of marriage, administration, and defence of the community. These networks have benefits and have helped each other all along. In other words, the social networks serve as a kind of social capital which the practices draw on.

### *Practices in the State-Established Border Community*

Practices to acquire the rights to land to live in and to make a living in the Thai Romyen community occurred in a number of contexts and were linked with different forms of capital as follows:

### *Practices to Become Members of Self-Help Settlement Village and Networks of Relatives and People from the Same Villages*

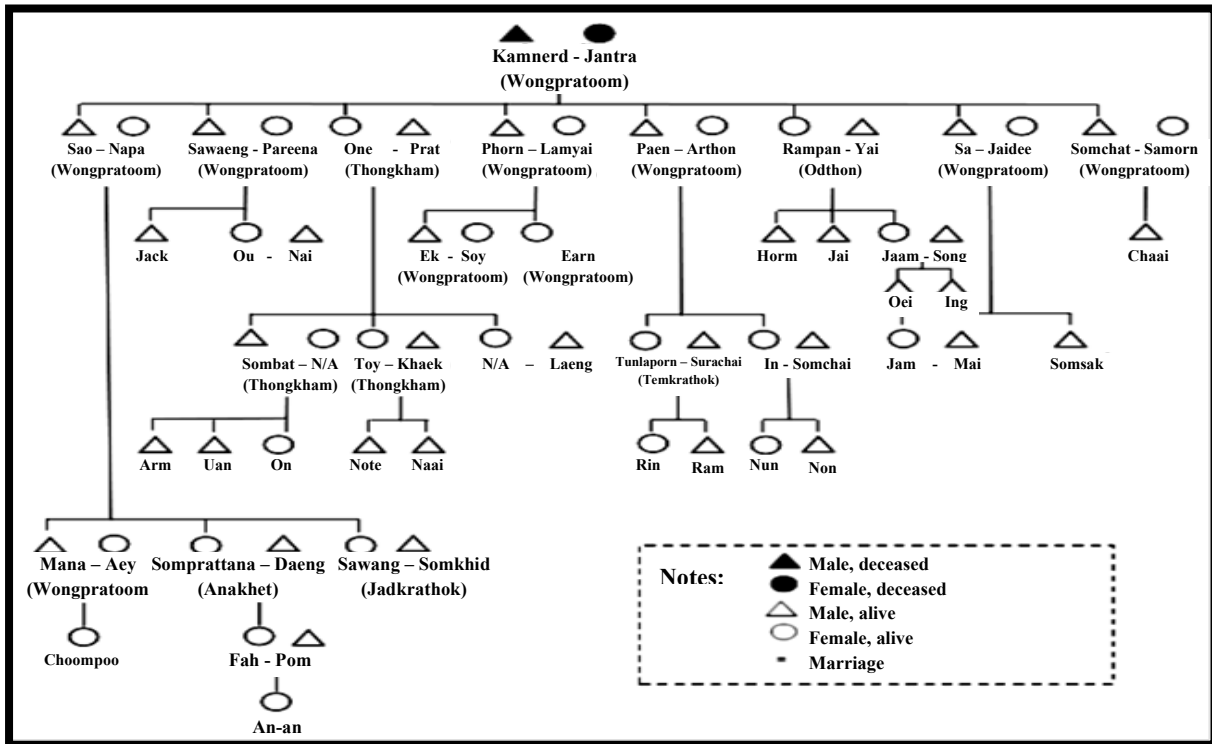
Being a member of the self-help settlement village was the primary condition required for one to be able to obtain land; thus, practices of becoming members of the village were important especially in the first period of community establishment. In 1969, Ban Kruat district was included in the policy of the Public Welfare Department establishing self-help settlement villages to assist people in border provinces and areas where there were communist activities.

Such practices were strengthened when a self-help settlement village was open for membership applications. Each household accepted to join the village would be provided with 25 rai of land for residential and agricultural purposes along the Cambodian-Thai border. Although the border was considered a risky area, being allocated land was a key factor for people to make the decision to join. However, the self-help settlement village required applicants to have the following qualifications: (1) being of Thai nationality; (2) attaining legal age and being a family leader; (3) having good behaviour; (4) the ability to be a farmer; (5) not being insane; (6) having no land or not enough land to make a living; and (7) not engaging in any occupation at the time. Thus, when the opportunity arose, practices began. Many people recounted how they travelled to the site after receiving news and information from relatives who were already members of the self-help settlement village. They stayed with their relatives and got help in preparing the documents required to submit the applications. Support and help from their relatives or people from the same villages were crucial for the migration to the border area.

After becoming a member of the self-help settlement village, being able to choose (or buy) a ‘good’ piece of land from another member was another phenomenon frequently found in the first period of the development of the state-established community. According to the interviews, relatives and people from the same villages formed a social network of people who were connected with and helped each other to become members of the self-help settlement village and to choose the location of the land. Thus, those having larger networks have more benefits. Figure 3 shows the family tree of a family having the most members living in the Thai Romyen community. The family was called “Wongpratoom” (pseudonym), and the heads of the family were Mr Kamnerd and Mrs Jantra Wongpratoom who moved from Khong district in Nakhon Ratchasima province. Six out of their eight children settled down in the Thai Romyen community. Their children’s families living in the community also obtained land through marriage; this practice will be discussed in the next section.



**Figure 3.** The Wongpratoom family tree diagram



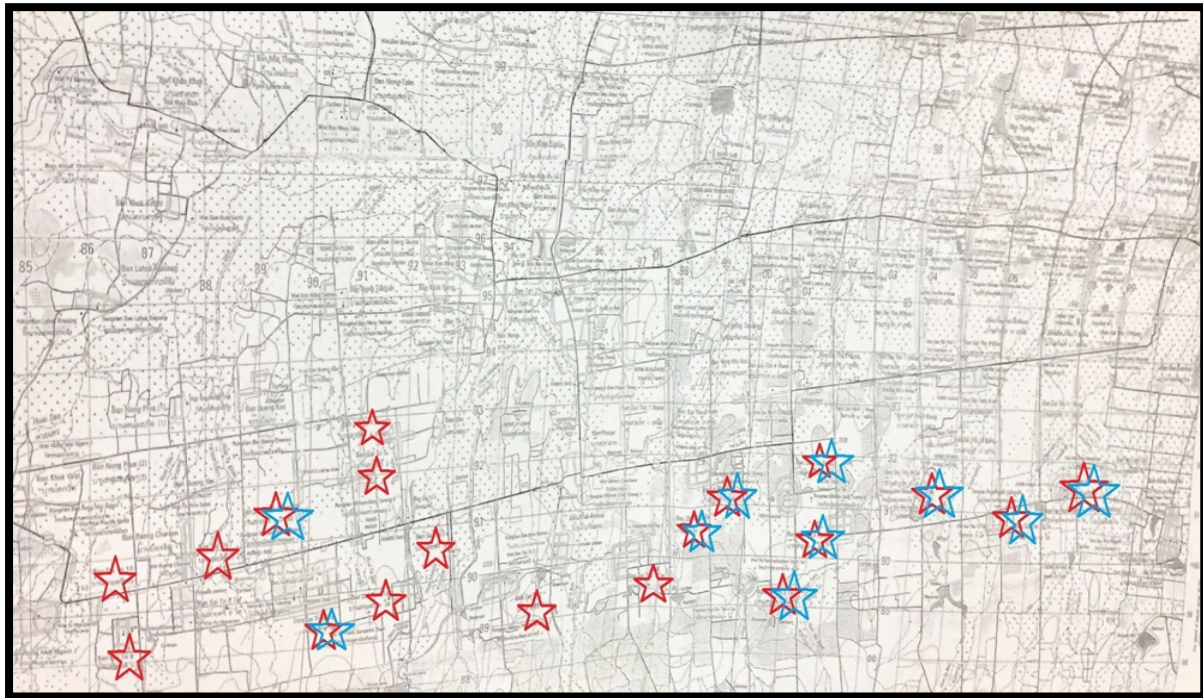
According to Mr Phorn, son of the Wongpratoom family, the motivations encouraging his parents to leave their natal community and settle at the self-help settlement village include help from relatives and people from the same village as well as the hope of having a better life like those families that had moved to the village before them; as he said,

*“...My parents had eight children. We originally lived in Korat. When we heard about the self-help settlement village from our relatives, my father decided to move here, and we were provided with 25 rai of land... When my oldest brother had his own family, he followed us to the village. Other children of my parents, including me, bought the land from other members in the village. Some were allocated land when we had our own families. Most of our family members settled down here. Our children and grandchildren were born here, so our family has the largest number of members in the village...”* (Phorn Wongpratoom (pseudonym), 62, interview on 11 May 2018).

Apart from relatives and networks of people coming from the same villages have helped and facilitated migration from various Isan villages to settle in the state-established communities in the border area. In the Thai Romyen community, there were many people coming from Nong Koh village, Satuek district, Buriram province and Ta Khraw village, Khong district, Nakhon Ratchasima province. People from these communities have lived in many communities in Ban Kruat district, apart from the Thai Romyen community. In Figure 4, the

red stars symbolise the network of people from Nong Koh village and the blue stars represent the network of people from Ta Khraw village. The distribution of houses of people from the same villages highlights the importance of social networks among them in migration and settlement on the border area.

**Figure 4.** Distribution of houses of people from the same villages



Although the border was a risky area, having people from the same villages staying together and helping each other made people feel at home and safe. At the beginning of their migration, the neighbours who had come to the self-help settlement village earlier would provide them with accommodation and assist in applying for membership of the self-help settlement village. In this context, the practices of becoming members of the village were conducted via the use of social capital that consisted of networks of relatives and people from the same villages. As a result, those having larger and more networks, e.g., having more family members, would have a better opportunity to own land and have access to various rights provided by the state. In this context, social capital has mediated power relations and facilitated negotiations between actors and the state.

#### ***Practices of Getting Married to Earn the Right to Residential Land***

For administration purposes, in 1980 the state gathered households and established a community under the Thai-Khmer Border Self-Defence Village Program. The key principle of this program was state security. This aim was implemented through establishing a sense of love for and attachment to the country and providing the right to acquire land for earning a

living. Under the program, the residents were provided with numerous benefits, such as one rai of residential land, a house for each household, occupational promotions, and public utilities in the community. In return, they had to collaborate with the state and participate in the state's activities. According to villagers, it was the time when the state gave the most benefits to its population in border areas; thus, many people wanted to move into self-defence villages. The status of a household proved by a marriage certificate was set as an important criterion to earn rights to live in self-defence villages. Under this condition, the practice of marriage was accentuated so as to meet the state criteria for obtaining residential land. Hence, there were a great deal of marriages taking place during the time of the establishment of the Thai-Khmer Border Self-Defence Village Program.

Such marriages often involved women and men in the networks of relatives or people from the same villages who lived in the community or outside, though there were also marriages between the residents of Thai Romyem community and outsiders. Some families managed to get many children to marry in order to acquire marriage certificates and household status. For instance, Pian, a woman in a family with four sisters, recounted that her parents had arranged for all daughters to marry men in the community so as to acquire rights to land and houses. She said,

*“...Five daughters married men in the village whose families migrated from the same village in Buriram. After getting married, we were provided with land and a house... If the parents said it is good [marrying a man in the village], it is certainly good. All of us have been together with our husbands, living in the community until now.”* (Pian Ochalert (pseudonym), 63, interview on 20 July 2018).

While drawing on social capital, marriage also created symbolic capital in the form of marriage certificates and household status. The symbolic capital enabled villagers in the Border Self-defence community to negotiate the criteria set by the state so as to obtain residential land. It can be said that through marriage practices, social capital is converted to symbolic capital. At the same time marriage also strengthened and facilitated the expansion of social networks. The expansion of a network of relatives through marriage shown in the family tree diagram (Figure 3) is a case in point. This study reveals that through marriage practices, residents of Thai Romyem community have used the rules and regulations that the state used to control and direct them to their own benefits. Such practices draw on both social capital and symbolic capital.

### ***Practices of Using the Bunker Area***

The system of land ownership in the border area is different from other areas since it is more flexible and depends on complicated social relationships due to the fact that the border is a

linkup space where people, goods and trans-border culture meet (Santasombat, 2012). Borders areas have an abundance of resources and unoccupied lands. As a result, they are the target areas for economic integration, control of resource utilisation for utmost benefits, settlement, and security. These processes are highly dynamic, and thus the border becomes an area of complex interests, a security site, and a buffer zone. Moreover, the state also creates new rules and regulations that can be either mandatory or flexible, such as land use regulations (Manorom, 2016) With regard to land issues, Suksumret, Srikhum & Smith (2015) reveal that special characteristics of the land in border areas include a flexible policy regarding land use and legal ownership. In some cases, there is no land ownership. An unclear ownership system, especially with regard to unoccupied public lands, encourages people in the community to negotiate with the state regarding criteria and regulations of land use and control. The practices of using the bunker area in Thai Romyen community reveal how residents of the community negotiate with the state and what kinds of capital such practices drew on.

### ***Growing Plants, Building Shops and Animal Cages: Practices of Making Reservation and Using the Bunker Area***

As mentioned earlier, bunkers surrounding the community were a special feature of a state-established border community. Dugouts of 20 meters wide and 3 meters high were built to protect the community against battles under the Thai-Khmer Border Self-Defence Village in 1980. When the border was peaceful, the bunker turned into an empty area, and the people figured out how to use it. They pulled the bunker down, then grew bamboo and other plants, and built shops and animal cages. People who made use of the bunker area were families that had no place to live; some had their houses situated opposite to the bunker area. Because of ties with relatives and neighbours, most members of the community were not opposed to this usage.

Using the bunker areas involved the practices of reservation and manipulation of a public area where actors did not have ownership. As people in the community did not express opposition and the local government officers compromised, such practices kept occurring. Han, a man who did not have a house to live after becoming separated from his wife and later built a shop on the bunker, described how he started to use the area:

*“...I saw vacant land adjacent to the road. I told the community leader that I would build a shop where I could also live; he didn’t say anything. He knew that I had no house of my own, and I had nowhere to go. I just asked for permission to make a living on this land, I had no intention to possess it at all...”* (Han Chanachai (pseudonym), 61, interview on 25 December 2018).

In Han's case, he was having no land to make a living become a symbolic condition/capital that allowed him to make use of the bunker. In other cases, having a house located opposite the bunker validated the use of the bunker area. According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital derives from perception and recognition. In the cases of Han and others, recognition by their neighbours and local government officials regarding their living conditions and house location became symbolic capital in which their practices of making use of the bunker area are drawn. In addition, being a state-established border community also legitimated the practices of using the bunker area. In this context, membership can be considered symbolic capital.

Moreover, that use of the bunker area was connected to unclear state regulations regarding the utilisation of land on the border. In this context, people took the opportunity to use the land by using their social network with local government officials whom they had come to know when working on the compromise regarding the enforcement of rules and regulations. On the community's part, there were certain agreements to avoid conflicts; such agreements could be reached because of relationships among members, most of whom were relatives. In this light, the practices of reservation and utilisation of the bunker area involved various forms of capital. Each practice might draw on single or multiple forms of capital, which could be converted into other forms. For example, the negotiations and agreements among members of the community and local government officers drew on relationships and networks among relatives and neighbours, which are social capital. Such social capital has symbolic characteristics; in other words, social capital was converted into symbolic capital as the perception and recognition of members of the community and local government officers regarding the reservation and utilisation of the bunker had drawn on their relationships and networks.

### ***Village Meetings: Practices to Legitimate the Use of Land***

Organising a village meeting was a practice to reflect the power of the local community and to legitimate the use of land in the bunker area. In 2009, the Thai Romyen community held a meeting to formulate regulations regarding the use of the bunker area called "Allocation of Public Lands, B.E. 2552 (A.D. 2009)." These regulations prescribed how to allocate the plots of the bunker area to households in the community and what qualifications of households were required. Representatives of the households were invited to attend the meeting so that they could take part in developing regulations which would be implemented in the community. The regulation was made in reference to Kruat Self-Help Settlement criteria in recruiting members to live in the settlement village. As a result of the village meeting, qualifications of legitimated households included: (1) those with house registration in the community; and (2) members of households who actually live in the community. After the committee approved the households that had qualified, the whole bunker area was measured



and divided equally into plots to be given to each household. Apart from allocated land, the meeting agreed to set aside the land of 5 meters in width to construct a road and the public areas on corners where residents of the community can use.

The practice of village meeting can be called a “strategy” that the residents of the Thai Romyen community used to negotiate with the local government to legitimise the use of the bunker area. The primary condition facilitating this practice is the status of being a state-established community in a border area and a Self-Help Settlement village. Such conditions required residents to follow certain rules and regulations regarding the control and allocation of land. In this context, they made use of the government rules and regulations to legitimate their use of the bunker area through the practice of a village meeting. The meeting was organised on the basis of relationships and networks of villagers who realised their need for land for their children to earn a living after getting married and having a family of their own. Most of these villagers were relatives or those who had migrated from the same villages. The practice of village meeting drew on social capital. In the meantime, the local government took a rather compromising role as the bunker had not been used for a long time. Although this practice was quite successful and many families had made use of the bunker area, some residents did not agree with its allocation. The reason for the disagreement was that they had been the original owners of the bunker area before the state expropriated it and set up the community in 1980. However, their rights to occupy land were not taken into account, as Somsong, who had lived in the area before the state-established border communities were formed in 1980, stated:

*“...Soldiers took our lands to establish a village. They gave us 800 baht per rai for land expropriation. It was sad thinking about that, but we had to do it for the benefit of the public...”* (Somsong Sattra (pseudonym), 58, interview, 22 June 2018).

After the village meeting ended and the plots land were allocated, some residents decided to switch plots of land with each other to make it easier for them to use the land allocated. Others sold the right to use the land to other residents at a reasonable price, although selling and purchasing rights to use land was against the rules. Thus, the sales and transactions were made without documents, but verbal agreement and trust developed based on social capital. The symbolism of being a state-established border community enabled the residents of the Thai Romyen community to negotiate with the local government regarding usage of the bunker area. At the same time, social capital, relationships and networks among the residents facilitated the practices of village meetings allowing villagers to mutually reach the agreements of how to allocate the bunker as well as negotiating with the local government to legitimate their rights to use the banker land.

The participation of the residents of the Thai Romyen community in allocating bunker land is essentially in accord with the studies of Manrom (2016) and Kritsanajutha (2016). These works examine the issues of land management, especially in the border areas which involve many parties, including the public sector, government agencies, local administration organisations, capitalists and villagers. Both studies emphasise the complexity of land grabbing and suggest that land management has to be integrated at institutional levels and give importance to community participation. Surasom Kritsanajutha also points out that in border areas, local communities should have their own development policies in parallel with the development of the border and the trans-border economy. Development policies should also include a policy to allocate unused land to those having no land so that they can make a living.

***Building a House, Applying for a House Registration Number, Electricity and a Water Supply: Practices of Securing Land Use***

Building houses and applying for house registration numbers, electricity and a water supply took place after the practice of the village meeting. In Thai Romyen, there were 28 houses built on the bunker area. Most of these households were the second generation of people whose parents lived in the community. Apart from building houses, some families grew plants and built shops and animal cages. As they did not have title deeds, but only the right to use the land, having a house registration number was a way to secure their rights and make them feel confident about occupying the land, as one man reported,

*“...I built this house after getting married. My mother gave me the right to use the land. I do not feel insecure, although no title deed can be issued for this plot of land. Our house does have a registration number ...”* (Jenjob Khrobtittang (pseudonym), 32, interview on 12 September 2018).

Practices of applying for a house registration number, electricity and water supply involve various government organisations, including the sub-district municipality, the Provincial Electricity Authority and the community. A house number is required when applying for electricity and water supply. As a house number and such facilities are provided by the government, having them is a symbol of security and confirmation of people’s right to the land.

To obtain a house number and facilities, there are regulations and procedures that applicants have to follow. However, in the context where power and the land ownership system are unclear, there is room for people to claim and affirm their rights. In this case, the practices of residents of the community to secure their rights over land clearly showed how they used the symbolic capital of being members of a state-established community for their benefit.



All in all, the practices of residents in the state-established border community to acquire the rights to residential and agricultural lands were diverse and based on both symbolic capital and social capital. This article discussed three major findings. First, a practice would involve one or more forms of capital, for example, the practice of getting married to acquire the right to residential land related to both social capital and symbolic capital. Selecting a spouse was based mainly on networks of relatives and people from the same villages, while a marriage certificate as symbolic capital was used to stand up to the state in accordance with the criteria to acquire land. Second, the study confirms Bourdieu's practice theory, suggesting that capital is transformable from one form to another. This reflects the capital's status as "social power" transmitted via the agency's practices. For example, social capital having symbolic characteristics was transformed into symbolic capital in the practices by which people became members of the self-help settlement village and legitimated the use of the bunker area to make the local government officials whom they were familiar with compromise and allow them to use the land. Third, Bourdieu's theory of practice was usually analysed on an individual level, but this study found that certain practices were not performed by individuals alone, but that the household often took part. Therefore, an analysis of practices should take households into consideration.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study analysed the practices in a state-established community, applying Bourdieu's theory of practice, which suggests that "practice" is a "strategy" that humans use to encounter and negotiate with "structure," which, in this study, refers to rules, regulations and agreements. In the border field, people used various strategies in their practices to acquire the rights to lands. In each practice, people chose to use particular types of capital that serve as a power relationship. This study found that social and symbolic capital was used in many different ways and served as the power relationship between "structure" and "agency," which was shown through different practices that people encounter, manipulate and negotiate with the local government to acquire the right to use land. Based on their experiences that had been accumulated through interactions with local government staff and the state rules and regulations, residents of the Thai Romyen community were able to choose appropriate strategies and kinds of capital to achieve their goal of becoming members of the state-established border community, utilising the bunker area, and legitimising and securing the land use.

The use of Bourdieu's theory of practice often focuses primarily on the individual level. However, this study found that an analysis of practice that concentrates only on agents alone would have limitations. That is to say, that an individual did not execute the acts all alone. Thus, when conducting an analysis of practices, the importance should not be given only to the individual, but also the individual's practices in the household context. In other words, the



analytical framework should be expanded to the family context in relation to the individual's practices.

In border studies, most studies often focus on the power of the state and investors/those involved in business; however, this study reveals the power of the local community that exists in parallel with other kinds of power. Local power becomes even stronger when the practice is taken in collective action, such as the practice of village meetings, as described in this study. Ignoring the power of the local community limits the understanding of the situation and the dynamics of the border areas, especially in state-established border communities which have different development and establishment conditions than other communities. In terms of policies, the results of this study suggest that the state should give importance to local communities and put more effort to understand their potential. Policies regarding allocation and management of resources and community administration should be formulated in ways that are consistent with community situations. Such recommendations are shared with previous studies (Manorom, 2016; Kritsanajutha, 2015) that call on the state realisation of situations and potentials of local communities, especially those in border areas. The insights are the basis of the formulation of policies that are most suitable for border communities and contribute to the development of the society and the country as a whole.

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### **Ethical Principles for Research Involving Humans**

This article is a part of the dissertation entitled “Practices of State-Established Border Community on the Cambodian-Thai Border”, which has been approved by Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee for Human Research in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the ICH Good Clinical Practice Guideline (No. HE613017) on 7 May 2018.



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### **List of Interviewees**

Jenjob Khrobtittang (pseudonym), 32, being interviewed on 12 September 2018

Maj.Gen. Rakdaen Chartmankhong (pseudonym), 49, being interviewed on 11 August 2018

Pian Ochalert (pseudonym), 63, being interviewed on 20 July 2018

Somsong Sattra (pseudonym), 58, being interviewed on 22 June 2018

Han Chanachai (pseudonym), 61, being interviewed on 25 December 2018