



Champaka
Monograph 5

The Nguyen and Champa
during 17th and 18th Century

A Study of Nguyen Foreign Relations



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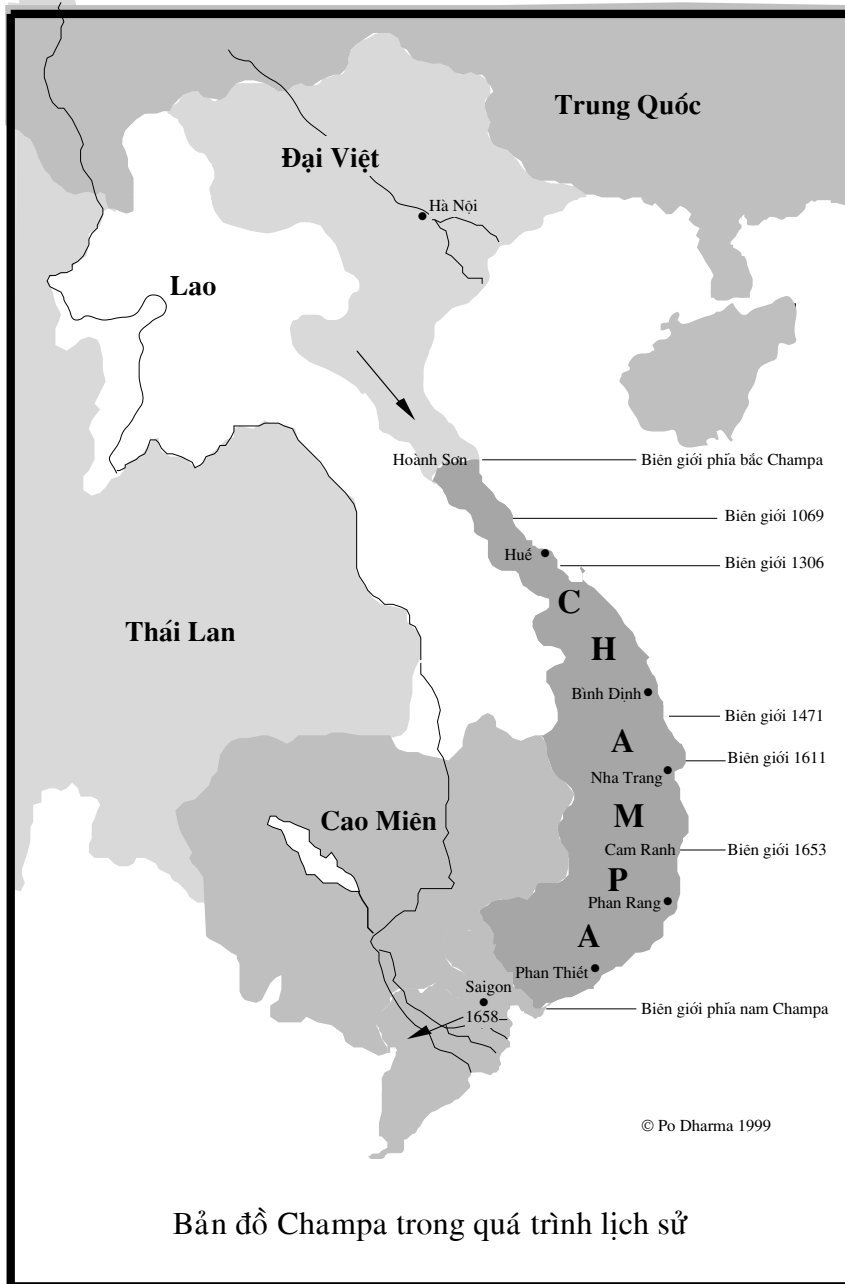
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Introduction

This is an attempt to reconstruct a period of Vietnamese history by studying certain aspects of the foreign relations of the Nguyen rulers of southern Vietnam with the kingdom of Champa during the years 1558 till 1776. Nguyen rule over southern Vietnam began in 1558 with the appointment of the Nguyen family patriarch, Nguyen Hoang, to the position of governor of the province of Thuan Hoa in central Vietnam. This study begins in 1558, the year Nguyen Hoang took up the governorship of Thuan Hoa, and ends with the collapse of the Nguyen government in 1775. In that year, the last Nguyen ruler, Phuc Thuan, had to flee the capitol, Phu Xuan, in the face of an all-out attack by the Le-Trinh Army of the north.

The period studied also chronicles the Vietnamese expansion from the Red River Deltas, in the north, to the central highlands and subsequently, the Mekong Delta, in the south. This southward expansion was the result of the policies of the nine successive rulers from the Nguyen family. They are Nguyen Hoang (1558-1613), Nguyen Phuc Nguyen (1613-1635), Nguyen Phuc Lan (1635-1648), Nguyen Phuc Tan (1648-1687), Nguyen Phuc Tran (1687-1691), Nguyen Phuc Chu (1691-1725), Nguyen Phuc Tru (1725-1738), Nguyen Phuc Khoat (1738-1765) and Nguyen Phuc Thuan (1765-1776).

The 17th and 18th century history of southern Vietnam is one of the least studied periods of that country's historiography by the Vietnamese. One reason for this neglect is that the Vietnamese government considered this period in the country's history as divisive and unhealthy for national unity. This was further complicated by the fact that it was the later Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) the direct descendants of the earlier Nguyen, who surrendered Vietnam to the French in 1883. They were seen as traitors or betrayers of the nation.

Even less explored is the foreign relations of the Nguyen. It is hoped that by bringing to light the external dimension of Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam – in this case, with Champa, several questions pertaining to the nature of Nguyen rule can be answered. This includes a look at how the Nguyen first used foreign relations to bolster their image where they were placed in a position to act as a de facto independent state, and later to achieve its purpose of state formation.

This study will also investigate how the Nguyen conducted themselves in relation to foreigners. This raises the question as to whether, in its dealings with foreigners and its neighbours, the Nguyen considered itself an independent state or conversely merely saw itself as an extension of the Le rule. This thesis puts forth the claim that by the 18th century, there was a shift in the stance of the Nguyen from being traditionally bound to their northern rulers to being an independent nation with its identity forged in south Vietnam. This is most apparent in its foreign relations.

In the opening years of the 18th century, the Nguyen began to conduct foreign and tributary relations independently. Freed at last from conditions that had impeded their direction to the South, the Nguyen began to act as overlords when dealing with its neighbours.

This study intends to show that its dealings with foreigners and the experiment of imposing tributary relations on its neighbours is evidence of the Nguyen's projection of themselves as rulers of a separate state. The tributary system was also a source of economic strength where tribute items were used for trade.

The following aspects will be given scrutiny to flesh out this thesis. Firstly, it is important to consider how foreign relations bolstered the image of the Nguyen and eased its transition into becoming a de facto kingdom. This then leads to the second aspect, the evolution in the growing strength of the Nguyen vis-à-vis the Le Dynasty towards a real possibility of an independent statehood. The third aspect is an examination on how relations with weaker states and upland tribes allowed the Nguyen to structure a tributary system where it occupied a central position. Finally, this study will

investigate the internal efforts of building a governmental apparatus to consolidate its position as a polity.

This study is not confined to the study of state-to-state relations. Foreign relations here refers to all forms of contact with external entities which include foreign nationals (traders and missionaries) living in Nguyen Southern Vietnam and also include non-state groups, non-Vietnamese elements living within or beyond the boundaries of Nguyen Southern Vietnam. The study of the foreign relations of the Nguyen has to be understood in the context of the process of state formation, more precisely, how foreign relations were used to realise the ambition of the Nguyen. Before proceeding with this, it would be pertinent to throw light on both the primary and secondary material employed in the drawing of this picture.

The case in study is the Nguyen's relations with Champa or what remained as Champa in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is hoped that through this study, the nature of the Nguyen's foreign relations can be demonstrated more succinctly.

Literature Review

Generally, the period between 1529 and 1802 in Vietnamese history can be characterized as volatile. The period is associated with civil wars between the Mac Dynasty and the Le Restoration loyalists, followed in 1627 by a standoff between the Trinh in the north and the Nguyen in the south. It was also a period which saw an increase in Vietnam's foreign contacts, both in the north and the south. Past works on this subject are a useful quarry that this study will make frequent reference to.

This notion of division dominating the period is addressed in the works of Le Thanh Khoi,¹ Phan Huy Le and his colleagues in Hanoi.² Another theme which has also received attention for

¹ Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Viet Nam des Origines a 1858*, Paris: Sudeasie, 1981, pp. 253-264. Le Thanh Khoi's other work is, *Le Viet Nam: Histoire et Civilisation*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955.

² Phan Huy Le et al., *Lich Su Viet Nam, Tap I*, Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi, 1976, pp. 291-293.

this period of Vietnamese history is the southward movement (Nam Tien) of the Vietnamese people. The Nguyen's territorial expansion in the south became the focus of historians such as Jean Chesneaux,³ Phan Khoang,⁴ and Tran Trong Kim.⁵

While most general works on Vietnamese history only devote certain parts of their discussions on the Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam, likewise, the same could be said of scholarly works that centre specifically on the later Nguyen Dynasty. The pioneering works are those by Leopold Cadiere, a Catholic missionary of the French Foreign Missionary Society (Missions Etrangères des Paris) who had served in Vietnam during the early part of the twentieth century. Cadiere, a founding member of the Association des Amis du Vieux Hue (Association of the Friends of Old Hue) in 1913, started his research on Nguyen rule via a survey of the historical geography of Quang Binh, the earlier administrative centre of the Nguyen.⁶ His subsequent works deal with a wide range of subjects relating to Nguyen rule, including the shifting of official residences of the Nguyen,⁷ the subject of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's Christian wife,⁸ and on the trade of Thuan Hoa.⁹ Perhaps the most important contribution by Cadiere is his explanation of the estab-

³ Jean Chesneaux, *Contribution a l'histoire de la Nation Vietnamienne*, Paris: Editions Sociales, 1955.

⁴ Phan Khoang, *Viet Su Xu Dang Trong 1558-1777: Cuoc Nam-Tien Cua Dan Toc Viet-Nam* [History of Vietnam in Dang Trong 1558-1777: The Epic of the Southward Movement of the Vietnamese People], Saigon: Nha Sach Khai Tri, 1969.

⁵ Tran Trong Kim, *Viet Nam Thong Shi (Viet Nam Su Luoc A History of Vietnam)*, trans. Tai Gelai, Beijing: Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1992. [In Chinese] For the Vietnamese version see Tran Trong Kim, *Viet Nam Su Luoc*, Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Van Hoa Thong Tin, 1999.

⁶ L. Cadiere, "Geographie Histoire Du Quang Binh d'après les annales Impériales", *Bulletin d'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* (hereafter *EFEO*), Vol.2, 1902, pp. 55-73. For more of Cadiere's works, see Bibliography.

⁷ L. Cadiere, "Les Residences des rois de Cochinchine avant Gia-Long", *Bulletin de la Commission Archeologique de l'Indochine*, 1913, pp. 103-185.

⁸ L. Cadiere, "Au Sujet de L'Épouse de Sai Vuong", *Bulletin des Amis de Vieux Hue* (hereafter *BAVH*), Vol.9, No.3, 1922, pp.221-232.

⁹ L. Cadiere "Un Voyage En 'Sinja' sur les cotes de Cochinchine au XVIIIe siècle", *BAVH*, Vol.8, No.1, 1921, pp.15-29.

lishment of the Nguyen rule as an independent entity.¹⁰ This is particularly clear in his description of Nguyen Phuc Khoat, the eighth ruler's (r. 1738-1765) unilateral elevation to royal status.¹¹

With regard to the Nguyen's foreign relations, Cadiere described the lives of two Europeans, namely, Father Alexander de Rhodes and Thomas Bowyear, an English trader.¹² Cadiere's pioneering works were based mainly on Vietnamese primary sources that had just been introduced when he began conducting studies on Vietnamese history. This includes gazetteers, chronicles and biographical sketches. Due to his reliance on such sources, Cadiere's accounts were, at times, merely translations of Vietnamese sources into the French language. However, Cadiere's access to missionary records, helped provide some balance in his writing. In many ways, Cadiere's works provide the basis for studies on Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam.

Another French scholar is Charles Maybon whose *Histoire d'Annam*, from 1592 to 1820 is the earliest single volume of work that addresses Vietnamese history during the period of the civil war between the Nguyen and the Trinh.¹³ It traces the confrontation between the two families to the time when the Nguyen's paramount position in the Le Court was lost to the Trinh following the death of the family's patriarch, Nguyen Kim, who was the leader of the Le Loyalist movement. The movement was formed to restore Le rule in Vietnam following the usurpation of the throne by the Mac in 1529. Apart from discussing the formation of a separate statehood under the Nguyen in the south, Maybon also looked at the interaction between the Nguyen and Europeans. His work is a pioneering effort that demonstrates the importance of

¹⁰ L. Cadiere, "Le Mur de Dong Hoi: Etude Sur L'établissement des Nguyen En Cochinchine", *BEFEO*, Vol.6, 1906, pp.87-251.

¹¹ L. Cadiere, "Les Changement des Costumes de Vo Vuong", *BAVH*, Vol. 1915, No. 4, pp. 417-424.

¹² L. Cadiere, "Les Europeens Qui Ont Vu Le Vieux-Hue: Le P. De Rhodes", *BAVH*, 1915, pp.231-249 and "Les Europeens Qui Ont Vu Le Vieux Hue: Thomas Bowyear (1695-1696)", *BAVH*, Vol.7, No.2, 1920, pp.185-240.

¹³ Charles B. Maybon, *Histoire d'Annam, de 1592 a 1820*, Paris: Librairie Plon, 1920. Maybon's other works include, "Une Factorie Anglaise au Tonkin au XVII siecle (1672-1697)", *BEFEO*, 1910.

both European and indigenous Vietnamese sources in understanding Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam.

Like Cadiere, Maybon's works also rely heavily on Vietnamese court sources. Hence, in discussing factors that characterised events at the turn of the 19th century with the defeat of the Tayson and the proclamation of the Nguyen Dynasty, Maybon proposed that the new Nguyen Dynasty was a triumph of the Nguyen in restoring the fortune of the earlier Nguyen. This claim is challenged more recently by scholars such as Nola Cooke, who propose instead that the Nguyen rulers of the 19th century, who were the direct descendants of the earlier Nguyen, helped to perpetuate the restoration myth as a means of legitimising their royal lineage.¹⁴

Among Vietnamese scholars however, the study of Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam only became an important topic in the South during a brief period between late 1950s and early 1970s. The impetus was buoyed by the search for of a *raison d'être* for the existence of the State of Vietnam (1949-1955) and later, the Republic of Vietnam (1956-1975) in the South following the partitioning of the country into two halves by the Geneva Accord in 1954. The first major work which emerged from this is Phan Khoang's survey of the trade of Nguyen Southern Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries, published in 1969.¹⁵ In fact, it is the first singular volume devoted to the history of the Nguyen rulers. The work however, draws mainly from the Nguyen court chronicles without much reference to other sources. In contrast, Nguyen Thanh Nha's studies on the economic history of Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries published in 1970 is now considered a fine demonstration of scholarship that combines the utili-

¹⁴ Nola Cooke, "The Myth of the Restoration: Dang-Trong Influences in the Spiritual Life of the Early Nguyen Dynasty (1802-47)", in Anthony Reid (ed.), *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900*, London: Macmillan Press, 1997, pp. 269-299.

¹⁵ Phan Khoang, *Viet Su Xu Dang Trong 1558-1777*, Saigon: Nha Sach Khai Tri, 1969.

sation of indigenous sources with non-Vietnamese sources.¹⁶ Apart from tracing the Nguyen as well as the Trinh's economic history, this later study also includes a chapter on the foreign relations of the two political entities. However, by limiting the discussion on foreign relations to a single chapter, it did not leave much room for the exploration of various other themes that dominate the Nguyen's foreign relations. It was also around this time in 1967 that Nguyen The Anh published an annotated bibliography on Vietnam's relations with the West.¹⁷

If the historians of the south had attempted to use the rule of the Nguyen rulers over southern Vietnam to justify the existence of the modern southern regime, their counterparts in the North did just the opposite. For the historians of the Hanoi regime, the Nguyen of the 17th and 18th centuries was considered a renegade entity that reflected the national division they were facing. The Nguyen's breakaway was looked upon in the same light as the modern day southern regime that had tried to make permanent what was to be the temporary division provided in the 1954 Geneva Accord. Two major works on the general history of Vietnam were published in the north which included sections on Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam. In both cases however, foreign relations received scant attention.¹⁸ Apart from that, the Nguyen were cast in a negative light. As stated earlier, the ancestors of the regime that eventually surrendered Vietnam to the French in the late 19th century were presented as feudal which is a description repugnant within the Communist ideology.

Other works from the same era but of a different persuasion includes the work of Dang Phuong Nghi, a French-trained Vietnamese scholar, who examined the public institutions of Viet-

¹⁶ Nguyen Thanh Nha, *Tableau Economique du Vietnam aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siecles*, Paris: editions Cujas, 1970.

¹⁷ Nguyen The Anh, *Bibliographie Critique Sur Les Relations Entre Le Viet Nam Et L'Occident*, Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1967.

¹⁸ Phan Huy Le, *Lich Su Viet Nam, Tap I* (A History of Vietnam, Vol.I), Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi, 1976, pp. 296-303 and Phan Huy Le, et al., *Lich Su Che Do Phong Kien Viet-Nam, Tap III* [A History of the Feudal System in Viet Nam, Vol.III], Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Giao Duc, 1960.

nam during the 18th century.¹⁹ His work, published in 1969, covers both the Trinh North and Nguyen South. Nghi relied on both Vietnamese and European materials. Special attention was given to the *Lich Trieu Hien Cuong Loai Chi* (Institutions of the Various Dynasties), the record of the public institutions of the various dynasties.

Another was the French scholar, Pierre-Yves Manguin's study which centres on Nguyen and Champa's relations with the Portuguese. It is one of the few available works that describes Nguyen's foreign relations with a single state or power.²⁰ In his work, Manguin, who relied on Portuguese archives, established new dimensions in Nguyen studies with particular reference to Nguyen's foreign relations.

The Canadian scholar, Alexander Woodside's study of the later Nguyen dynasty is the latest on the Nguyen.²¹ Even though the work concentrates on the successors of the Nguyen rulers, Woodside's study is built on a careful examination of the 18th century Nguyen. Woodside also suggests that the rulers of the Nguyen dynasty were not only direct descendants of the Nguyen rulers, but that they were also the ones who had established some of the insti-

¹⁹ Dang Phuong Nghi, *Les Institutions Publiques Du Viet Nam au XVIIIe Siecle*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1969.

²⁰ Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais sur les Cotes de Viet Nam et Du Campa: Etude sur les Sources Portugaises (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siecles)*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1972. His other related work is *Les Nguyen, Macau et le Portugal: Aspects Politiques et Commerciaux d'une Relation Privee en Mer De Chine 1773-1802*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'extreme-Orient, 1984.

²¹ Alexander B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1978. Woodside also discussed the earlier Nguyen in his "Conception of Change and of Human Responsibility for Change in the Late Traditional Vietnam", in David K. Wyatt (ed.), *Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982 and Alexander B. Woodside, "Central Vietnam's Trading World in the Eighteenth Century as Seen in Le Quy Don's 'Frontier Chronicles'", *Essays into Vietnamese Past*, K. W. Taylor & John Whitmore (eds.), Ithaca: Southeast Asian Program, Cornell University, 1995, pp. 162.

tutions that continued to function in the later Nguyen dynasty era. More importantly, Woodside claims that these institutions such as the Foreign Office continued the policy of the early Nguyen. The case of the Nguyen's relations with the Jarai people of the central highlands as well as the Nguyen's relations with Cambodia are examples he cites to substantiate his claim.²²

After a lull of more than twenty years since the publication of Phan Khoang and Nguyen Thanh Nha's work, two Chinese academicians completed their studies on the Nguyen rulers. The first was Yang Baoyun who submitted a doctoral thesis to the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in 1992, and the second is Li Tana who completed her studies at the Australian National University in 1993. Yang Baoyun gave an overview history of the Nguyen rulers (whose regime he described as a principality) tracing the state's formation process with a chapter dedicated to the Nguyen's foreign relations.²³ Yang Baoyun's work relied heavily on Vietnamese and Chinese sources. The result is a study that conforms to the historical ideas expounded by the Nguyen Court historians.

Li Tana's studies examine the socio-economic changes that took place in Nguyen Southern Vietnam and how these changes contributed to the development of Nguyen rule.²⁴ Li Tana argues that Nguyen Southern Vietnam had emerged as a new alternative Vietnam as compared to the Vietnam of the Red River Delta in the north. Li Tana's work is a path breaking effort that challenges the boundary of enquiries into Nguyen rule over southern Vietnam by utilising a combination of indigenous as well as non-indigenous sources. More information on the sources is ex-

²² Ibid.

²³ Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l'histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam Meridional, 1600-1775*, Geneve: editions Olizane, 1992.

²⁴ Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Ithaca: Cornell University, Southeast Asian Program, 1998.

plained by Li Tana and Anthony Reid in their volume on Nguyen sources.²⁵

At the same time, established scholars such as Keith Taylor²⁶ and Nola Cooke²⁷ began to devote their attention to the Nguyen rulers of this period, echoing Anthony Reid's call for more studies on the Early Modern Era of Southeast Asia.²⁸

Despite the numerous studies available on the Nguyen rule over southern Vietnam, either direct or indirect, few are dedicated to foreign relations. Yet, foreign relations remains one of the major developments that had contributed enormously to the process of state building of the Nguyen. This study is an effort to address this area of Nguyen history and is an attempt to illuminate a key element of the process of state formation.

Works on Nguyen-Champa relations have been mainly confined to the efforts by French scholars, who, due to their colonial connections with Indochina, were naturally the pioneers in the study of the Chams and their ancient kingdom of Champa. Scholars like George Maspero, Etienne Aymonier, E. Durand, L. Finot and George Coedes²⁹, focused their works entirely in establishing

²⁵ Li Tana and Anthony Reid (eds.), *Southern Vietnam Under the Nguyen: Documents on the Economic History of Cochinchina (Dang Trong), 1602-1777*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993.

²⁶ Keith Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and the Beginning of Viet Nam's Southward Expansion", in *Southeast Asia in Early Modern Era*, Anthony Reid (ed.), Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, see also his "The Literati Revival in Seventeenth Centuries Vietnam", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 1987, pp. 1-22.

²⁷ Nola Cooke, "Regionalism and the Nature of Nguyen Rule in Seventeenth Century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, March 1998, pp. 122-161. For her other works, see Nola Cooke, "Nineteenth-Century Vietnamese Confucianization in Historical Perspective: Evidence from the Palace Examination (1463-1883)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, March 1994, pp. 270-312.

²⁸ Introduction of Anthony Reid (ed.), *Southeast Asia in Early Modern Era*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

²⁹ See G. Maspero, *Le Royaume de Champa*, Paris, 1928; E. Aymonier, "Legendes Historiques de Chame", *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, Vol. XIV, No. 31, 1889, pp. 5-92 and "Premiere Etude sur les Inscriptions Tchames", *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. XVIII, 1891, pp. 5-86; E. Durand, "Bal Canar", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient (BEFEO)*, Vol. V, 1905, pp. 382-386,

the historical positions of the Chams and Champa without paying much attention towards the construction of links between the Chams and the Vietnamese. The exception being Maspero whose study of the Cham have been dominating the scene for more than half a century. In recounting the history of Champa, Maspero focused on the kingdom's long struggle against the Vietnamese. The study stopped at 1471, the year Champa was defeated by Emperor Le Thanh Tong. For Maspero, it marked the end of Champa.

Maspero's 1471 notion was left unchallenged for many years until around the 1980s when a group of scholars belonging to the Centre for Indochinese Research began to conduct research on this aspect of the Cham history. P. B. Lafont, originally an expert on ethnic minorities in the highlands of Vietnam and Laos, began to direct research projects that investigate into this area. This culminated in a seminar on Champa held in Copenhagen where several papers relating to the Chams were discussed. They include Lafont's introduction, entitled, "On the Relations between Champa and Southeast Asia" and Henri Chambert-Loir's paper entitled, "On the Historical and Literary Relations Between Champa and the Malay World".³⁰ Another paper of similar interest was by Eric Crystal which looks into the broader question of Champa as a factor in the Study of Southeast Asia³¹ where he tries

L.Finot, "La Religion des Chams d'Après les Monuments, BEFEO, Vol. I, 1901, pp. 12-33; and G. Coedes, *Les Etats Hindouises d'Indochine et d'Indonesie*, Paris: 1964, also published as *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968.

³⁰ Henri Chambert-Loir, "Notes sur les Relations Historiques et Littéraires entre Campa et Monde Malaise", in *Actes du Séminaire sur le Campa, organised by the University of Copenhagen, 23 May 1987*, Paris: 1988, p. 95-106. This was later republished as "Catatan Hubungan Sejarah dan Sastra antara Campa dengan Dunia Melayu", in Ismail Hussein, P-B. Lafont & Po Dharma (eds.), *Dunia Melayu dan Dunia Indochina*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1995, pp. 217-234.

³¹ See for instance, P. B. Lafont, "On the Relations between Champa and Southeast Asia" & H. Chambert-Loir, "On the Historical and Literary Relations Between Champa and the Malay World", in *Proceedings of the Seminar on Champa, University of Copenhagen (1987)*, Paris: Centre for the Study of History and Cultures on the Cultures of the Indochinese Peninsula, 1994, pp. 65-75 & 87-99; Eric Crystal, "Champa and the Study of Southeast Asia", in *Le Campa*

to explore the ethnicity of the Chams. A somehow related paper is Nguyen The Anh's "Indochina and the Malay World: A Glimpse on Malay-Vietnamese Relations to the Mid-Nineteenth Century", published in *Asia Journal*, in 1996.³² Nguyen The Anh's paper however, focuses mainly on the Vietnamese dimension.

The most influential member of the team is perhaps Po Dharma, who had started work initially on the post-1471 Cham kingdom of Panduranga and its relations with the Vietnamese. Through this study, Po Dharma was able to push the study of Vietnam-Champa relations beyond Maspero's long established 1471 barrier.³³ More recently, the present writer began to investi-

et Le Monde Malais, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1991, pp. 65-76.

³² Nguyen The Anh, "Indochina and the Malay World: A Glimpse on Malay-Vietnamese Relations to the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *Asia Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, June 1996, pp. 105-131. The same paper was earlier published in the Malay language entitled, "Hubungan Sejarah di antara Vietnam dan Dunia Melayu", in Ismail Ali, P.B. Lafont and Po Dharma (eds), *Hubungan Dunia Melayu dan Indochina*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995.

³³ Po Dharma, "Kesusastraan Cam", in *Kerajaan Campa*, Jakarta (PN. Balai Pustaka) 1981, pp. 197-215, Po Dharma, "Kesusteraan Cam", in Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi (ed.), *Alam Melayu: Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Campa*, Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan dan Pelancongan & Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1988, pp. 279-298, Po Dharma (ed.), *Akayet Deva Mano: Versi Cam dari Hikayat Dewa Mandu Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan dan Pelancongan Malaysia & Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1989, Po Dharma, "Peranan Tamadun Melayu dalam Masyarakat Campa", Ismail Hussein, Aziz Deraman & Abd Rahman Al-Ahmadi (eds.), *Tamadun Melayu, Jilid I*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1989, pp. 261-263, Po Dharma, "Deux Princes Malais au Campa, Leur Role dans la Vie Socio-Politique et Religieuse de ce Pays", in *Le Monde Indochinois et La Peninsule Malaise: Contribution Francaise au Deuxieme Congres International sur la Civilisation Malaise organise par Le Ministere de la Culture et du Tourisme de Malaisie*, Kuala Lumpur: Embassy of France, 1990, pp. 19-28, Po Dharma, G. Moussay & Abdul Karim (eds.), *Akayet Inra Patra (Hikayat Inra Patra/Epopoe Inra Patra)*, Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia & Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1997 and Po Dharma, G. Moussay & Abdul Karim (eds.), *Nai Mai Mang Makah (Tuan Puteri dari Kelantan/La Princesse qui Venait du Kelantan)*, Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kebudayaan, Kesenian dan Pelancongan Malaysia & Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 2000.

gate closely into the relations between the Nguyen and Champa, or what remained as Champa during the 17th and 18th century.³⁴

Sources on Nguyen Southern Vietnam

In the course of reconstructing the history of Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam through a study of the tributary and foreign relations of the Nguyen rulers, a variety of materials have been examined, with greater attention paid to primary sources. The lack of emphasis on the subject by existing research means that a major portion of this study is reconstructed through the consultation of original documents. However, this also involves a re-examination of secondary materials.

The original materials used in this research can be broadly divided into four categories: first, contemporary Vietnamese archival sources written in the 18th century and the sources compiled by the Historical Academy of the later Nguyen Dynasty during the 19th century. Secondly, the travelogues of visitors to Nguyen Southern Vietnam during the 17th and 18th centuries and thirdly, Christian missionary reports of the French Foreign Missions. There are also non-Vietnamese original documents, written either

³⁴ See Danny Wong Tze-Ken, "Relations Between the Nguyen Lords of Southern Vietnam and the Champa Kingdom: A Preliminary Study", *SEJARAH*, No. 5, 1997, pp.169-180; Danny Wong Tze-Ken, "Nhưng moi quan he giua Nguyen va vuong quoc Champa: Buoc nghien cuu khoi dau"(Relations Between the Nguyen Lords and the Champa Kingdom: a Preliminary Study), *CHAMPAKA*, (Journal of the International Office of Champa, San Jose, California) No. 1, 1999, pp. 59-75.[In Vietnamese]; Danny Wong Tze Ken, "Les Relations entre les Champa et les Nguyen (XVIIe-XVIIIe siecles) D'apres archives Vietnamiennes"(The Relations Between Champa and Nguyen Lords during the 17th & 18th Century, based on Vietnamese Sources), Paper presented at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Maison D'Asie, Paris, 27 April 1998; Danny Wong Tze Ken, "Vietnam-Champa Relations and the Malay-Islam Regional Network in the 17th-19th Centuries". Paper presented at the Workshop on Borders and Borderland, organised by SEASREP and Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI), LIPI, Jakarta, 25-26 March 2004; and Danny Wong Tze Ken, "Vietnam-Champa Relations during the 17th-18th centuries". Paper presented at the International Symposium on New Scholarship on Champa, organised by Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 5-6 August 2004.

in the original Chinese or Japanese. The most important were the royal chronicles of Cambodia and the Champa Archives.

The Nguyen were not known for maintaining substantial historical records. This was simply due to the fact that the Nguyen rule was originally a provincial administration. This provincial position deprived the Nguyen of the services of highly educated scholars. Apart from that, despite its claim to royal status, the administrative system of the Nguyen remained rudimentary, thus it lacks extensive administrative records. This lack of direct original sources was also a result of the political upheaval and wars that took place after the fall of the Nguyen in 1776. During that period, much of the original documents of the Nguyen administration were either lost or destroyed.

Later researchers, this writer included, owe much to Le Quy Don, an official of the Le-Trinh army that entered Phu Xuan in 1776 for recording eye witness account on the Nguyen rule. During the first few months of Le-Trinh occupation of Phu Xuan, Don had the opportunity of going through the surviving archives of the Nguyen. He also conducted interviews with former officials and collected documents from some of their families. The end result is his *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (Miscellaneous Records of the Pacification of the Frontiers), which serves as a major source in this study.³⁵

Also valuable to this study is Le Duy Dan's *Nam Ha Tiep Luc* (*Record of the Region South of the River*),³⁶ compiled shortly after the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) in 1802. The work is a first in the historiographical attempt to justify the existence of the Nguyen rule during the Nguyen Dynasty. However, Dan, a Tien Si (graduate of the Vietnamese Imperial Examination) laureate of 1775, was originally from the north and had not been to the south. He is believed to have consulted surviving Nguyen documents while compiling the *Nam Ha Tiep Luc*.

The second category of the Nguyen archival sources came from the efforts of the Quoc Su Quan (Historical Academy) of the

³⁵ *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (Miscellaneous Records of Pacification in the Border Area), MS. A. 184.

³⁶ *Nam Ha Tiep Luc* (Selected Records of Nam Ha), MS. A. 586.

Nguyen Dynasty. In 1820, Emperor Minh Menh (r. 1820-1840) ordered the setting up of this institution with “the aim of verifying and recording the truth”.³⁷ Out of the efforts of the court historians are a compendium of histories and biographies of eminent personalities, some of which are consulted in this work.

Another main source used is the *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (Veritable Records of the Former Nguyen, hereafter *Tien Bien*), completed in 1844 during the reign of Emperor Thrieu Tri (r. 1840-1848). The 12-volume text records the reign of the respective Nguyen rulers, beginning with Nguyen Hoang, and ending with Nguyen Phuc Thuan. Due to a 70 years lapse between the fall of the Nguyen rule in 1776 to the date of its completion, much of the information contained in the *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* were probably drawn from the *Phu Bien Tap Luc* and *Nam Ha Tiep Luc*, as well as whatever fragmented pieces of documents that the court historians could piece together.

Given the nature of the commissioned origin, the *Tien Bien* is less forthcoming in details and tends to be muted in many instances. Apart from that, the manner in which it was written, especially the utilization of the posthumous term of royalty used for the Nguyen rulers and their families, complicates the actual situation of Nguyen rule. Despite its shortcoming, *Tien Bien* remains a relatively reliable source for its chronology of events, and this study uses it mainly as a guide to mapping out various events of Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam.

Apart from the *Tien Bien*, the court historians also produced a six-volume biography of eminent personalities of the Nguyen rule known as the *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien* (Biography of the Former Dai Nam).³⁸ The text also includes a list of monks from China who had served in the Nguyen domain.

³⁷ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (Veritable Record of the Former Dai Nam), MS VHv 1320, (hereafter, *Tien Bien*), preface: pp. 2-3.

³⁸ *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien* (Official Biographies of Dai Nam’s Initial Period), MS. VHv. 172.

Another important primary source material is the *Dai Nam Chinh Bien Liet Truyen* (Biographies of the Dai Nam)³⁹ which describes Nguyen's dealings with its neighbours including Champa. Even though it is a biographical collection during the period of the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty and the subsequent reign of the Nguyen rulers, Volume 31-33 of its first collection contains 'biographies' (descriptions) of the Nguyen's neighbours, which including Champa and their interaction with the Nguyen.

Being the products of the Nguyen Court, the Nguyen chronicles and other sources tend to provide favourable views of the Nguyen rulers. In contrast, *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (Complete History of Dai Viet, hereafter *Toan Thu*),⁴⁰ the histories produced by the Le Court is useful in providing an alternative view of Nguyen rule.

This study also referred to the geographical gazetteers regarding Nguyen Southern Vietnam. The 12 volume *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (Gazetteer of Dai Nam),⁴¹ compiled in 1882 under orders from Emperor Tu Duc (r. 1848-1883) and led by Cao Xuan Duc is also a very important source providing Duc information that is not readily available in the chronicles.

In looking at the Nguyen's dealings with Champa, particularly during the period of Nguyen domination of that state beginning in 1694, the Champa archives of Panduranga is extremely important. The materials are useful in illuminating the relations between the Nguyen and an autonomous Champa.⁴²

³⁹ *Dai Nam Chinh Bien Liet Truyen* (Biographies of Dai Nam), *So Tap*, Vol. 31-33, Ms. VH 1678.

⁴⁰ *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (The Complete Records of Dai Viet), MS. A. 3 and MS. HM. 2197 A.

⁴¹ *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (Gazetteer of Dai Nam), MS A. 853.

⁴² The archives of Champa consulted in this study come from a collection of Cham documents in Han characters deposited at the Asiatique Societe, Paris. See Po Dharma, P. B. Lafont (comp.), *Catalogues du Collections Cams*, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1989. See also Ishizawa Yoshiaki, "Les Archives Cam Redigees en Caracteres Chinois au Fonds de la Societe Asiatique avec Annotation Analyse", *Historical Science Reports of Kagoshima University*, Vol. 29 July 1980, pp. 13-40.

Studies dealing specifically on relations between Vietnam and Champa are few. The pioneering work was that by Po Dharma, whose pioneering studies on the relations between the Vietnamese and the Chams focused on the last phase of Champa's existence as a political entity named Panduranga.⁴³ More recent works on the relations between Vietnam and Champa including the present writer's study on the Nguyens relations with Champa.⁴⁴ It is clear that arising from these studies, there are many questions remained unanswered of which further studies have to be conducted. The present work is such effort that geared towards filling up part of that gap.

Chapterisation

To explain the foreign relations of the Nguyen with Champa, this study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides the setting and background that are seminal to the discussions of subsequent chapters. In this chapter, Vietnam's brief history, its geographical setting and a discussion on how foreign relations is viewed in Vietnamese history is put forth.

Chapter Two deals with the beginning of Nguyen's contact with Champa as part of their contact with foreigners. It traces the origin of Nguyen rule vis-à-vis the career of Nguyen Hoang, the Nguyen's patriarch who started as a provincial governor in 1558 and who decided to focus his attention on building his sphere

⁴³ Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Champa): ses rapports avec le Vietnam, Vol. I & II*, Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1987.

⁴⁴ See Danny Wong Tze-Ken, "Relations Between the Nguyen Lords of Southern Vietnam and the Champa Kingdom: A Preliminary Study", *SEJARAH*, No. 5, 1997, pp.169-180; Danny Wong Tze-Ken, "Nhưng moi quan he qiu Nguyen va vuong quoc Champa: Buoc nghien cuu khoi dau"(Relations Between the Nguyen Lords and the Champa Kingdom: a Preliminary Study), *CHAMPAKA*, (Monographs of the International Office of Champa, San Jose, California) No. 1, 1999, pp. 59-75.[In Vietnamese], Danny Wong Tze Ken, "Vietnam-Champa Relations and the Malay-Islam Regional Network in the 17th-19th centuries", *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, No. 5, March 2004 and Danny Wong Tze Ken, "Historical Relations Between the Chams and the Malays: Four Phases of Linkages". Paper presented at the 40th Anniversary International Symposium of the Japan Society of Southeast Asian Studies, Tokyo, 9 December 2006.

of influence in the south. Chapter Three throws light on the importance of foreign relations to the survival of the Nguyen in the face of Nguyen-Trinh War that lasted from 1627 to 1672. It was during this period that the Chams were considered a contested power vis-à-vis the Nguyen.

Chapter Four is an attempt to look at how Champa fell to the hands of the Nguyens and how changes began to take place with the establishment of a Nguyen prefecture command in the former Cham land. The establishment of the tributary relations between the Nguyen and Champa is discussed in Chapter Five. This chapter will end with the fall of the Nguyen in 1776. The year also marked the temporary cessation of relations between the Nguyen and Champa which was only resumed with the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty in 1802.

Chapter One

The Setting

This chapter provides an overview of the 217 years of Nguyen rule over southern Vietnam. The area that came under Nguyen control stretched from the Nhat Le River in the province of Quang Binh to the southern-most Vietnamese territory of Ha Tien at the Mekong Delta. Nguyen rule began in 1558 when Nguyen Hoang (r. 1558-1613) was appointed governor of the province of Thuan Hoa. In 1627, the Nguyen family broke with the central government of the Le Dynasty (r. 1428-1788) which was based in the north. This thrust the Nguyen into an armed conflict with the Trinh family that was controlling the Le Court in Tay Do and later at Thanh Long. The Nguyen went on to establish a separate state of their own by expanding the Vietnamese sphere of influence and power in the south. This they did at the expense of the two ancient kingdoms of Champa and Cambodia. By the time of their fall to the Le-Trinh armies in 1775, Nguyen territories extended from central Vietnam at Quang-Binh to Ha Tien in the south. This roughly corresponds with the territories of what was once political South Vietnam.

This first chapter also provide a brief geographical sketch and a description of the ethnic composition of the territories before the arrival of the Nguyen. This is followed by a description of various aspects of governance that shaped the Nguyen family's 217 years rule over southern Vietnam.

Vietnam Prior to 1558

For more than two thousand years, Vietnamese civilization was confined to the Red River Delta. Until 1471, the heartland of the Viet people stretched from Lang Son, at the Chinese border, to the Thanh Hoa, and Nghe An provinces in present day central Vietnam. On the west, the western mountain range separated them from other minority ethnic groups. This geopolitical and cultural

sphere derived its unity from the tradition of north Vietnam and this identity subsumed all other newly acquired territories in the south.

Like many people in Southeast Asia, the Vietnamese trace their history back to a myth. According to most Vietnamese traditions and annals, the first Vietnamese rulers were the Hung Kings of the Hong Bang or Hung Dynasty. Based on *Linh Nam Chich quai*, a 15th century folktale, the Vietnamese people are associated with the Hung Kings (Hung Vuong) who were believed to be descended from Lac Long Quan (Lac Dragon Lord). The latter was a hero from the sea who settled in the Red River area. He taught the people how to till the land and how to build settlements. He then returned to the sea. When a ruler from China came and took control of the land, the people called to Lac Long Quan for help. He came again to rescue them. He then took Au Co, the wife of the Chinese ruler and married her. The union between Lac Long Quan and Au Co became the progenitors of the Viet race – Hung Kings.¹ New Vietnamese studies show that Hung is an Austroasiatic title of chieftainship in the languages of Mon-Khmer speaking people in Southeast Asia. It is also used among the minority Muong people in northern Vietnam. Van Lang or the Vietnamese kingdom, actually refers to people or nation. The kingdom was based in the region of Me-Linh in the heart of the Red River Delta.

Earliest records of Vietnamese history came from *Viet Su Luoc* which recorded the reign of a Chinese ruler, Chuang (698-682BC) of Zhou Dynasty in China.² The Vietnamese considered Chuang of Zhou as their first Hung king. The main reason is that the records on the Zhou kings showed 18 generations before it ended, and this is similar to the Vietnamese belief that the Hung Kingdom spanned 18 generations. More importantly, this period also coincided with the archaeological findings dating back to the 7th century BCE. These findings show that the various tribes and

¹ *Linh Nam Chich Quai*, as cited in Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 1, 6-7.

² *Viet Su Luoc*, Vol. 1: 1a as cited in Keith Taylor, *Ibid.*, pp. 3 and 309-310.

cultures in northern Vietnam shared one of the oldest bronze-using culture known as the Dongson culture.³

A total of 18 Hung rulers ruled this kingdom from the 7th century BCE to 258BCE. The dynasty came to an end when a ruler of Chinese descent, Thuc Vuong Phan took over. He changed the country's name to Au Lac and he set up his rule at Co Loa, in present day Bac Ninh. A citadel was constructed at the site, and Thuc Vuong Phan ruled with the title of An Duong Vuong (or King An Duong).

In 208 BCE, An Duong Vuong was defeated by Trieu Da, a Chinese general who then set up the Trieu Dynasty. The country was then called Nam Viet (southern Viet). The dynasty lasted until 111 BCE before it was overthrown by an invading army from China, now under Han Wu Ti of the Han Dynasty.⁴ The event marked the beginning of a thousand years of Chinese domination over Vietnam which only ended in 938 CE.

Under the Chinese, Vietnam was administered as a military colony with the presence of a Chinese garrison.⁵ During the Chinese rule, internal political problems in China did allow occasional brief period of independence for the Vietnamese. In 40 to 43 CE for instance, the Trung sisters (Hai Ba Trung), Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, led a rebellion against the Chinese, and held court at Me-Linh, Son-Tay.⁶ In 248 CE, Trieu Au, another woman

³ Keith Taylor, *Ibid.* p. 7. For more detailed studies on the Dong Son culture, see Charles Higham, *Archaeology in Mainland Southeast Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

⁴ It is interesting to note that, due to this historical connection as well as the overwhelming borrowing of Chinese culture, Vietnam was considered part of East Asia by scholars such as Fairbank and Reischauer. See John Fairbank, E. O. Reischauer & Albert M. Craig, *East Asia, Tradition and Transformation*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, pp. 258-276.

⁵ For a study on the early history on Vietnam, see Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. On the Chinese occupation of Vietnam see Jennifer Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation of northern Vietnam: Administrative Geography and Political Development in Tongking Delta, first to sixth centuries AD*, Canberra: Australian National University, Oriental Monograph Series, No. 27, 1980.

⁶ The two sisters, Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, commonly known as Hai Ba Trung (Two Trung Sisters) committed suicide when they were defeated and pur-

leader started an insurrection against the Chinese. In 544, Ly-Bon, who was of Chinese descent, revolted against the Chinese in the Red River Delta but was defeated. In 687, Ly Tu Tien led another Vietnamese rebellion against the Chinese. After Ly Tu Tien was killed, he was succeeded by Dinh Kien, and the rebellion threatened the Chinese garrison. It was not until reinforcements from Guangxi (China) came to the garrison's rescue that the rebellion was defeated. In 720s, Mai Thuc Loan led a rebellion against the Chinese. Other than that, the Chinese were able to maintain a firm grip on the region which they called Giao Chi, and later Annam (Annam or An Nan which in Chinese means Pacified South). However, this feature of resisting the Chinese and later things foreign, was one of the most enduring traditions of the Vietnamese people.

One thousand years of Chinese rule saw the Vietnamese adopt many aspects of the Chinese way of life. Chinese influence range from economic, cultural to intellectual development. Despite encountering many aspects of Chinese culture, the Vietnamese were still able to maintain some elements of their own indigenous identity and way of life.⁷ This helped the Vietnamese in maintaining an independent identity and a constant consciousness of their distinctive features as contrasted to the Chinese.

Perhaps the greatest Chinese influence on the Vietnamese was in the aspect of intellectual and literary development. The Vietnamese had adopted the Chinese characters in their system of writing, and Confucianism dominated the social code and general outlook of the Vietnamese. Such adoption of Chinese elements continued even after Ngo Quyen had freed Vietnam from the Chinese control in 938 A.D. Ngo Quyen and subsequent Vietnamese rulers of various dynasties looked to Chinese models for their system of government and social order.

The Vietnamese retained the Chinese characters in their system of writing even though the indigenous Vietnamese spoken

sued by the Chinese army. A shrine named Hat-Mon Pagoda was erected in Son Tay in their memory, another, named Hai Ba was situated at Hanoi.

⁷For a study on Vietnamese civilisation, see Nguyen Van Huyen, *The Ancient Civilization of Vietnam*, Hanoi: The Gioi, 1995.

language was maintained, particularly in the rural areas where the degree of Sinicization was lower. In the eleventh century, the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225) introduced public examinations as a means to recruit officials into its government service. The examinations were modelled after those conducted in China. The examinations were based largely on the Confucianist classics. Since then, it became part of the Vietnamese national culture and was vital in shaping the traditional outlook and world view of the Vietnamese, especially among the officialdom. Like their counterparts in China, the Sinicised Vietnamese adopted Confucianism as their ways of life. In dealing with non-Viet people, the Viet people adopted a superior posture the same way the Chinese had regarded all non-Chinese as barbarians and uncivilised.

The independent nation of Vietnam essentially covered the region around the Red River Delta, with Thang Long (present day Hanoi) as its centre of authority. The city remained the heart of Vietnamese culture and political power for six hundred years before being challenged by the emergence of an alternate political entity in the south led by the Nguyen from the end of the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century.

After regaining its independence from China in 938A.D., the Vietnamese were ruled by six indigenous dynasties, namely, the Ngo (938-944); Dinh (968-980); Early Le (Tien Le, 980-1009); Ly (1009-1225); Tran (1225-1400); and Ho (1400-1406). Internal crises during the Ho dynasty allowed the Chinese an opportunity to re-assert its rule in Vietnam. A Chinese army during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) invaded Vietnam and re-established Chinese rule over Vietnam. This time, the Chinese could only stay for 23 years (1406-1428). In 1428, Le Loi, a Vietnamese leader from Lam Son, Thanh Hoa province defeated and expelled the Chinese army and established indigenous rule over Vietnam. The new dynasty was called the Le Dynasty (also known as Hau Le, later Le 1428-1778 to distinguish it from the former Le), whereas the country was called Dai Viet.

It was during the Le dynasty that many of the Vietnamese traditions emerged, including the adoption of a legal system of its

own, the Hong Duc Legal Code.⁸ There were also significant breakthrough in the development of literature. There was also the expansion of Vietnamese territory to the southernmost areas of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam before the Nguyen's subsequent southward movement to complete the incorporation of the southern land under Vietnamese rule.

Geographical Features of Southern Vietnam

Vietnam is a long narrow country. Its long stretch of territory which measures roughly six hundred miles from north to the south, provides for a diverse geographical setting.⁹ According to Jean Chesneaux, this diversity had advantages and some disadvantages.¹⁰ Generally, there are four main features.

First, in central Vietnam where the Nguyen territory begins, is the Truong Son mountain range, formerly known as the

⁸ The Hong Duc Legal Code was an extensive set of laws promulgated in circa 1475 by Emperor Le Thanh Tong (1460-1497). It encompassed almost every aspect of Vietnamese lives, and would serve as the basis for the Gia Long Legal Code, introduced in 1812. See Danny Whitfield, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Vietnam*, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1976, pp.114-115. For a legal history of this period, see Yu Insun, *Law and Society in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Vietnam*, Seoul: The Asiatic Research Centre, Korea University, 1990.

⁹ For discussions on the historical geography of Nguyen Southern Vietnam, see *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (The Geographical Gazetteer of Dai Nam), hereafter *DNNTC*. Listed as Manuscript A69/7 in Institute of Han-Nom Research and Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient collections: various volumes on the southern region south of Nghe An, including, Vol. 4: Quang Binh, Vol. 8: Thua Thien, Vol. 9: Phu Xuan, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Vol. 10: Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Binh Thuan, Vol. 11: Gia Dinh, Dinh Thuong, Ha Tien, and Vol. 12: An Giang, Vinh Long, Bien Hoa. For a discussion on Quang Binh, see L. Cadere, "Geographie Histoire Du Quang Binh d'apres les annales Imperiales", *BEFEO*, Vol.2, 1902. For geographical studies on the south, see Trinh Hoai Duc, *Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi*. For the French version, see *Histoire et Description de La Basse Cochichine*, G. Aubart (trans.), Paris: Impemerie Imperiale, 1893. For an old geography of southern Vietnam, see *Nam Ky Dia Du Chi* [Institute of Ham-Nom collection, MS VHv 1547].

¹⁰ Jean Chesneaux, *The Vietnamese Nation: Contribution to a History*, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1966, p. 9.

Annamite Cordillera or chain of mountains. This extends through the entire southern part of the country and is not far from the sea. In this narrow space are the plains of Dong Hoi, Quang Tri, Hue and Phu Gia. Some of the places, like the area around Hue in Thua Thien has only around 25 miles of land, sandwiched between the South China Sea and the borders of Laos. However, the plains begin to widen along the southern part of the Truong Son mountain range. The Truong Son is also progressively of lower heights as it extends to the south. These mountains are accessible from the plains through passes such as the Ai Lao and Mu Gia. The mountains give way to the plains as it reaches the Mekong Delta. The alluvial deposits of the Mekong river and other smaller rivers such as the Bassac and Saigon make the delta plains fertile and suitable for farming. Hence, the topography of the land changed from a narrow and rugged strip of highlands in the north to a vast and flat lowland delta in the south.

Secondly, cutting through the mountains and the plains are numerous rivers that flow from the highlands to the plains before emptying into the South China Sea. Apart from being a source of water supply for agriculture, these short and fast flowing rivers also serve as natural demarcation points between the Viet people and their southern neighbours. As the Truong Son descend to the Mekong plains, the rivers flowing from its hills also become larger and slower. Nonetheless, they continue to serve as natural demarcation lines for the Viet people and the Khmers. This was especially so during the later stage of the Nguyen rule.

Thirdly, on the east is the long Vietnamese coast that extends through the entire length of the country. The coastal line spans over six hundred miles from present day Quang Binh province in the central Vietnam to Ha Tien in the southwest bordering present day Cambodia. Even though the southern Vietnamese are not known to be great seafaring people,¹¹ the long coastal region

¹¹ Such view was expressed by John Crawfurd who visited Saigon and Hue in 1820. According to Crawfurd, "This branch (British Ports in the Straits of Malacca), and any other of the foreign trade of Cochin China, is carried out by Chinese, who are both the merchants, mariners and navigators. The native Cochin Chinese scarcely venture beyond their own coasts.", see John Crawfurd, *Journal*

enable them to share in the rich maritime culture of Southeast Asia. This is evident from the way the population is concentrated near the coast. It has also made the country accessible from abroad. Hence, one would find a series of ports along the coast as the Viet people progressively migrated further south. These ports include Hue, Tourane (Danang), Hoi An, Qui Nhon, Saigon and Ha Tien. Even before the Nguyen extended their rule to the south, some southern ports have been recognised as important entry points of the country. The Chinese scholar Zhang Xie who mentioned the two ports of Tan Chau and De-di as the main entrances to southern Vietnam. *O Chau Can Luc*, the geographical gazetteer compiled in 1365 provides a list of natural products from the region of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. Among them were elephant tusks, bee wax, olive, rattan, iron ore, pepper, calambac, rhino horns, silk, buffalo horns, and deer skins.¹² The richness of southern Vietnam was also described by Zhang Xie in his *Dong Xi Yang Kao*, compiled in 1618. A total of 62 items were listed, among them gold, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, pearl, mother of pearl, Khe Nam, silk linen and bee wax.¹³

Fourthly, there was the natural richness of the mountains and the sea. The richness of the mountain land is evident from the goods that were brought down by the uplanders¹⁴ and the Viet people who ventured into the highlands. Chief among the products were Khe Nam and calambac, bee wax, swift nests, pepper, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, and even elephants.¹⁵ From the sea

of an Embassy to the Court of Siam and Cochin China, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press Reprint, 1987, p. 514. In fact, this situation persisted until the early 19th century, see George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago in 1832-33-34*, London: William H. Allen, 1837, reprinted, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 198.

¹² *O Chau Can Luc* (MS A 263), Vol. 2: 18-19.

¹³ Zhang Xie, *Dong Xi Yang Kao*, 1618, Vol. 1: 13-16. This edition, Taipei: Zheng Zhong Zhu Ju, 1962.

¹⁴ The term uplanders is used in this study to denote the hill tribes living within southern Vietnam as well as those living beyond the western boundaries of southern Vietnam. The term is also used by Li Tana in her *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1: 15-18.

came sharkskin and fish. This natural wealth was recognised at the very early stage of the Nguyen rule by its founder, Nguyen Hoang, who reminded his successors to be grateful for the abundant wealth of the land and sea that could sustain them for generations.¹⁶

The Population of Southern Vietnam

It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on the size of the population of southern Vietnam at the time of Nguyen Hoang's arrival in Thuan Hoa, generally it is agreed that Nguyen Southern Vietnam had always had smaller population compared to the north. La Bissachere estimated that in 1800s, the population in the north was 18,000,000 and Cochinchina had about 1,500,000.¹⁷ Li Tana gives a figure of around 5.5 million in the north in 1539 and around 400,000 in southern Vietnam in 1555.¹⁸ Generally, the population of Nguyen Southern Vietnam can be divided into two broad groups, namely, the indigenous people, which included the Viet, the various groups that were living in what is considered Nguyen Southern Vietnam and the Cham population, and the uplanders, which denote the hill tribes living mainly on the western highland areas. The second group in the population consisted of immigrants like the Chinese and Japanese.

The southern province of Thuan Hoa came under Vietnamese control in 1306 after the Champa ruler, Jaya Simhavarman III gave it up in exchange for marriage with the Vietnamese princess, Tran Huyen.¹⁹ In 1402, a greater part of Quang Nam, another southern province was taken over when the Vietnamese defeated Jaya Simhavarman V of Champa. In 1471, the Vietnamese under

¹⁶ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (hereafter *Tien Bien*), Vol. 1: 35.

¹⁷ La Bissachere, *Relations sur le Tonkin et la Cochinchine* (1807), published by Charles B. Maybon, Paris: 1920, as cited in Dang Phuong Nghi, *Les Institutions Public du Viet Nam*, Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1967, p. 34.

¹⁸ Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 160-161. Li Tana's figures were compiled from various sources including *Ngan Nam Tche Yuan* (Record on Annam).

¹⁹ Much of the early history of Thuan Hoa and some parts of Quang Nam can be found in *O Chau Can Luc* that was compiled before Nguyen Hoang came down to Thuan Hoa.

Le Thanh Ton again defeated Champa,²⁰ and extended the Vietnamese sphere of influence up to the region of Phu Yen. Since then, the Vietnamese had established military colonies in Quang Nam through which to re-settle their people. These military colonies will in turn serve to protect them against the Cham or uplander intrusions. These people were also a barrier between the Vietnamese heartland and their enemies. Between 1504-1509, the Chams launched attacks against the Vietnamese, it resulted in the latter driving the Chams and uplanders into the western highlands.²¹

Generally, the Vietnamese settlers who were brought into Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam after 1306 and 1471 had little contact with the uplanders as well as groups such as the Chams. There were several barriers against such contacts. Firstly, there was a royal edict of 1449 which forbade inter-marriage between Vietnamese and the Champa people. This implied that uplanders were also excluded as they were regarded to be inferior to the Chams. Judiciary measures that prevented inter-marriages were enshrined in the Le Code (Code of Hong Duc).²² This law, considered the most important ever formulated in the history of Vietnam, was subsequently adopted in post-Hong Duc period as in Article 333 of the Le Code that forbade the marriage of Vietnamese officials and

²⁰ Early scholars including Georges Maspero contended that the Vietnamese conquest of 1471 marked the end of Champa, see Georges Maspero, *Le Royaume de Champa*, Paris: Histoire Nationale d'Art et d'Histoire, 1928. However, Vietnamese chronicles maintained that Champa remained in existence as the independent nation of Panduranga in the southern region of Phan Rang until at least 1693 when the Nguyen conquered it and set up a Nguyen-sponsored government. See for instance, *Tien Bien, Vol. 6*. Some later works including that by Po Dharma suggest that Champa remained independent until 1834 when it was finally absorbed by Emperor Minh Manh, see Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Champa) 1802-1835, ses rapports avec le Vietnam*, Paris: EFEO, 1987.

²¹ Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, p. 155. See also Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Viet Nam*, p. 230.

²² Hong Duc, after the reign title of Emperor Le Thanh Ton (1460-1497).

Chams.²³ In 1499, a further decree was issued to prohibit Vietnamese from marrying Cham women. The rationale was a need to maintain the purity of Vietnamese customs.²⁴

Secondly, there existed a cultural as well as linguistic barriers between the Vietnamese and the colonised. The Vietnamese adopted a superior attitude vis-à-vis the uplanders and the Chams. Thus, contact between these two peoples was minimal. Furthermore, in the early stages the Vietnamese did not trade with the uplanders and this meant minimal contact. The only occasion when the uplanders did come into contact with the Vietnamese, was in the markets (fairs) where they sold their jungle products. Very few Vietnamese ventured into the mountains to conduct trade with the uplanders.

A sound administration over the uplanders and careful dealing with the Chams was a hallmark of Vietnamese rule even before the arrival of Nguyen Hoang. The frequent armed attacks by the uplanders and the Chams on the Vietnamese settlers disrupted the development of the Vietnamese settlements. Between 1471 and 1509, the uplanders and the Chams attacked Vietnamese settlements on no less than five occasions.²⁵ The Chams in particular, continued to maintain a sizeable army and in their first military encounter with the Nguyen in 1611 they managed to muster a full scale attack. The Chams continued to be a torn in the flesh of the Vietnamese until the Nguyen conquest in 1693.

The region that came under the Nguyen rule was ethnically diverse. The region from Quang Binh down to Phu Yen were formerly occupied by the Cham people. Encounters between the Viet people and the Cham during the Tran (1225-1400) and the Le (1428-1788) dynasties gravely weakened the Champa Kingdom. As a result of these two encounters, the Champa Kingdom shifted

²³ See Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, and Insun Yu, *Law and Society in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Vietnam*, Seoul: Asiatic Research Center, Korea University, 1990, p. 154.

²⁴ *Kham Dinh Viet Su Thong Giam Cuong Muc*, (MS A. 1 hereafter *Cuong Muc*), Vol. 24: 39-40.

²⁵ See Hickey, *Sons of the Mountain*, pp. 154-155.

its capital to the region south of Phu Yen thus leaving large tracks of land in the hands of the Viet people.

The Cham belong to the Austronesian stock.²⁶ They came under Indian cultural and religious influence around the middle of the fourth century CE. The fusion between the local dynamics and this foreign influence is evident even today in Cham architecture and relics found in the region between present day Hue and Quang Nam. The cities of Tra-kieu, Dong Duong and My-son are fine examples of this influence. At the time of the establishment of Nguyen rule in Thuan Hoa in 1558, the Cham Kingdom (or Nagara Champa) was centred at Phan Rang, and called itself, Panduranga.

Contrary to findings of earlier scholars, the people of Champa were not homogenous.²⁷ In fact, over the centuries, interaction took place between the Cham and the uplanders from the Truong Son (Annamite Mountain Chains) range. Former Cham centres in the highlands such as My-son lend support to such an argument. There are new findings that suggest that there exists an incorporation of other Austronesian tribes such as the Jarai, the Chru, the Ronglais and the Rhade in Champa. In fact, Po Rome (1627-1651), who was one of the most popular kings in the history of Champa, was actually of Chru descent. Po Rome's son, Po Saut, was in turn, of Chru and Rhade parentage.²⁸ There were also evidence which suggests the incorporation of other non-Austronesian groups into the kingdom of Champa, namely, the Stieng and the Hmong.²⁹

²⁶ Eric Christal, "Champa and the Study of Southeast Asia", *Le Campa et Le Monde Malais: Acts de la Conference Internationale sur le Campa et le Monde Malais*, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1991, pp. 66.

²⁷ For many years, scholars were influenced by Maspero's view that the Chams were homogenous. See Georges Maspero, *Le Royaume de Campa*, Paris: editions G. Vanoest, 1928.

²⁸ Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, p. 56.

²⁹ For some recent studies that took up this line of argument, see Benard Gay, "Une Nouvelle sur le Composition Ethnique du Campa" in *Actes du Seminaire sur le Campa organise a l'Universitaire de Copenhagen*, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1988, pp. 49-56; Po

Apart from the Cham, who were mainly dwellers of the plains, the Viet settlers from the north also encountered uplanders who lived in the highlands on the western side of the central Vietnamese plains. Those uplanders who were associated with the Chams were concentrated in the region between Qiang Binh and Phan Rang. Further to the south were the Bahnar, the Sedang, Hre and Kato. They were Mon-Khmer speakers. Towards the southern end of the Truong Son in the Mekong region were the Maa, Stieng, Mnong and Sre, who were Mon-Khmer speakers.³⁰

And even as the Vietnamese under the Nguyen began to advance into the south, they encountered other uplanders who spoke different tongues. Vietnamese sources have tried but failed to identify the differences between these uplanders.³¹

Despite official efforts at prohibiting lowland and highland contacts, such relations did take place. This was especially so in the case of traders and individual settlers. To the Viet people, the highlands were commercially attractive. Various uplanders had supplied different Vietnamese courts with highlands products. Commodities such as elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, wax, honeycombs, sandalwood, calambac, resin, and even lacquer were items that were very much sought after by the Viet people. But in view of the prohibitions, the Chams very often became the middlemen in helping the Vietnamese acquire these jungle goods. There were also Viet people who had made inroads into the highlands and who traded directly with the uplanders.

Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa) 1802-1835, Ses Rapports avec Vietnam, Vol. I*, Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1987; and Pierre-Bernard Lafont, "Les Grandes Dates de l'Histoire du Campa", in *Le Campa et la Monde Malais*, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1991, pp. 6-25.

³⁰ For more on uplander tribes in the Central Vietnamese highlands, see Bernard Bourotte, "Essai d'Histoire des Populations Montagnardes du Sud-Indochinois jusqu'à 1945", *Bulletin de la Societe des Etudes Indochinoises*, (hereafter, *BSEI*), Vol. XXX, 1955, p. 17; see also Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, pp. 1-19.

³¹ For several examples of Vietnamese attempts to identify the various uplanders in the Nguyen domains, see *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 2: 22-23, 30-31; Vol. 4: 3-20. (Institute of Han-Nom and EFEO version)

During the early stages of Nguyen rule, contact between the Viet people and the uplanders was limited. It was only with International trade and demand for jungle products from the highlands however, that saw the Nguyen making efforts to engage in trade with the uplanders. This included the imposition of certain forms of monopoly over some prized commodities like sandalwood, calambac, gold and other precious metals. By including these goods as part of the annual gifts and tribute sent by these tribes to the Nguyen a form of monopoly was imposed.

Before 1558, there were already some foreigners in southern Vietnam. These included the Chinese and the Japanese. The Chinese were mainly traders. Most of the Chinese who came to trade in southern Vietnam arrived during the early stage of Nguyen rule. In 1570 for instance, it was reported that a total of 13 to 14 trading junks from Fujian arrived at Thuan Hoa.³² During the 17th centuries, the Chinese were allowed to set up their own quarters at the port of Hoi An, as well as the region of Thuan Hoa.³³

The Japanese arrived in Tonking in north Vietnam long before the 16th century. They were already trading at the port of Van Don.³⁴ They came to southern Vietnam at about the same time as the Chinese traders in the 15th century. The Japanese began to arrive in southern Vietnam in large numbers following the anti-Catholicism edict that was issued by Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1587. Most of the Japanese settled at Hoi An. However, it is believed that there were already some Japanese traders living in

³² Chen Chingho, "Ming Huong Xa and Thanh Ha Xa in Thua Tien", *The New Asia Journal*, Thuan Hoa here during 1570 does not refer to Hue or even Hoi An, but rather, refers to the former headquarters of Nguyen Hoang at Dinh Cat in present day Quang Tri.

³³ See for instance, Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi-An (Faifo)*, Carbondale: Center for Vietnamese Studies, Southern Illinois University, 1973; see also Chen Chingho, "The Chinese Quarter of Faifo (Hoi-An) and Its Foreign Trade during the 17th & 18th Centuries", *The New Asia Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, August 1957, pp. 273-333.(In Chinese)

³⁴ J. H. Peysonnaux, "Ancienne Colonies Japonaises en Indochine", *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* (hereafter *BAVH*), No. 4, 1933, p. 262.

Hoi An before 1587 though their numbers are uncertain.³⁵ Most of the Japanese were involved in the silk trade.

Southern Vietnam Before Nguyen Hoang

After living under Chinese domination for more than one thousand years, the Vietnamese people under the leadership of Ngo Quyen, finally broke away from Chinese rule in 939 CE. The new Vietnam, officially known as Dai Co Viet, was confined to the region around the Red River Delta. In 982 CE., less than fifty years after regaining independence, the Vietnamese under Le Hoan (980-1005) of the early Le Dynasty (1010-1225), launched the first attack on its southern neighbour, the Kingdom of Champa. The attack was a success and the Vietnamese carried off 100 Cham ladies and an Indian holy man from the royal court of Champa.³⁶ The event marked the beginning of the process of *Nam Tien* or southward movement of the Viet people. In 992, it was reported that Le Hoan sent an army of 30,000 men to build a road from Cua Sot in present day Ha Tinh province into the Champa prefecture of Dia Ly.³⁷ By then, the Vietnamese sphere of influence had reached the region of present day Quang Binh.

In 1001, due to military pressures from the Vietnamese, the Chams under King Harivarman, abandoned Indrapura, the capital at present day Tra Kieu of Quang Nam province and moved the Cham royal court to Vijaya in present day Binh Dinh. Further Vietnamese territorial expansion to the south began in 1069 when Emperor Ly Thanh Tong (r. 1054-1072) of the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225) defeated an invading Cham army³⁸ and annexed

³⁵ A. Sallet, "Le Vieux Hue-Souvenir Japonais", *BAVH*, No. 4, 1919, pp. 506-507.

³⁶ *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, (hereafter *Toan Thu*, this edition, edited by Chen Chingho, Tokyo: Tokyo University, Centre for East Asian Research, 1985) Vol. 1: 189. See also Georges Maspero, *Le Royaume De Champa*, Paris: edition G. Vanoest, 1928, pp. 122-123.

³⁷ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 1: 193.

³⁸ The Kingdom of Champa was founded between 190-193 CE. by the Cham people. It was an Indianized state, extending from present day Quang Nam area to the Mekong Delta in the south. Known as Lin Yi by the Chinese, the kingdom

the area in Bo-Chinh (in Dia-Ly) and Ma-Linh (Present Day Quang Binh and part of Quang Tri). They further expanded the Vietnamese territories to the region just north of Thua Thien in present day Hue. In 1075, Emperor Ly Nhan Ton (r. 1072-1127), the 4th Emperor of the Ly Dynasty, issued a decree for the emigration of Vietnamese to the newly acquired Champa lands. This started the *Don Tien* system of resettlement of Vietnamese pioneers in the south.³⁹ There were however temporary setbacks of this system when the Chams, with the assistance of the Khmers and some Chinese, attacked the Vietnamese in 1076.

During the Tran Dynasty (1226-1400), Vietnamese territories expanded further to the south. In 1306, Emperor Tran Nhan Ton (r. 1279-1293) sent his daughter Nuyen-Chan *Cong Chua* to marry Che Man, the King of Champa. In return, the two prefectures of O-Chau (Thuan Chau) and Li-Chau (Hoa Chau) were given “as bride price” by the Cham King.⁴⁰ A year later in 1307, the Vietnamese army defeated the Champa army when the latter tried to regain these lost territories. This time, the Vietnamese annexed the entire Thuan Hoa (Thua Thien Province) and pushed down into the area just north of Dao Hai Van in Quang Nam (present day Danang). It was only in 1371 and 1378 that the Vietnamese advance was temporarily checked when a Cham King named Che Bong Nga led an army and invaded Thang Long and sacked the city.

Under the Le Dynasty, the Vietnamese army fought a battle in 1471 against the Chams and expanded the Vietnamese territories to incorporate the area just beyond Vijaya (Nha Trang), the governing seat of the Kauthara phase of the Cham kingdom. The

was constantly threatening the Vietnamese people, as well as being at war with the Cambodians. By the early fifteenth century, the Chams however, were in decline. For a detailed study of the kingdom of Champa, see Georges Maspero, *Le Royaume De Champa*, Paris: edition G. Vanoest, 1928.

³⁹ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 3: 248. This was when Minh Linh Chau and Dia Ly came under Vietnamese rule. The name of Dia Ly was changed to Linh Binh.

⁴⁰ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 6: 388. Earliest Vietnamese description of the newly acquired regions are found in the *O-Chau Can Luc* (Institute of Han-Nom Research, listed as A263), compiled by Duong Van An during 1548 and 1553, that is shortly before Nguyen Hoang arrived in Thuan Hoa.

battle effectively reduced greatly the power of the Cham Court, leaving it a minor player in the history of mainland Southeast Asia.⁴¹

Details of the Vietnamese' southward movement have been explained elsewhere. However, it is necessary to highlight several factors that spurred this expansion. Firstly, there was a need to overcome population congestion in the Red River Delta. It is estimated that by the 12th century, the population in that area had grown to a level where the land was insufficient to support the production of food crops. Moving south made sense as the existing area was constrained to the west by highlands.

Besides the congestion in the Red River Delta, the second factor lies with developments in China. Chinese dominance in the north compelled the Vietnamese to look to the south for new settlements. Since 938 CE, China remained a potential threat to Vietnam's security. The military might of the Chinese was not something that the Viet people were keen to challenge. On top of that, Vietnamese emperors submitted to Chinese rulers. Thus a northward expansion was not an option.

The incorporation of vast areas of new land over a period of 400 years from 938 CE to 1400 resulted in the doubling of the geographical size of Vietnam. Over this period however, the various Vietnamese Courts could only exert effective control over the two important provinces of Nghe An and Thanh Hoa, leaving other newly acquired southern areas under nominal control. This lack of central control was due mainly to the alien terrain of the region as well as due to the resistance of the Cham people.

Indeed, the same Champa that was defeated by Le Thanh Tong in 1471 actually managed to gain recognition from the Ming Court. In 1481, the Ming Court sent a 2,000 strong armed delegation to escort 'Gu Lai' the descendant of the old king back to Champa and crown him as king. The Ming Court also despatched

⁴¹ The circumstances which brought about the Vietnamese attack on Champa is discussed in John K. Whitmore, "The Development of the Le Government in Fifteenth Century Vietnam", PhD Thesis, Cornell University, 1968, pp. 198-199 & 207-213. Interestingly, one of the major issues was the excessive demand by the Le emperor for Champa tribute which the latter failed to provide.

an envoy to the Le Court to demand an explanation for the 1471 attack on Champa.⁴²

Ming support for Champa was part of the Chinese world order that existed in the form of tributary relations. Even though the Chams were at war with the Vietnamese, both these regions were part of the Chinese world order and submitted regular tribute to the Chinese court. In return, the Chinese emperors extended recognition to the Vietnamese and Cham rulers and promised protection to the two states should they come under attack. In this case Chinese support for the Chams was made in order to preserve a harmonious Chinese world order.

In 1509, the Le Court sent Do Doc, Le Tu Van and Vu Di to administer Quang Nam. In line with the 1487 Cham restoration, Tra Phuc, the son of the fallen Cham king, Tra Doi (Che Man), who died in captivity in Thang Long, seized the remains of his father and escaped to Champa. The act was a symbolic rallying point for Cham restoration. By bringing back the remains of the former king, it denoted the return of the King to his subjects. The Cham also sent an envoy to Ming China to obtain the latter's support. Ming officials were sent supposedly to investigate the matter and to kill all Cham conspirators.⁴³ The event also suggest that despite their 1471 defeat, the Chams were still aiming to free their occupied land from the Vietnamese.

The expansion to the south was slow despite the two factors mentioned above. In addition to resistance from the Chams, the largely unexplored highlands and the unaccustomed warmer climate in the south also discouraged Vietnamese settlement. The prospect of leaving one's ancestral land for an unknown world did not appeal to the majority of the Vietnamese of the Red River Delta. Similarly the Le Court was more preoccupied with court politics and had little time to encourage a southward settlement. This is especially true in the two decades leading to the Mac usurpation of 1527.

⁴² *Cuong Muc*, Vol. 24: 6-8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 25: 30.

This however, does not mean that no one was interested in settling in the south. On the contrary, there was a steady voluntary movement of Vietnamese to the south. One of the first acts by Vietnamese emperors after conquering the new lands was to parcel them out among the princes and mandarins who in turn, undertook the pioneering process by employing peasants and workers to clear the land for cultivation. The process was in many ways an effort in imposing the same “feudal” social structures that existed in the Red River Delta.⁴⁴

Under the Le Dynasty, the Vietnamese government in Thang Long also introduced laws to banish criminals to the south. By so doing, the government hoped to rid the north of undesirable elements as well as to utilize their energies in opening up the land and establish settlements in the south. In 1474, three years after the annexation of Cape Varella from Champa, the Le government acted to banish criminals there. The criminals were divided into three categories according to the severity of their crimes. Those with the gravest offences were sent to the southern-most region.⁴⁵

Apart from the criminals, there were those who Camille Briffaut called ‘*les errants*’. Briffaut suggested that throughout the southward movement of the Vietnamese people, the majority of the pioneers were ‘marginal members’ of society. He mentioned two types of Vietnamese in the villages: the sedentary and established *cite* (urban) people, and those who were not part of the main stream society, or ‘*les errants*’. It was the *errants* who were called to clear new fields and organise new villages.⁴⁶ They were people without homes, land or ancestral altars or family tombs. In other cases they were also those uprooted either by conflicts or natural disasters. These ‘*errants*’ included people from weakened clans without resources, the rebels and criminals, as well as, craftsmen

⁴⁴ Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁵ See *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi: Hinh Luat Chi*, p. 331.

⁴⁶ Camille Briffaut, *Le Cite Annamite*, Vol. 3, Paris: Librairie Coloniale & Orientaliste, Emile Larose, 1912, pp. 10-30, as cited in Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountain*, pp. 150-151. See also *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi: Hinh Luat Chi*, p. 331.

and shamans who were seeking new opportunities.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the number of people who ventured south was small prior to the 17th Century.

However, by the early 16th Century, the southern region began to receive more attention from the Vietnamese. This was due to the growing economic difficulties that had arisen in the Red River Delta, compelling many to leave for new opportunities. Natural calamities such as flood and famine ravaged the north. The Le Court at the time were drawn into court intrigues and efforts to control floods and in overcoming drought were neglected. Among the provinces most affected were Thanh Hoa and Nghe An which were situated at the tail of typhoon. A series of migration to the south then took place each time a natural disaster struck. Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam were the normal destinations. The flow of people from the two provinces to Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam continued even after the arrival of Nguyen Hoang. In the autumn of 1559 for instance, a severe flood in Nghe An and Thanh Hoa caused many to move south and settled in Thuan Hoa.⁴⁸ Even during the Nguyen-Trinh conflict this exodus from the two province of Nghe An and Thanh Hoa continued. This provided new settlers populate Nguyen's southern Vietnam. According to Li Tana, the floods that took place in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An in the years 1561, 1570, 1571, 1572, 1586, 1589, 1592, 1594, 1595, 1596 and 1597, resulted in continued immigration from these regions into Nguyen Southern Vietnam.⁴⁹

The Red River Delta was also increasingly unable to support a fast growing population. The relative peace experienced during the nearly two hundred years of the Tran Dynasty (1225-1400) and the first hundred years of the Le Dynasty (1427-1529) saw a rapid increase in population of Vietnam. The traditional Vietnamese heartland of the Red River Delta became over-

⁴⁷ Briffaut, *Le Cite Annamite*, pp. 10-33.

⁴⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: p. 7a.

⁴⁹ Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 26, fn. 38.

crowded.⁵⁰ The population in the north had increased from an estimated barely two million in 1417 to more than five million in 1539.⁵¹ Thus, the vast area in the south offered an alternative to those who seek new opportunities.

There was also the growing tension of war particularly after the Mac Usurpation of 1527 that caused a southward migration. In this period, the country was temporarily divided between the Le Restoration forces and the Mac army, which lasted until 1596. Political sentiments was divided among the elites with some championing for the restoration of the disposed Le Dynasty, while others gave their support to the Mac. The war that spread throughout the country resulted in the uprooting of many who wished to avoid the conflict, particularly men who wanted to avoid being drafted into the combating armies. The south, with its looser central control, became an attractive avenue to escape the conflict.

Finally, the southward movement was more than a process of the emigration of peasants and *errants*. It was a process of migration of people which encompassed many levels, bringing people of different backgrounds and even political affiliations to settle in the new land. However, it was Nguyen Hoang, the founder of the Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam, who acted as a catalyst of the Nam Tien process, in the new lands he took control of.

Foreign Relations in the Vietnam World

The history of Vietnam's foreign relations since 1428 has been shaped and coloured by the Vietnamese rulers' acceptance of the Chinese world order. In that year, Le Loi (reigned as Le Thai To, 1428 to 1433), the founder of the Le Dynasty (1428-1788), drove out the army of Ming China that had occupied Vietnam from 1408 to 1428. One of the first things that Le Loi did was to send a trib-

⁵⁰ For discussions on the population of Vietnam during this time, see Ng Shui Ming, *The Population of Indochina*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1974, pp. 11-13; see also Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 161-172.

⁵¹ Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 160.

ute to the Chinese court at Nanjing.⁵² The act demonstrated Vietnam or Dai Viet's (as Vietnam was known under the Le) willingness to be subordinate to the Chinese court despite having expelled the Chinese army from Vietnam. The move also signified Dai Viet's status as a vassal state with China as its suzerain. This act of submission effectively placed the Vietnamese within the Chinese world order and tributary system.

The rituals of tributary diplomacy involved a whole range of activities including the exchange of gifts (known as tribute goods), letters and ambassadors. The ultimate goal was the maintenance of the status-quo, which could be translated into the sustenance of the suzerain and subordinate relations between the patron state and the vassal states.

Historians tend to divide Southeast Asia into two cultural spheres, namely, the Indianised states, that is to say, those which had accepted some form of cultural influence from India, and Sinicised, referring to those which received Chinese influence. Between the two, Indian influence extended over a wider area with Vietnam being the exception.⁵³ However, despite their influence on the socio-cultural life of the major part of Southeast Asia, the Indians never had any direct political relations with the states in the region. On the other hand, most Southeast Asian states have sent diplomatic missions to the Chinese Court.

⁵² Such a practice is not confined to Le Loi alone. In 1788, when the Tay Son rebellion overthrew the Le dynasty and defeated an intervening Chinese army, the first thing that Nguyen Hue (Emperor Quang Trung), the Tay Son Emperor did was to send a tribute mission to China and presented himself at the Chinese Court. When Nguyen Phuc Anh established the Nguyen Dynasty in 1802, the first thing he did was to send a tribute to China. See Truong Buu Lam, "Intervention Versus Tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1788-1790", in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968, pp.165-179; and Phan Thuc Truc, *Quoc Su Di Bien*, (National History, Supplementary Version), Chen Chingho (ed.), Hong Kong: New Asia Research Institute, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Vol. I: pp. 30-31.

⁵³ Some scholars like John Fairbank and Edwin Reischauer and Albert Craig were more inclined to include Vietnam as part of East Asia than Southeast Asia. See Fairbank, Reischauer and Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973, pp. 258-259.

The sending of diplomatic missions to China, often in the form of tributary missions, demonstrated that these states understood the significance of such relations. In fact, tributary relations between Southeast Asian states and China only ceased after most of these countries came under western colonisation in the 19th century. In the case of Vietnam, such a relationship did not end until 1885 when the French managed to wrest Vietnam from China.

However, China's military or imperial contact with Southeast Asia was limited to the Mongol invasion in the 13th century and Admiral Cheng Ho (Zheng He)'s seven voyages between 1403 and 1427. The Chinese had never sought control over other Southeast Asian states. Apart from granting recognition and in some cases, protection, Chinese control over Southeast Asia was nominal. Thus, for most Southeast Asian states, China's distance and its unwillingness to project its power meant that there was no real security threat from China should any of the Southeast Asian states refused to submit. This view was not shared by Vietnam, one of the two countries in Southeast Asia which continued to send tributary missions to China throughout the greater part of its independent history. The other was Siam.⁵⁴

Truong Buu Lam is of the opinion that for the Vietnamese rulers, tributary relations provided a way to remain relatively independent of their giant neighbour, and to prevent Chinese interference in their internal affairs.⁵⁵ Strongly conscious of their country's geographical proximity to China, Vietnamese rulers were eager to keep the Chinese at bay by assuming the position of a subordinate vassal in their relationship with China. This strategic consideration was also reinforced by the belief of the Vietnamese in a Chinese world order.

⁵⁴ For a study on the Siamese tributary relations with China, see Sarasin Vi-raphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652-1853*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977, see also Takeshi Hamashita, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* (The Oriental Library), No. 46, 1988.

⁵⁵ Truong Buu Lam, "Intervention Versus Tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1788-1790", p. 165.

For Vietnam, being the immediate southern neighbour of China, the Chinese threat was real. When Le Loi accepted the position of vassal to the emperor of China, it was out of several considerations, including security. From the days of Le Loi's reign until the Mac family usurped the throne in 1527, the Le Court at Thang Long (Hanoi) sent regular tribute to the Ming Court. The Vietnamese court also sent missions to China each time a new Vietnamese emperor came to the throne.⁵⁶

In return, the Chinese emperors would reward the Vietnamese emperor with the regalia of investiture as well as the seal of authority, which corresponds to the rank of a provincial governor in China. Apart from that, the Chinese emperors would also reward the Vietnamese emperors with gifts, many times more valuable than what was contained in the Vietnamese tributes. The measure was a reflection of both the superior position of the Chinese emperor as well as his benevolent character.

Tributary delegations from Vietnam to China were given very strict specification including the route to be taken, the size of the delegation as well as the content of the tribute specifically stipulated to the item. Any change to the specification of the tribute would require the approval of the Chinese. Unlike most other Southeast Asian states which used the maritime route for sending tribute, the Vietnamese delegations travelled on land. The route would take the delegation from Thang Long through Lang Son on the Sino-Vietnamese border before entering China via the Zheng Nangan in the province of Guangxi. From there, the delegation would travel to the Chinese capital where it would be received.

Vietnam's normal tribute to China during the Le Dynasty consisted of four gold incense pots and vases, weighing 209 taels; 12 silver pots weighing 691 taels, 20 Rhinoceros horns, and 20 elephant tusks.⁵⁷ There were instances when these were substituted

⁵⁶ For a study on Chinese sources relating to Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations, see G. Deveria, *Histoire des Relations de la Chine avec l'Annam-Vietnam du XVIe au XIX Siecle*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1880.

⁵⁷ *Cuong Muc*, Vol. 35: 17.

with gold and silver, the reason being the difficulty faced in transporting these items over land, as in the year 1716.⁵⁸

In discussing the case of tribute and trade relation between Siam and China, Sarasin Viraphol suggests that there was an economic dimension to the notion of tributary relations, namely, the accompanying trade mission. Tributary relations with China went beyond the basic characteristic of state-to-state diplomacy. Viraphol argues that despite the general Confucianist disdain for commercial activities, and the Neo-Confucianist philosophy that was championing a self-imposed isolationist policy in China during the 17th and 18th centuries, the Chinese could not shun trade. Despite the image of Chinese self-sufficiency, there was a certain degree of economic interdependence, and in the case of Siam, it was the demand for rice.⁵⁹ For the Siamese, profit generated from the conduct of tribute trade was so great that it was worthwhile to engage in it.

The concept of tribute trade involved the admission to the tributary diplomacy arrangement which was followed by permission to trade. In this case, goods from the official trade mission were exempted from taxes, making it a profitable venture. While this element of tribute trade became so much an integral part of Siam's relations with China, the same could not be said of Vietnam's case. At least historical sources relating to Vietnam's dealings with China (reports of tributary missions to China) do not reflect the existence of tributary trade.

In the case of Vietnam, the tribute trade with China is unclear. The lack of evidence from the Vietnamese side seem to suggest that its tributary relations with China was limited to state-to-state relations. Vietnamese historical materials have not provided us with a clear idea of additional activities beyond the framework of the state-to-state diplomacy.

However, the existence of tribute trade is evident in Vietnam's dealings with delegations from Insular Southeast Asia. The *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* describes many instances where traders

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 35: 17.

⁵⁹ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652-1853*, p. 1.

from Do Ba (Cha Va) arrived in Thang Long with their tribute of local produce while seeking permission to trade.⁶⁰ There were also occasions where traders from Insular Southeast Asia, most likely to be Malays, offered precious items such as pearls to the Vietnamese emperors, presumably in the hope of gaining permission to trade in Vietnam. Despite the usage of the term *Cong* or tribute when referring to such instances, at no time in its history has any state from Insular Southeast Asia considered itself a vassal of Vietnam.

Given this situation, it is perhaps important to bear in mind that despite Vietnamese rulers' acceptance of the Chinese model of tributary relations as the *modus operandi* of their foreign relations, the reality of the functioning of this system in Vietnam's case reflects some variants that warrant attention. This is especially so in Vietnam's dealings with its neighbours and foreigners.

Like most countries in Southeast Asia at that time, the first maxim which governed the relations of Vietnam's relations with foreign countries was based on the understanding that actual diplomatic exchanges or embassies were seen as ritual confirmation of existing ties. The second maxim is that Vietnam will not acknowledge itself to be inferior to any other country.⁶¹ The exception being its relations with China in which the latter was considered to be the source of legitimising its rule. These maxims were evident in the case of Japan in the 17th and 18th centuries as W. J. Boot argues. Also, according to Boot, "in a hierarchically conceived world, equals do not exist".⁶² Given these maxims, it would appear that successive Vietnamese regimes have subscribed to them.

Gideon Rose argues that "Theories of foreign policy seek to explain what states try to achieve in the external realm".⁶³ In

⁶⁰ *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (MS A. 3 hereafter *Toan Thu*), Vol. 3: 4; Vol. 7: 14; Vol. 11: 17 & 57.

⁶¹ W. J. Boot, "Maxims of Foreign Policies", *Itinerario*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, 2000, p. 66.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶³ Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policies", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, 1: pp. 144-172.

looking at the Nguyen foreign relations, it would appear that the question to ask is, “what causes states to adopt certain kinds of foreign policies?” And in this case, the Nguyen. Nguyen went with the neoclassical realism where the most common approach has been to assume that foreign policies have their sources in domestic politics.⁶⁴

In accepting the Chinese tributary system in its relationship *vis-a-vis* its larger northern neighbour, the Vietnamese also adopted a similar system in conducting its relationship with its other neighbours. Thus when Ngo Si Lien wrote in the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* on the Le Court’s relationship with the kingdom of Champa and Ai Lao, he used the word ‘Cong’, or tribute to describe the relationship. In other words, Vietnam imitated the Chinese, taking on the role of a superior state. The marked difference however, lies with the fact that the Vietnamese’ sphere of influence was limited. Alexander Woodside made clear that the Vietnamese never achieved the position of universal empire as in the case of Imperial China. It was “one of a number competing domains in the genuine if vaguely defined multi-kingdom political environment of mainland Southeast Asia”.⁶⁵ Thus, at best, the Vietnamese tributary system was a pale shadow of the system practiced by the Chinese universal empire. Such an argument is valid considering the fact that the Vietnamese had not the capability to project its power against Siam or Burma. It also did not have the cultural influence of China.

Suffice to say the various Vietnamese rulers, including Le Loi and his descendants, conducted their foreign affairs by imitating the tributary system of China. Even though the adoption of the Chinese system was most apparent during the later Nguyen Dy-

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 147. For a discussion on Realism in foreign policies, see K. J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 6th edition, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International Editions, 1992, pp. 67-68.

⁶⁵ Alexander Barton Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Nguyen and Ch’ing Civil Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 235. Chapter Five, “The Emperor, the Bureaucracy and the World Outside Vietnam”, deals with this question of Vietnam’s foreign relations under the Nguyen dynasty during the first part of the 19th century.

nasty (1802-1945) as explained by Alexander Woodside this system began in the days of the Le Dynasty.

Despite the reality that it was merely a middle-level power, the Vietnamese emperor assumed the position of *Tien Tu* (Son of Heaven). This was also the title of the Chinese emperors, and can be seen as an attempt to elevate Vietnam onto a platform as the centre of universe in relation to its immediate neighbours and the non-Viet peoples living within or without its political boundaries, and thus, demanded the respect due to such position from them. In resuming its relationship with its neighbour such as Champa and the various principalities in Laos, the Vietnamese rulers demanded tribute from them.

The entire process was an expression of the relative status of the rulers of Vietnam and their neighbours. While the Vietnamese had copied the tributary diplomacy framework of the Chinese in dealing with their neighbours, the very states that they had demanded tribute from were used to operating in a non-Sinicised tributary diplomacy framework. While the Siamese could recognise the Chinese diplomatic techniques, other states that the Vietnamese came into contact with, including Champa and Cambodia, were less well-informed of it. Nonetheless, this does not mean that states like Champa and Cambodia did not understand their positions with regard to their larger neighbours. In fact, David Chandler suggests that, “Cambodian kings, pulled into tributary relations with their stronger neighbours, knew the rules of the game and what position they had to take”.⁶⁶

Tributary relations could also take the form of punitive actions on the part of the patron states whenever a vassal ruler seemed to contravene the tributary relationship. Thus, when Champa failed to pay a heavy tribute as demanded by the Le emperor in 1471, the Vietnamese attacked and annexed a large part of Champa. The justification for such action against Champa was that the people of Champa who “do not fear heaven and are negligible in protecting (its proper patterns)”, were enemies of the Vietnam-

⁶⁶ David Porter Chandler, “Cambodia before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794-1848”, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973, p. 61.

ese.⁶⁷ The attack on Champa confirmed the Vietnamese' power vis-à-vis Champa. After the sacking of the Champa capital, Vijaya, the Vietnamese emperor received tributes from other more distant hill peoples, including Ai-Lao (which was defeated by the Vietnamese in 1467), Tran-ninh (a plateau in eastern Laos), and the newly annexed Thuan-hoa and Quang-nam.⁶⁸

Such tribute relationships continued into the days of the later Le period and even during the Mac period. During the Mac usurpation period (1527-1600), the Vietnamese court at Thanh Hoa, under the Le Restoration campaign continued to receive tribute and gifts from its neighbours, particularly Ai Lao and Tran Ninh. Such relationships continued after the Le was successfully returned to Thang Long (Hanoi) in 1590.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the settings that prepare us for the further understanding of the subsequent chapters by focusing on two main areas. Firstly, the settings of Nguyen Southern Vietnam prior to the establishment of the Nguyen rule. In this regard, emphasis is given to the geographical feature and characteristics of the population of Nguyen Southern Vietnam. This is especially important to serve as background to the future interactions between the Nguyen and Champa, which was situated in the region of southern Vietnam. Secondly, this chapter also highlighted the manner foreign relations were being practiced by states in mainland Southeast Asia and Vietnam prior to the establishment of Nguyen rule, including how earlier Vietnamese regimes have dealt with Champa.

⁶⁷ John K. Whitmore, "The Development of Le Government in Fifteenth Century Vietnam", Cornell University, Ph. D., 1968, p. 209.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214.

Chapter Two

Initial Contacts, 1558-1613

Nguyen rule over southern Vietnam began in 1558 with the appointment of the patriarch of the Nguyen family, Nguyen Hoang to the position of governor of Thuan Hoa. It can be argued that during the first 42 years of Nguyen Hoang's rule, from 1558 to 1600, southern Vietnam's external linkages were actually an extension of the foreign relations of the Le Court. It was only after 1600 when Nguyen Hoang resolved to carve out a separate power base of his own in the south that the nature of the foreign relations became the direct concern of the Nguyen. This chapter will look at how foreign relations and foreign trade became important in the last few years of Nguyen Hoang's reign as part of Nguyen Hoang's goal in strengthening his hold on the two provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam.

The Beginning of Nguyen Rule

The departure of the Nguyen family to southern Vietnam during the mid-16th Century was the result of an inter-family feud which saw Nguyen Hoang, the patriarch of the Nguyen Lords, taking up appointment as the governor and garrison commander of Thuan Hoa, then one of the southern-most Vietnamese province.¹ Dai Viet, as Vietnam under the Le Dynasty was called, entered into a state of civil war between the Mac and the pro-Le forces creating two centres of power from 1527 to 1592. The Mac entrenched themselves in the northern capital of Thang Long, while the Le Restoration forces had first regrouped at Ai Lao, in present day Laos, before launching attacks on Thanh Hoa province. They captured the city of Tay Do in 1543 and made it the capital of the Le

¹ After Thuan Hoa, there were Quang Nam, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen which were further to the south.

Restoration Movement. Established in 1533, the movement was led by Nguyen Hoang's father, Nguyen Kim. When he first arrived in Sam Chau, Ai Lao, Nguyen Kim's Le forces only numbered a few thousand men and 30 war elephants. He received help from the ruler of Ai Lao, Sau Dau to strengthen his forces. That year, Nguyen Kim discovered the existence of Ninh, the youngest son of Le Chieu Ton, the deposed emperor, hiding in disguise in Ai Lao with some court officials. Upon putting Ninh on the throne with the reign title of Le Trang Ton, Nguyen Kim proclaimed the Le-Restoration movement.² Kim's appeal to Le loyalists resulted in the rallying of many able-men who remained faithful to the Le, and by 1543, the Le army managed to wrest Thanh Hoa and Nghe An from the Mac, and temporarily restored the Le Court in Tay Do, in Thanh Hoa.

Upon usurping the throne in 1527, the Mac family tried to establish a dynastic rule in Thang Long. Apart from restoring law and order in the country, it also tried to obtain recognition from China to legitimise its rule. This was achieved in 1543 when the Ming Dynasty in China recognised the Mac as the legitimate rulers over Vietnam. The recognition helped to rally some support among the Vietnamese to the Mac, thus allowing it to exercise some form of normalcy and order in administrating the country. However, Mac rule was challenged by a section of the elites who remained loyal to the deposed Le family.

Just as the Le forces was gaining strength, Nguyen Kim was assassinated in 1545. He was poisoned by Duong Chap Nhat, the Mac Tong Tran (Garrison Commander) of Thanh Hoa who pretended to have shifted allegiance to the Le.³ The control of military power fell into the hands of Kim's son-in-law, Trinh Kiem, a commander in the Le forces. Trinh Kiem was a native of Soc Son village, Vinh Phuc district in Thanh Hoa. He first joined Nguyen Kim during the campaign against the Mac from Ai Lao. Due to his bravery and ability, especially in the battle of Luu Duong in 1537, he was made a general. Kim also gave his eldest

² *Tien Bien*, Vol. I: 2, see also *Toan Thu*, Vol. 16: 845 and *Cuong Muc*, Vol. 27: 25.

³ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. I: 3a; see also *Cuong Muc*, Vol. XXVII: 40b-41a.

daughter, Ngoc Buu, in marriage to Kiem.⁴ Nguyen Kim had two sons, both of whom were still young when their father died. Nguyen Uong, the elder was in his early twenties, while the second son Hoang was only twenty. As the war against the Mac was conducted under the leadership of Trinh Kiem, both of Nguyen Kim's sons also contributed to the Le cause. According to the *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien*, the history commissioned by the Nguyen's descendants in the 19th century, the Le Emperor recognised their ability and rewarded them through promotions in the Court. Uong was made a Quan Cong,⁵ and held the administrative position of Ta Tuong, whereas Hoang's ability in battle won him the title of Hau.⁶ These promotions drew the jealousy of Kiem who saw the two brothers as threats to his position. This led to the killing of Uong, allegedly on Kiem's orders. Hoang was afraid that he might suffer the same fate as his brother. He was advised by Nguyen U Ky, his maternal uncle⁷ to pretend insanity in order to avoid Kiem's suspicions. At the same time he consulted Nguyen Binh Khiem,⁸ a very famous scholar who had retired from the service of the Mac, and no longer party to the civil war. Khiem advised Hoang to go south.

⁴ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. I : 3a; see also *Cuong Muc*, Vol. XXVII: 30.

⁵ Though there is no direct equivalent between the Vietnamese Court titles to those of European origins, a Quan Cong will be roughly equivalent to a Count.

⁶ Roughly equivalent to a Viscount or a Baron. According to L. Cadiere, the title of Quoc Cong entitled a person to be appointed a prefect or governor, a Quan Cong to be a sub-prefect, and a Hau as the head of a village. The administrative position of Ta Tuong, literally meaning Left-Minister and member of the Grand Councilors (tsai-hsiang) allowed a person to participate in government affairs, see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985, p. 522. See also L. Cadiere, "Le Mur de Dong-Hoi: Etude sur l'établissement des Nguyen en Cochinchine", *BEFEO*, Vol. VI, 1906, p.89.

⁷ Nguyen Hoang was under the care of Ky when his father first arrived in Ai Lao. Ky continued to serve as the teacher and advisor of Hoang even as Hoang moved to the south in 1558. See *Tien Bien*, Vol.I: 5b & 6b.

⁸ For a biography of Nguyen Binh Khiem (1491-1585), see *Tu Dien Nhan Vat Lich Su Viet Nam* (A Biography of Historical Figures of Vietnam), Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Van Hoa, 1993, pp. 491-493. Khiem was known to be the writer of *Bach Van Nguyen Trinh Quoc Cong Luc Ki* (The Poems of Nguyen Trinh Quoc Cong), Vien Han Nom MS VHv 1453.

Trinh Kiem's jealousy which had brought about Uong's death, causing Hoang to feel threatened is a matter requiring deliberation in order to trace the genesis of the southward movement of the Nguyen. This is especially so because there exists two conflicting versions of the episode offered by the historical records of different Courts. Historical records from the Quoc Su Quan or Historical Institute of the later Nguyen Dynasty, the successors of the Nguyen in the 19th century, described how Trinh Kiem was jealous of the achievements of the two Nguyen brothers so that he had the elder one killed. There was, however, no mention of his intention of killing Hoang, apart from that allegedly perceived by Hoang himself, or deliberately by the subsequent court historians to justify Hoang's move to the south.⁹ The records of the Le Dynasty, *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, written largely under the *de facto* rule of the Trinh Lords, was silent on the event.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the real reason for Nguyen Hoang's appointment to the governorship of Thuan Hoa region could have been due to Trinh Kiem's appeal to the Emperor Le Anh Ton for Nguyen Hoang's appointment. In his presentation to the emperor, Trinh Kiem mentioned the strategic value of Thuan Hoa both in term of military and economic value. He also cautioned about the disunity of the people in the Thuan Hoa region, many of whom were suspected to be inclined to assist the Mac forces. Trinh Kiem reiterated that the situation posed a serious threat to the Le restoration movement. Thus, he recommended Nguyen Hoang for the position of governorship, as his family is "militarily-inclined, with many talents".¹¹ Trinh Khiem assured the emperor that with Nguyen Hoang working hand-in-hand with the garrison com-

⁹ All the records produced by the southern historians including the *Tien Bien*, *Cuong Muc*, and *Nam Ha Tiep Luc (NHTL)* mentioned Trinh Kiem's jealousy as the cause of Uong's death, without providing any explicit motive on Trinh Kiem's part to kill Hoang, apart from Hoang's personal perception of the threat.

¹⁰ Even Le Quy Don, the author of *Phu Bien Tap Luc (PBTL)* was silent on this matter. Writing on the history of the southern border two hundred years after Nguyen Hoang left for Thuan Hoa, Don too was perhaps bound by loyalty to his master, the Trinh, not to mention of the rivalry.

¹¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 6.

mander of Quang Nam, the Le court would have no more worries in the south.¹²

Whereas this recommendation to the emperor was ‘recorded in verbatim’ by the later Nguyen historians in the *Tien Bien*, the northern records are again silent. In his discussion of Nguyen Hoang’s decision to go south, Keith Taylor accepted the *Tien Bien*’s account as politically motivated, as it was more likely to have been recorded in such a manner by later historians in trying to justify Nguyen Hoang’s break with the traditional north and the Le court.¹³ Nonetheless, when looking from another perspective, Trinh Kiem’s intention could be exactly as in his recommendation to the emperor, albeit with some hidden motives, including an attempt to keep Nguyen Hoang from remaining as a potent force in the central political life at Tay Do. From a strategic point of view, the region of Thuan Hoa, in the central position between the northern Nghe An and Thanh Hoa, and Quang Nam in the south, was important in maintaining the geopolitical unity of the Le restoration movement which was under the constant threat of the Mac forces in the north. Any strategic gain by the Mac forces in Thuan Hoa would break the Le Restoration movement’s territories into two parts. Thus, it was sensible to send a strong leader like Nguyen Hoang to maintain the region under Le rule. Taylor who has examined both the Northern (*Toan Thu*) and Southern (*Tien Bien*) sources argued that Nguyen Hoang’s departure for Thuan Hoa was more a part of the inter-family rivalries in the capital city that did not involve life-threatening danger as suggested by the *Tien Bien*. He suggests that Nguyen Hoang had to leave Tay Do as he was clearly unable to challenge the political leadership in the capital. The command of Thuan Hoa would at least give him “an

¹² See *Tien Bien*, Vol. I, p. 6a. A notable surprise on this point is the silence of the northern records on the matter. While Keith Taylor was satisfied that Trinh Kiem’s recommendation to the Le emperor which was recorded in verbatim in the *Tien Bien*, but not mentioned at all in the northern records seems to suggest that it was done to justify the Nguyen’s break from the traditional Le Court.

¹³ Keith Taylor, “Nguyen Hoang and Vietnam’s Southward Expansion” in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power and Belief*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 46-47.

alternate power-base”.¹⁴ However, despite his removal from the centre of power, it is important to note that Nguyen Hoang remained a loyal servant of the Le Court.

The issue of Nguyen Hoang’s departure to Thuan Hoa has also been dealt with by Nola Cooke¹⁵ who concurs with Taylor that Nguyen Hoang’s departure from Thanh Hoa was the result of a family feud between the Nguyen and the Trinh for power and authority in the Le Court; and, that at the time of his departure from Thanh Hoa to Thuan Hoa, Nguyen Hoang had lost out in the power struggle against the more established and entrenched Trinh. This view differs significantly from those offered by earlier researcher L. Cadiere,¹⁶ and lately, Yang Baoyun,¹⁷ who, in accepting the *Tien Bien* version, maintained that Nguyen Hoang went south in 1558 on his own, and that he did so with the vision of a creating a new polity for himself and his descendants.¹⁸

This study takes the view that Nguyen Hoang had no choice but to go south in 1558 as he was not making any gains in the Le Court. However, Nguyen Hoang did not lose sight of the Le Court where he was still hoping to challenge for power. The south was for a time, a base where he could build on his strength. However, it was only after 1600 when Nguyen Hoang, again, lost out to the Trinh for position in the Le Court that he decided to build an alternative power base for himself in the south.

In his article describing the various sites of the Nguyen’s headquarters, Cadiere used the term ‘Rois’ or Kings when refer-

¹⁴ Keith Taylor, *Ibid.*, p. 55-58.

¹⁵ Nola Cooke, “Regionalism and the Nature of Nguyen Rule in Seventeenth Century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, March 1998, pp. 122-161.

¹⁶ See for instance, L. Cadiere, “Le Mur de Dong-Hoi: Etudes sur l’établissement des Nguyen en Cochinchine”, *Bulletin d’Ecole Francaise d’Extrême-Orient* (hereafter *BEFEO*), Vol. VI, 1906, pp. 87-254.

¹⁷ Yang Baoyun, *Contributions a l’histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam meridional (1600-1775)*, Geneve: Loisane/Etudes Orientales, 1992.

¹⁸ See the description of Nguyen Hoang’s death bed message to his successor, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen in *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 23-24.

ring to the Nguyen.¹⁹ Likewise, Yang terms the Nguyen rule as a ‘Principality’, which accorded the status of royalty to the Nguyen.

When Nguyen Hoang went to Thuan Hoa, he was accompanied by members of his clan from Tong Son in Thanh Hoa province, which included mandarin-administrators, soldiers and their families. Thus, the 1558 appointment actually brought a group of highly-placed and able people to Thuan Hoa. It was with the help of this group of people and the subsequent arrivals that Nguyen Hoang laid the foundation for a separate Vietnamese nation that offered a variant to the traditional northern Vietnamese political, economic, socio-cultural entity, as well as foreign relations.

Southern Vietnam Under Nguyen Hoang

Nguyen Hoang arrived in Thuan Hoa with his entourage that consisted of his former troops in 1558 as the Tran Thu (military governor) of the province. Prior to his arrival, Thuan Hoa was administered by a administrative system known as Tam Ty.²⁰ The system was introduced in Thuan Hoa in 1461 by Emperor Le Thanh Tong (r. 1460-1497 under the title of Hong Duc) shortly after the Le Dynasty had acquired the area from the Kingdom of Champa.²¹ The system placed the administration of a province under three magistrates, with each holding a different portfolio. The actual nature of the Tam Ty at Thuan Hoa during the arrival of Nguyen Hoang was not clear. The *Tien Bien* only mentions how the officials of the Tam Ty agreed to obey Hoang’s command.²²

The Tam Ty system originated in China. It was known as San Si and had been employed in the Chinese administration system since the Han Dynasty. But the Tam Ty system that was prac-

¹⁹ L. Cadiere, “Les Residences des rois de Cochinchine avant Gia-Long”, *Bulletin de la Commission Archeologique de l’Indochine*, 1913, pp. 103-185.

²⁰ For a brief statement on Tam Ty system and the various local and central government system of 18th century Vietnam, see Dang Phuong-Nghi, *Les Institutions Publiques Du Viet-Nam Au XVIIIe Siecle*, Paris: Ecole Française D’Extreme-Orient, 1969, p. 59.

²¹ See *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 13.

²² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 6b.

tised in the Le Dynasty was actually modelled after the provincial administration of the Ming Dynasty. The Qing government also used the system for provincial administration.²³ Its proper function however, is believed to have been modified by Nguyen Hoang. Under his son Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, the Tam Ty was fully restored and enlarged. It consisted of Xa Sai Ty which dealt with Chancellery affairs and the administration of justice. It was led by a Do Tri (magistrate) and assisted by a Ky Luc (Provincial Magistrate). The second portfolio was that of Tuong Than Lai Ty with jurisdiction over import taxes and customs and the control of the army in the provincial areas. It was led by a Cai-Ba (Treasurer). Lenh Su Ty was the third portfolio which was responsible for celebration of rites and the control of the army in the capital. It was under the charge of a Nha-Uy (commander),²⁴ whose duties included foreign relations.

Heading the Tam Ty was a Tran Phu (a judge in a military guard).²⁵ The presence of the Tam Ty system suggests, on the one hand, the existence of a mandarin civil-service-led administration. On the other hand, the frontier character of the region did not warrant the employment of a full civil administration. This is mainly due to the fact that the Tam Ty administration, although led by a civil mandarin, was also militarily inclined, with a strong military section. The system was usually used by the Vietnamese court as a form of local administration in frontier areas. At the time of Nguyen Hoang's arrival at Thuan Hoa in 1558, the province, together with Quang Nam were then the southern most region of Vietnamese influence.

In 1558, Quang Nam was under the command of Bui Ta Han, who was also known as Tran Quan Cong. Bui Ta Han was a native of Quang Ngai. He was appointed the governor of Quang Nam under the Le Government and remained loyal to the Le after the Mac usurpation. During Nguyen Hoang's early days in Thuan Hoa, Han was instrumental in assisting Nguyen Hoang to resist the

²³ See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985, pp. 401-402.

²⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 2b, see also *PBTL*, Vol. 3: 24b-26a.

²⁵ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1, p.5b.

Mac army. Han however, had a special place in Vietnamese history as he was known as the official who had set up the Son Phong (Mountain Defence) system as part of the Vietnamese means of controlling the uplanders along the western highlands. Interestingly, though Han was an equal of Nguyen Hoang, later court historians categorised him as one of the Nguyen's trusted subordinates.²⁶

Upon Nguyen Hoang's arrival, Tong Phuc Tri,²⁷ the chief of the Tam Ty, presented to Hoang the various registry books of Thuan Hoa, and offered to serve under Hoang. Tong Phuc Tri, also known as Lun Quan Cong, was a native of Thanh Hoa. He was sent to serve as the judge of the Tam Ty at Thuan Hoa. After Nguyen Hoang took over Thuan Hoa, Tri became one of Hoang's most trusted subordinates. Since then, the Tong family remained an integral part of the elite circle in the Nguyen Court in southern Vietnam. Apart from Tri, Nguyen Hoang was assisted by his uncle, Nguyen U Ky, and Mac Canh Truc. Nguyen U Ky was the elder brother of Nguyen Hoang's mother. His family was originally from Hai Duong province but had settled in Thanh Hoa. Members of his family had been serving the Le Court. It was Nguyen U Ky who was mainly responsible in bringing up Nguyen Hoang after the death of Nguyen Kim.²⁸ Mac Canh Truc (not related to the Mac family) was a native of Hai Duong. He came to Thuan Hoa as part of Nguyen Hoang's entourage, and held many important positions. After his demise, the family changed the family name to Nguyen Phuc, and later, Nguyen Huu.²⁹

Nguyen Hoang set up his headquarters at Ai Tu, near to the present day city of Quang Binh as his centre of administration. The choice of Ai Tu is an indication that Nguyen Hoang was more

²⁶ See *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien*. For this study, the version from the Institute of Han-Nom is used, MS VHv 172), Vol. 3: 16-17. For Bui Ta Han's role in the setting up of the Son Phong system, see preface of *Phu Man Tap Luc*, (Miscellaneous Records of the Pacification of the Barbarians, Vien Han-Nom, MS A. 68), Vol. 1: 10 & Vol. 3: 1.

²⁷ For a brief biography, see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 5.

²⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 7a. See also *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 1-2.

²⁹ See *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 9.

concerned to defend the region from the attack of Mac forces still based in Thang Long than to actually pay close attention to civil rule. This is especially so as Ai Tu was strategically placed near to the approaches of the River Linh Giang and hence, would enable Nguyen Hoang to control the flow of movement between Nghe An and Thuan Hoa-Quang Nam region. One example which demonstrated Nguyen Hoang's concern for military-security problem was the setting up of a coastal defence (Hai Phong) to guard against attempts by the Mac forces from attacking the Le controlled territories in the south.³⁰

The *Tien Bien* is silent on the Tam Ty system at Thuan Hoa after Nguyen Hoang's arrival. It was not mentioned again during his administration. It is most likely that the system was maintained but under the direct jurisdiction of Nguyen Hoang, leaving little room for the Tam Ty to act independently as it used to. It is likely that the Tam Ty was allowed to administer civil affairs while military decisions were executed by Nguyen Hoang and his original followers. This had probably led to a situation where the Tam Ty system was unable to develop fully, neglecting certain aspects of the administration. The inability of the Tam Ty to function effectively is demonstrated in a case that took place in the early part of 1586 when the Le Emperor dispatched Nguyen Tao, a Hien Sat Su (censor) at the Le Court to Thuan Hoa for the purpose of extracting taxes from the two provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. However no taxes were collected as there were no proper and accurate land registry and population census available for the two regions. This problem was later rectified by Nguyen Hoang who called for the preparation of the necessary registries by the various officials of Phu (prefecture) and huyen (county). The case suggests the subordination of the Tam Ty and civil affairs administration to military considerations. Such developments was probably unavoidable as Vietnam was still in the midst of a civil war between the Mac and the Le forces.

Even without an effective Tam Ty administrative system, Nguyen Hoang was reported to have been a successful governor

³⁰ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1, 7a.

for Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam.³¹ Quang Nam was placed under his jurisdiction in 1570 after the former governor, Nguyen Ba Quynh was recalled by the Le Court. Nguyen Ba Quynh had succeeded Bui Ta Han following the latter's demise in 1569. It is interesting to note that the appointment was made while Nguyen Hoang was in the temporary capital of Tay Do (Thanh Hoa), indicating the possibility that Nguyen Hoang coveted the appointment to the seat of the more prosperous Quang Nam in addition to his Thuan Hoa.³² That same year also saw Nguyen Hoang going to Tay Do to seek Trinh Kiem's favour in granting him the governorship of Quang Nam. During his governorship of Thuan Hoa and later, Quang Nam, Nguyen Hoang was able to lead his forces against Mac attacks on the two provinces. One of Hoang's more famous victories was against the Mac general, Lap Bao, in 1574,³³ but more important than such victories was that Nguyen Hoang was able to rule quite effectively:

“Hoang soothed and governed for more than ten years with geniality; seaborne merchants favoured him; he applied law with impartiality, kept the local strongmen in check, and put an end to the cruel and crafty; the inhabitants of the two provinces were influenced toward compassion and virtue and public morality was improved; people did not become bandits, doors were not locked, seaborne merchants from foreign kingdoms all came to buy and to sell, a trading centre was established; military discipline was strict, everyone worked

³¹ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 12b.

³² See *Toan Thu*, Vol. 16: 862; see also *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 7b - 8a.

³³ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 10-12.

hard. From that time, men of Mac did not dare come for plunder and the border lands were at peace”.³⁴

Nguyen chronicles observed that Nguyen Hoang was successful in his administration. This presented him with a new opportunity to try his fortunes up north in the Le Court. *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, an earlier text from which the *Tien Bien* had drawn much of its information, also acknowledged Nguyen Hoang’s success in resisting the threats of the Mac forces and the moves to wrest the two provinces from the Le. It also mentioned that Nguyen Hoang being well liked by the population of the two provinces.³⁵

Throughout his tenure as the governor of Thuan Hoa and after 1570 as well Quang Nam that extended to the region of Phu Yen and Qui Nhon, Nguyen Hoang was very much a loyal servant of Le. Both the *Tien Bien* and *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* provide a detailed record of Nguyen Hoang’s exploits in resisting the Mac in the south and joining the Le Restoration forces in fighting the Mac in the north from 1593 to 1600. In this respect though, the northern chronicles of *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* devoted less importance to Hoang when compared to *Tien Bien* a southern chronicle. The northern annals’ treatment of Nguyen Hoang is by no mean biased against him since Nguyen Hoang was but only one of the many officials in the service of the Le. The southern chronicle however saw Hoang as the founder of a dynasty in the South.³⁶

The period between 1558 and 1600 saw Nguyen Hoang remaining a loyal servant of the Le as a strategy. During this period, he did his best to contribute to the Le Restoration Movement’s campaign against the Mac. In 1590, Nguyen Hoang sent more money and supplies to the Le Court in aid of the military

³⁴ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 16: 868, cited in Keith Taylor, “Nguyen Hoang and the Beginning of Viet Nam’s Southward Expansion”, p. 49. This is the best available translation. Both the *Cuong Muc* and the *Tien Bien* have a shorter abridged version, see *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 12 and *Cuong Muc*, Vol. 28: 32.

³⁵ *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 20.

³⁶ In many ways, the *Tien Bien* could be seen as a political statement written to justify the move of the Nguyen in resisting the authority of the Le Court.

campaign,³⁷ when the salary of his garrison force was delayed in 1592. He did this without complaining. In 1593, the Le forces recaptured Thang Long (also known as Dong Kinh or Eastern Capital). In the following year, Nguyen Hoang went to Thang Long to pay his respect to the Le Emperor, and was made a Tai Ve with the rank of Quoc Cong (Grand Duke). Nguyen Hoang then returned to his home province of Thanh Hoa to pay respect at the tomb of his father, Nguyen Kim.

During the entire period from 1558 to 1600, there was little evidence of Nguyen Hoang dealing in foreign relations. Apart from receiving foreign merchants at the major port at Hoi An and Ai Tu, Hoang's external contacts were limited. The only instance where Nguyen Hoang was involved directly in foreign relations was under the direct aegis of the Le Court. In 1597, Hoang was appointed one of the main officials accompanying the Le Emperor to the Vietnam-Chinese borders in the north to seek recognition from China.³⁸ Hence suffice to say that prior to 1600, Nguyen Hoang was still acting entirely in the capacity of a Le official. It was only after that year that Hoang's attitude changed. This marked a new phase in his dealings with foreigners and there was evidence of a sense of independence. Nguyen Hoang's dealing with foreigners was aimed at advancing his own political gain rather than that of the Le Court. Hence, from 1600, there was a marked increase in the external contacts of the Nguyen and this is reflected certainly in the records.

Nguyen Hoang, 1600-1613

Nguyen Hoang stayed in the Le Court from 1593 to 1600. Having met objective of securing the south, he can now turn his attention to assist in the fight the remnants of the Mac forces. During this period, he was involved in the military campaign to rout the remnants of the Mac forces at Son Nam in 1594. Han, his second son

³⁷ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 14.

³⁸ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 17: 909.

was killed in this military campaign.³⁹ However, from his marriage with at least four women, Nguyen Hoang had ten sons and two daughters. Hoang also took part in the campaign of 1595 against the Mac at Hai Duong, Tai Nguyen and Son Tay. By then, the forces of the Mac Dynasty could no longer hold out against the Le Restoration Forces, and the Mac family retreated to territories in China but continued to maintain some hold on the province of Cao Bang at the Sino-Vietnamese borders until 1663. With its restoration completed in Vietnam, the Le Emperor had to seek official recognition from China. It requested to be readmitted as a tribute sending state. The matter however was complicated by China's recognition of the Mac in 1540. For this, the Le Emperor had to travel to the borders of China with the Imperial Seal in 1597 and to present his credentials to the representative of the Chinese Emperor. Nguyen Hoang was part of the entourage. The *Tien Bien* again played up the importance of Nguyen Hoang in this diplomatic mission by not making reference to the roles of other officials. The *Toan Thu* however, only included Hoang's name among a list of other names, without highlighting anyone in particular.⁴⁰ Nguyen Hoang took part in both the Le's missions to the China-Vietnam borders in 1597 and 1598 to seek Chinese recognition for the Le.

Hoang realized that he was still losing out in the Le Court. Despite serving the Le faithfully for a decade in the north, it was obvious that Nguyen Hoang was unhappy with the lack of recognition accorded to him compared to the emphatic rise of his nephew, Trinh Tong (1570 to 1623)⁴¹ Nguyen Hoang's contribution to the Le Restoration movement between 1593 and 1600 was significant having actively participated in the campaign against the Mac in

³⁹ For brief biography of Nguyen Hoang's children, see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 3-8 & Vol. 2: 37. See also Vinh Cao et al. (comp.), *Nguyen Phuc Toc The Pha: Thuy To Pha-Vuong Pha-De Pha*, [Genealogy of Nguyen Phuc To] Hue: Nha Xuat Ban Thuan Hoa, 1995, pp. 101-119.

⁴⁰ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 17-18, see also *Toan Thu*, Vol. 17: 907 & 909.

⁴¹ Trinh Tong was the son of Trinh Kiem, the leader of the Le Restoration from 1539 to 1569, who succeeded Nguyen Kim, Nguyen Hoang's father. Kiem had married Ngoc Bao, Hoang's only sister.

north. Nonetheless, Hoang's contributions were considered by the Le Court, dominated by the Trinh family, as of lesser worth compared to the leadership of the Trinh family. While Nguyen Hoang was the provincial governor of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam, the Trinh family remained the principal figures in the Le Court. Several other events probably contributed to Nguyen Hoang's decision to once again focus his efforts in the south, particularly since those efforts in the north were unproductive. While he was in (having come north to aid in military campaign against the Mac) the Le Court in 1594, he was asked by the Le emperor to officiate in the conferment of posthumous title of Vuong (king) to Trinh Kiem, his brother-in-law, who had died in 1571. In the same ceremony, Nguyen Hoang's late father, Nguyen Kim, was only honoured with a lower posthumous position of Quoc Cong (Grand Duke).⁴² In 1599, when the Le emperor accorded the title of Binh An Vuong (King of Pacification) to Trinh Tong, Nguyen Hoang remained as a Quoc Cong (Grand Duke), a rank lower than Trinh Tong.

There was also no further honour coming Hoang's way in the form of appointments. Neither was he appointed to any of the positions in the central Le Court. Even though Hoang also held the title of Thai Ve (Defender in Chief), his administrative position remained that of governor of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. This view was shared by Le Quy Don in his *Phu Bien Tap Luc* written in 1776. According to Don:

“During the fifth month of the fifth year of Emperor Khanh Tong (1600), Thuan Quoc Cong (Nguyen Hoang) whose reputation and merits were gaining ground was unhappy that he was not rewarded. He was also disturbed by overtures from the usurper Mac to rebel. This an-

⁴² *Toan Thu*, Vol. 16: 899.

xiety caused him to conspire with the naval commanders, Phan Nhan (Soc Quan Cong), Ngo Dinh Ngo (Trang Quan Cong) and Bui Van Khue (My Quan Cong) to rebel. He in turn, volunteered to quash the rebellion and used that as a ruse to return to Thuan Hoa with his forces".⁴³

By then, Nguyen Hoang realised that his family had lost out in the power struggle at the centre. Thus, from then he began to seriously look to the creation of a separate power-base in the south.⁴⁴

During the period between 1593 and 1600, Nguyen Hoang and his personal army had to serve under the leadership of Trinh Tong. Nguyen Hoang was reported to have about 20,000 men under his command while serving in the north during the period between 1594 and 1601. However, it is not clear as to whether they were from his original force in Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam.⁴⁵ Recognizing that he had little chance in advancing his family fortunes by remaining in the Le Court, with the power of the central government firmly in the hands of his nephew Trinh Tong, Nguyen Hoang in 1600 quietly withdrew his forces from north of the Linh Giang River and returned to Thuan Hoa.

Keith Taylor argues that Nguyen Hoang's withdrawal from the north in 1600 was of significance in the early modern era of Vietnamese history, Nguyen Hoang had reached a point where his decision to leave the north made him a rebel in the eyes of his contemporaries. He came to be judged harshly from a traditional Vietnamese outlook for going away without permission. Taylor however is of the view that all these mattered little to Hoang be-

⁴³ *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 20.

⁴⁴ This view is subscribed to by Keith Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and the Beginning of Viet Nam's Southward Expansion", pp. 55-56.

⁴⁵ See *Tien Dai Ven Tan*, p. 46. However, I am unable to verify the authenticity of this figure of 20,000 men.

cause he had his eyes firmly fixed on a new region in the South.⁴⁶ He continued to profess his undivided loyalty to the Le, with his desire for a larger share of power in the capital vis-à-vis the Trinh undiminished. Nola Cooke suggests that despite having expanded to the south and having built up a separate political entity that was probably equal to that of the Le-Trinh in the north, throughout the 17th century, the Nguyen family did not give up their desire to compete for influence against the Trinh in the Le Court.⁴⁷

Between 1600 until his death in 1613, Nguyen Hoang's policies in southern Vietnam focused on the strategy to carve out a separate power-base in the south. In the same year of his return from Thang Long, Hoang moved his headquarters from Ai Tu to the eastern part Thuan Hoa and named it Dinh Cat.⁴⁸ This move was a strategic decision to relocate his headquarters further south. In continuing to pledge loyalty to the Le Court, Hoang also tried to demonstrate strong ties with the Trinh by marrying his daughter, Ngoc Tu, to Trinh Trac, the son and eventual successor of Trinh Tong. At the same time, his scheme in the south also began to take shape. That same year, he established new granary at Thuan Hoa as part of the measure to be self-sufficient.⁴⁹

In 1602, Nguyen Hoang went down to Quang Nam, and after inspecting a geographically-strategic location, he established a second residence and a second new granary "to store money and grains".⁵⁰ From that year, Nguyen Hoang began to place more importance on the southern province of Quang Nam. He appointed his sixth son and successor, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to be the garrison commander (Tran Thu) of Quang Nam. For Hoang, Quang Nam had great strategic advantages considering the geographical barrier posed by the Hai Van Pass that would help ensure the se-

⁴⁶ Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang ...", pp. 55-56.

⁴⁷ Nola Cooke, "Regionalism and the Nature of Nguyen Rule in Seventeenth Century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)", pp. 156-157.

⁴⁸ For a study on the various sites of the Nguyen headquarters prior to the move to Phu Xuan near present day Hue, see L. Cadere, "Les Residences des rois de Cochinchine avant Gia-Long", *Bulletin de la Commission Archeologique de l'Indochine*, 1913, pp. 103-185.

⁴⁹ *Tien Bien*, 1: 21 & *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 21.

⁵⁰ *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 21-22.

curity of the province. As Nguyen Hoang passed through Hai Van Pass, he took note of the strategic bottle-neck position of the pass between Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam, and decided to set up a garrison at the pass. Quang Nam was also richer in resources than Thuan Hoa.⁵¹ For Nguyen Hoang, Quang Nam was the main revenue earner, having received more tax revenue than Thuan Hoa. The province also boasted the port of Hoi An, which became one of the most important ports in the Nguyen domain. This shift had actually prompted Nguyen Hoang to move a larger part of his army to Quang Nam.

Another prong in Nguyen Hoang's strategy to strengthen himself in the south was the construction of the Thien Mu Temple in 1601. Nguyen The Anh argues that the setting up of the Thien Mu temple was an attempt to promote a separate national cult in the south "by placing himself [Hoang] under the aegis of a spirit not enfeoffed to the Thang Long Court [The Le]".⁵² The creation of a separate national cult was important in his claim to authority. Later historians at the Court of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), went to great length to justify this position. According to the *Tien Bien*, local legend had it that at the hilly locality of the village of Ha Khe, by the Huong Gianh (Perfume River), an old female spirit dressed in red had predicted the coming of a true lord who would build a temple at the locality. The identification of Hoang as this 'true lord' endowed his rule with divine legitimacy.⁵³ Since its construction, the temple became the main spiritual centre for the later Nguyen rulers. Even though named after a local woman deity, the temple was a Buddhist temple.

Nguyen Hoang's decision to concentrate on state formation in the south in his final years can be seen in what he suppos-

⁵¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 21b.

⁵² Nguyen The Anh, "The Vietnamization of Po Nagar", in *Essays into Vietnamese Past*, Keith W. Taylor & John K. Whitmore (eds.), Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 49.

⁵³ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 20-21. This episode is discussed by Nguyen The Anh, "The Vietnamization of Po Nagar", p. 49; see also A. Bonhomme, "La Pagode Thein-mau: Historique", *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue (BAVH)*, No. 2, April-June 1915, p. 177. Bonhomme was an official in the French administration of Vietnam.

edly uttered to his son, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen at his death bed. Hoang reminded his successor that, “at the northern part of Thuan Hoa are the barriers of Hoanh Son Mountain and the River Linh Giang, and in the south are the Hai Van Pass and the Thach Bi Mountain which will serve as walls. The mountain produces gold and iron, while the sea produces fish and salt. This is a place where meritorious heroes would excel. If you could gather the people and train an army to resist the Trinh, our cause would endure for thousands of years”.⁵⁴ He passed away in 1613 at the age of 89.

Nguyen Hoang’s death bed advice was exploited by the later Nguyen Dynasty Court historians as the basis for the Nguyen family’s establishment of a separate nation. While it is without question that Nguyen Hoang saw the strategic position of the region south of Hoanh Son as the basis for building up the Nguyen family’s power base (Strategy 1), the Nguyen continued to challenge the Trinh for power in the north. This objective (Strategy 2) was to remain a feature in the Nguyen policy well until the end of the 17th Century.⁵⁵

Even though subsequent Nguyen rule in South resembled a separate kingdom in opposition to the Le-Trinh domain in the traditional Vietnamese heartland, the link with the north was not severed. From the time of Nguyen Hoang’s departure from Thang Long in 1601 until the first few years of the rule of Nguyen Phuc Khoat (r. 1738-1765), the Nguyen were still acknowledging their subordinate position to the Le Court, as evident from the titles they assumed upon succeeding to power. Successive Nguyen rulers held the Le title of either Quan Cong or Quoc Cong. However, from 1653 onward, Nguyen Phuc Tan had unilaterally declared himself as Quoc Cong,⁵⁶ such a declaration was not accepted by the Le Court. Even after Nguyen Phuc Khoat had unilaterally de-

⁵⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 23-24. It is not known whether Nguyen Hoang had actually uttered these words, but later Nguyen rulers clearly continued their rule with Hoang’s advice in mind.

⁵⁵ Nola Cooke is of this view. See Nola Cooke, “Regionalism and the Nature of Nguyen Rule in 17th Century Dang Trong”, p. 123.

⁵⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 5b; *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 25.

clared himself as Vuong, or King in 1744, this elevation was merely an attempt to be equal to the Trinh's position. This was because even though Nguyen Southern Vietnam was in many ways a de facto state, the Nguyen continued to maintain their links with the north.

Initial Contact with the Chams

Nguyen Hoang's decision to return to Thuan Hoa in 1600 to build a separate power-base in the south saw him consolidating his strategic position. Thus, Nguyen Hoang had to make sure that his control on Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam would not be challenged from within as well as from his southern neighbours.

However, his southward movement inevitably brought them into contact with numerous tribes that the Vietnamese considered as barbarians or "uplanders". Nguyen Hoang had to deal with the uplanders living under his jurisdiction as well as those from beyond the boundaries of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam.

When Nguyen Hoang first took over Thuan Hoa, and later in 1570, Quang Nam, the two provinces were not only inhabited by the Viet people who lived mainly in the plains and coastal areas, but also by non-Vietnamese people who were made up of dwellers of hills and highlands on the western side of the two provinces. These were the 'Moi' (savages) or 'Man' as recorded in Sino-Vietnamese texts.⁵⁷ These uplanders were generally regarded by the Viet people as inferior in culture and primitive in lifestyle, and did not follow the more superior 'Han Phong' (referring to Han culture), or in this case, Vietnamese culture.

Shortly before Nguyen Hoang came to Thuan Hoa, a scheme was introduced in 1540 by Bui Ta Han (Nguyen Quan Cong), the governor of Quang Nam, to deal with the uplanders. The scheme, known as the Son Phong system, literally 'Defense Against the Mountains' or 'Pacify the Mountains' was introduced to,

⁵⁷ One of the earliest western usage of the term 'moi' as savage was by Father Jean Koffler, a Jesuit who was in Nguyen Southern Vietnam from 1748 to 1756.

“...cope with the various problems that had arisen in settlement areas adjacent to the uplands, such as protection for the newly established Vietnamese settlements from the hostility of the uplanders, the control of contacts between uplanders and Vietnamese, and relating to this, problem of regulating of trade between highlands and lowlands”.⁵⁸

The scheme involved the creation of new sub-districts (nguong) in the areas occupied by the uplanders. Each nguong would be governed by an indigenous chief with the title of Giao Dich, who had to work in collaboration with minor Vietnamese officials in the Vietnamese administrative district (Huyen/Phu or prefecture and sub-prefecture). The scheme was first introduced in the Quang Ngai area in 1540. In carrying out this scheme, Bui Ta Han created four nguong (sub-districts) in the highlands that fell within the Vietnamese boundaries. The sub-districts of Da Bong and Cu Ba were placed under the district of Binh Son, while Phu Ba nguong came under the jurisdiction of (Trung) Nghia district, and Ba To nguong under Mo Duc district.⁵⁹ It is difficult to know which uplander group was covered in these four nguons, but they were most likely to be either Kayong, Hre or Monom, three Mon-Khmer speaking groups.

As the uplanders lived in small groups and could be found both within and beyond the Nguyen’s territorial boundaries, this made the task of controlling them difficult and troublesome. Generally, the uplanders who lived within the boundaries of the

⁵⁸ *Phu Man Tap Luc* (Miscellaneous Records of the Pacification of the Barbarians, this study uses the Institute of Han-Nom edition, shelf No. VHv 1239), Vol. 1: 10a. *Phu Man Tap Luc* was compiled by Nguyen On Khe, a mandarin who was serving as the head of Son Phong in 1871. See also Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, p. 155.

⁵⁹ *Phu Man Tap Luc*, Vol. 1: 10a.

Nguyen domains were peripheral tribes who had for generations, lived in the highlands bordering the plains of central Vietnam. They could be found in the hills surrounding Phu Xuan as well as on the western side of the Quang Nam province. They were nomadic, moving from one place to another within the hills, and practicing a slash and burn cultivation system.⁶⁰

When Nguyen Hoang first entered Thuan Hoa, it was reported that on the eastern side of the Ai Tu River near his main encampment, there were two xa (villages) of Dao Chinh and Hoa La. Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* provided the locations of the uplanders there. According to Don, along the River Khue Quan near Cam Lo, leading upstream to Ai Lao, Tay Nguyen, there were many sach (tribes)⁶¹ of 'savages' and there were also many routes from there which led to Lac Huan Quoc (the kingdom of Lac Hoan in present day Savanaket in Laos). Don also explained how the various Bo (tribe) of Lao people in Qui Hop Chau in Tran Ninh Phu used routes leading to Van Tuong and Lo Huan, the homeland of two minority ethnic groups in Laos. The Nguyen would later accord the status of Quoc or kingdom on these settlements.⁶²

Those who lived beyond the western boundary of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam could be further divided into two, namely, the better organised bigger tribes and the minor hill tribes. The first was made up of larger tribes of uplanders organised under the rule of a chieftain. They included the Jarais, the Rhades, and the Bahnars. These tribes were, at some point of time, regarded as states (Quoc) by the Vietnamese. The second group was made up of smaller tribes which had very little contact with the Vietnamese, and who lived in places considered inaccessible by the Vietnamese.

⁶⁰ For a detailed study on the uplanders and their relations with the Vietnamese, see Gerard Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

⁶¹ When referring to the various groups of uplanders, Vietnamese documents normally use either the term nguon or sach followed by the name of their locations to differentiate one group from another.

⁶² *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 2: In the case of Nam Ban, which was situated outside the Nguyen domains, it was accorded the status of a kingdom by the Le Emperor, Le Thanh Tong (r. 1460-1497), see *PBTL*, Vol. 2: 30.

Only Vietnamese traders who visited these highlands in search of jungle products, came into contact with them.

While it is known that the Son Phong system continued to be implemented during the Nguyen Dynasty,⁶³ it is not clear if Nguyen Hoang and his successors practiced it in the way Bui Ta Han had introduced it in around 1540. *Phu Man Tap Luc* (Pacification of the Savages), published in 1871, recorded that “for seven or eight generations of the Nguyen rule, the Vietnamese and the Man (savages) co-existed in a very amicable manner, and that there was no disturbance taking place”.⁶⁴

This is not surprising given that it drew on the *Tien Bien* of 1844 which had only one entry regarding the uplanders for the entire administration of Nguyen Hoang. In the entry for August 1571, it was reported that a few uplander tribes in Quang Nam were conducting raids against one another.⁶⁵ The matter was resolved by Nguyen Hoang who sent one of his commanders, Mai Dinh Dung to put down the attackers. Dung was later asked to set up garrison in the area. Even then, it is not clear as to which nguon (sub-district) the natives actually belonged to.⁶⁶

Tien Bien's coverage on the early period regarding trade relations between the Nguyen and uplanders was brief even

⁶³ Nguyen On Khe, the author of *Phu Man Tap Luc*, (Pacification of the Savages/Barbarians) first published in 1871, was the head of Son Phong programme in Quang Ngai. See preface of *Phu Man Tap Luc*.

⁶⁴ *Phu Man Tap Luc*, Vol. 3: 1.

⁶⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 10.

⁶⁶ The method in identification of the respective uplander tribes was not properly practiced by the Vietnamese, who at best, could only identify several major groups such as the Jarai and the Cham. Even then, it was through a given Vietnamese name. For all other uplanders, the usual method in identification was to call the people a uplander tribe followed by the name of the locality, eg., the uplanders from Cam Lo. For a better understanding of the various uplanders dealt with by the Nguyen, I decided to follow the geographical division of the various ethno-linguistic groups as proposed by Gerald C. Hickey, *The Highland People of South Vietnam: Social and Economic Development*, Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, September 1967, pp.13-23, and the map on p. 1. This is taking the assumption that such distribution had undergone only minimal changes over the years.

though after 1570, Nguyen Hoang was in charge of both Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam provinces, a relatively large area.

From the day the Son Phong System was implemented, it was apparent that trade was a major concern for the Vietnamese. This is reflected in a taxation system that relied on trade agents who dealt with certain uplanders. These agents were issued licenses by the Vietnamese authority to trade. The uplanders would pay taxes to the trade agents who would then pay a certain sum to the mandarin in charge of the district. Even though all the taxes were quoted in Vietnamese currency, i.e., quan, the uplanders normally paid their taxes in kind, i.e., jungle products. These jungle products would then be brought down to the plains by the trade agents to be sold in the various markets or fairs. Eventually, these goods would reach the ports along the coast like Hoi An, Viet Hai, and Pulo Chiam. The volume of this highland-lowland trade, though small in comparison with the external trade conducted by the Nguyen with the Japanese and Chinese was important enough to ensure that items from inland areas such as elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, wax, bee wax, sandal wood, clove, rattan, and raisins, were available for the Vietnamese to trade with the foreigners.

Trade with the uplanders and its taxation contributed to the economic development of Nguyen Hoang's southern Vietnam. There was also a barter trade where jungle produce was exchanged for salt, farming tools, cooking utensils, as well as domesticated animals.⁶⁷ The supplies of jungle products from the uplanders varied according to locality. The *Phu Bien Tap Luc* provided a glimpse of this such as that in Table 1:

⁶⁷ According to Le Quy Don (the *Phu Bien Tap Luc*), due to their frequent ceremonial feasts, the uplanders from nguon (sub-district) Ta-trach at Dai Khai in Phu Xuan, also wanted some domesticated animals in exchange for their jungle produce. See *PBTL*, Vol. 2: 23.

Table 1: Uplander Tribes and Products

Name of Tribes	Locality	Produce
sach Lang-nuoc sach Ha-van	Binh-luong, Hu- ong-tra in Phu Xuan	Rattan, wax, honey and Kien-kien wood
Sach A-man-cach	Phuong An-Binh in Phu-vang	Kien-kien wood

Source: *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 2: 22-23.

In terms of tribute from Hoa Xa and Thuy Xa and Nam Ban, the *Phu Bien Tap Luc* also recorded them as well as the taxes.

Table 2: Tariff Rate for Licence to Trade with Uplanders

Name of Route Entry Point	Destination	Tariff for Trading Licence
Tuan Ba-giang (Phuong An Khang)	Ai Lao Bor- ders	110 quan ⁶⁸
Tuan Nguu-cuoc (Hieu-giang River)	Muong-vanh and Van- tuong	120 quan

Source: *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 2: 15-16.

It can thus be seen that Nguyen-Uplander relations were commercially beneficial. Firstly, Nguyen Hoang's administration benefited from the revenue generated by tariffs imposed on Vietnamese and Chinese traders who wanted to access the highlands. The amount

⁶⁸ The translation of *Phu Bien Tap Luc* by the Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi (Social Sciences Publisher) of 1977 gives the figure as 120 quan. See *Phu Bien Tap Luc* in *Le Quy Don Toan Tap*, Vol. 1, Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi, 1977, p. 108.

of 120 quan (120 strings of cash) per licence was a considerable sum of money then for a picul (100 catties/60 kilograms) of nutmeg was worth only five quan at the port of Hoi An.⁶⁹ Secondly, the uplanders remained the most important suppliers of local commodities exported through the ports in southern Vietnam. Out of a list of 23 commodities sold at the entrepot of Hoi An, in Quang Nam, at least 11 items were supplied by the uplanders.

Table 3: Commodities Supplied by Uplanders Sold at Quang Nam and Their Value

Commodity	Cost per Picul (Ta)
Betel Nut	3 quan
Nutmeg	5 quan
Sappan wood	6 quan
Cardomon ⁷⁰	12 quan
Ebony wood	600 tien/cash (6 mach)
Lacquer Wood	1 quan
Cyprus Wood	1.2 quan
Rhinoceros Horn	500 quan
Deers' tendon ⁷¹	15 quan
Elephants' tusks	40 quan
Calambac (one Can/catti)	120 quan

Source: *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 4: 38.

⁶⁹ *PBTL*, Vol. 4: 38. Examples of the cost of a few items include a picul betel-nut costing 3 quan, elephant tusks 40 quan a picul, and pepper cost only 20 quan, just to name a few.

⁷⁰ Li Tana gives the term *Amonnum xanthioides* nuts and noted that it is related to the Cardomon plant, Li Tana and Anthony Reid, *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen*, p. 117, fn. 44.

⁷¹ Li Tana gives the item as deers' antlers. The Vien Han-Nom version reads as tendon. See Li Tana and Anthony Reid, *Ibid.*, p. 117 & *PBTL*, Vol. 4: 38.

As these commodities were much sought after by foreign traders, they were the most important if not, most expensive items sold at Hoi An. This uneasy relationship, where the uplanders were important for trade but were also a security threat, persisted beyond the rule of Nguyen Hoang.

Initial Relations with Champa

After he took over the administration of Quang Nam in 1570, Nguyen Hoang and his people occupied a country ranging from the region south of Nhat Le River (in present day Quang Tri) to the area north of Cape Verella (Vung Tau). This brought them into direct contact with the Kingdom of Champa.

Nguyen Hoang was fully aware of the existence of Champa as a neighbour in the south that could threaten his position in southern Vietnam. He saw not only a military threat but also viewed Cham culture with suspicious. The many Cham ruins and relics found in the south today is a measure of the persistence of Cham culture.⁷²

Until the middle of the 17th century, the Vietnamese sphere of influence in the south was checked by the Champa Kingdom⁷³ Even though the Vietnamese had defeated the Chams

⁷² In fact, some scholars are of the opinion that much of the new Nguyen Vietnamese culture that emerged can be attributed to Cham influence. This includes music and costume. See for instance, Gerald C. Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highland to 1954*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982; L. Cadiere, "Geographie Historique du Quang-Binh D'apres Les Annales Imperiales", *BEFEO*, Vol. II, 1902; Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, pp. 113-114. See also Alexander B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven: 1971, pp. 23-24 & 26.

⁷³ Champa is traditionally known as Chiem Thanh in Vietnamese sources, a term borrowed from Zhan Chen in Chinese writings. The name seemed to denote homogeneity to this nation. Even early western scholars tend to accept Champa as a single centralised nation that had gradually shifted its capital southwardly in the face of the Vietnamese threat. See Georges Maspero, *Le Royaume de Champa*, Paris: editions, 1928. Recent scholarship however, confirmed that the Chams

in the 1471 and annexed the northern part of the country, the kingdom reassembled itself in its new capital in the region around Phan Thiet. From there, the Chams continued to send periodic tribute to the Vietnamese court at Thang Long. As late as the end of the 16th century, the King of Champa was still able to honour its alliance with the Malay World when he sent a military force to assist the Sultan of Melaka-Johor in the 1594 battle against the Portuguese then based in Melaka.⁷⁴ Thus, the Kingdom of Champa that Nguyen Hoang encountered in the 17th century, was still a force to be reckoned with.

Two incidents relating to the Chams during Nguyen Hoang's time are recorded in the *Tien Bien*. In 1602, the Chams were reported to have sent a delegation to Nguyen Hoang's court. The *Tien Bien* used the term 'thong hao', which means that the Chams had come to establish friendly relations with the Nguyen. Little is known of the actual nature of the transaction between Nguyen Hoang and the Cham envoy. Nothing further is mentioned of the outcome of this mission by the Chams.

It was not until 1611 that Champa was next mentioned in Vietnamese chronicles. In that year, Nguyen Hoang established a prefecture in Phu Yen.⁷⁵ Even though no reasons were given with regard to Nguyen Hoang's decision in the setting up of the Phu

were a federation of five principality regions, stretching from present day Nghe An/Thua Thien to the region just beyond Mekong Delta. Champa was also multi-ethnic, and not homogenous as suggested earlier. See Bernard Guy, "Une Nouvelle sur le Composition Ethnique du Champa", *Actes du Seminaire sur le Campa*, Paris: Centre D'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1988, pp. 49-58.

⁷⁴ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Introduction of Islam into Champa", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 58, part 1, 1985, p. 12 and P. B. Lafont, "Hubungan antara Champa dengan Asia Tenggara", In *Dunia Melayu dan Dunia Indocina*, Ismail Hussein, P. B. Lafont & Po Dharma (eds.), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1995, p. 214.

⁷⁵ The Thach Bi or sometimes known as Hong Duc Thach Bi (The staele of Hong Duc) was set on a mountain at Phu Yen to mark the official demarcation line between Champa and Dai Viet after Le Thanh Tong's victory against Champa in 1471. See Maspero, *Le Royaume de Champa*, p. 240; Po Dharma, "Le Frontieres du Campa (Denier etat des recherches)", in P. B. Lafont (ed.), *Les Frontieres du Vietnam*, Paris: L'Hamattan, 1989, p. 123.

Yen prefecture, it may be possible that he was looking to the region further south as a suitable base to strengthen his family's position. In reaction, a Cham force crossed the demarcation line at the Thach-Bi Mountain to attack the Vietnamese settlements in Phu Yen.

At the time of the attack, the Chams had their capital at Panduranga, near present day Phan Thiet, and was led by a king known as Po Nit. It is evident that Po Nit felt threatened by the influx of Vietnamese into the region of Phu Yen, till then considered a no-man's land. Po Nit felt that with the setting up of the Phu Yen prefecture, the balance of power in the area had tilted in favour of the Nguyen.

To counter the attack by Champa, Nguyen Hoang sent a force to defend Phu Yen against the Cham incursion, and later, to garrison the area.⁷⁶ However, no efforts were made to enter Cham territories beyond the boundary set in 1471 when Champa was defeated by Emperor Le Thanh Tong. What Nguyen Hoang did was to establish two new districts of Dong Xuan and Tuy Hoa, placing them under the jurisdiction of the prefecture of Phu Yen. The two districts fell within the boundary set in 1471.⁷⁷ Nguyen Hoang's decision not to invade Champa probably stemmed from his weak position due to the Trinh threat coming from the north. But more possibly, Hoang was not in good health to lead a military expedition and he died two years later at the age of 89.

Conclusion

Throughout Nguyen Hoang's administration of southern Vietnam, there was no explicit policy being implemented with regard to 'foreign' elements like the uplanders, or the Chams to foreign traders visiting Hoi An. This was mainly due to Nguyen Hoang's preoccupation with the affairs in the north. Despite later Nguyen historians' attempts to portray Nguyen Hoang as the founder and

⁷⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1, pp. 22b-23a.

⁷⁷ *DNNTC*, Vol. 10: Binh Dinh, p. 2-3.

originator of a separate new Vietnam in the South, Nguyen Hoang did not cut his links with the Le Dynasty.

However, the year 1600 marks the beginning of change in Nguyen Hoang's position when he began to focus on the effort to develop an alternate power base. Even though Nguyen Hoang was still hoping to challenge for power in the North, his dealings with his non-Vietnamese neighbours as well as with foreigners, gave him a certain measure of independence.

This sense of independence was also reinforced by Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam's distance from Thang Long, which inevitably left Nguyen Hoang to act unilaterally over many issues, including foreign relations. Hence during the first reported contact with Champa in 1602 and later in 1611, Nguyen Hoang was able to exercise his authority in foreign relations almost short of being an independent ruler.

While Hoang did not try to secede from the Le, the last 13 years of his reign saw this new sense of independence take root especially in sixth son, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. The latter would lead an open confrontation against the Trinh-controlled Le Court in 1627.

Chapter Three

Champa as Contesting Power, 1613-1692

This chapter explores the foreign relations of the Nguyen during the reign of three rulers who came after Nguyen Hoang, namely, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen (r. 1613-1635), Nguyen Phuc Lan (r. 1635-1648) and Nguyen Phuc Tan (r. 1648-1687). This was a period dominated by open warfare between the Nguyen and the Trinh that lasted from 1627 to 1672. During this time, the Nguyen had very active foreign relations. This involved dealings with Japan, European merchants, Christian missionaries, and Nguyen's southern neighbours. This chapter will focus on the former three groups while Nguyen's relations with Champa and Cambodia will be discussed in the next chapter.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and the Break with the North

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was the sixth son of Nguyen Hoang. He rose to power in the wake of the deaths of all his older brothers. Of his five older brothers, Ha the eldest died of natural causes shortly after their father arrived in Thuan Hoa in 1577. Han, the second brother was killed in military action during Nguyen Hoang's campaign against the Mac army in Son Nam in 1594, while brother number three, Thanh, died at the age of 17 of natural causes. Dien, the fourth brother was also killed in action against the Mac at Hai Duong in 1598. Hai, brother number five was left behind by Nguyen Hoang when he returned from the North in 1601, to serve as a sign of good will and as a demonstration of his allegiance to the Le Court. This was similar to the practice of leaving behind family members as a form of 'hostage' in state-to-state diplomacy in China, particularly during the Warring States period and also

like ‘Sankin Kotai’ system in Japan¹ To his advantage, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was also the only son of Nguyen Hoang’s first wife, Madam Nguyen Thi.² The *Tien Bien* also portrayed him as his father’s favourite.

Probably because of his position as a ruler, later Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) court historians who compiled the *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien (Tien Bien)* in 1844, portrayed him as a very able military commander.³ Certainly, it was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen who defeated a Japanese pirate flotilla at the Viet Hai River estuary in 1585,⁴ and it was he who was entrusted by Nguyen Hoang with the governorship of Quang Nam in 1603. When talking about his appointment to the position, the *Tien Bien* was careful to mention in some detail the fate of his five older brothers who died during Nguyen Hoang’s life time.

Though it was not the practice for the position of governorship to be succeeded hereditarily, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s succession to his father’s position of Governor of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam received approval from the Le Court. *Tien Bien*, the Southern Annals, describes the arrival of an envoy from the Le Emperor to convey condolences to the family on the death of Nguyen Hoang. The same envoy also announced the appointment of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to the rank of Thai Bao Quan Cong (Commander with the rank of Quan Cong) and confirmed his appointment as governor for the two provinces.⁵ However, the northern Annals of *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* is silent on his appointment and merely recorded the death of Nguyen Hoang.⁶

At the time of his ascension to power, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was already 51 years old. An experienced leader in both

¹ For a brief biography of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s brothers, see *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien* (hereafter *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*), Vol. 2: 2-8.

² *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 3.

³ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (hereafter *Tien Bien*), Vol. 1: 24.

⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 13-14.

⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 2a.

⁶ *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu Thuc Bien* (hereafter *Toan Thu*), Vol. 18: 929. The *Kham Dinh Viet Su Thong Giam Cuong Muc* (hereafter *Cuong Muc*) also mentioned that the Le Emperor had appointed Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to succeed his father and assumed the rank of Thai Bao, see *Cuong Muc*, Vol. 31: 12.

military and administrative matters, Phuc Nguyen had been the administrator of the strategically important Quang Nam province for ten years. Under his administration, the province prospered. The port of Hoi An which served as the major entrepôt on the Indochina peninsula during this period, attracted merchants from China, Japan and insular Southeast Asia. Apart from that, Quang Nam was also the richer of the two provinces under the Nguyen's control.⁷

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's first task upon succeeding his father was in re-organising the administration of the provinces. He noted that his father had governed the two provinces by concentrating power in his own hands, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen believed that such a personal style of administration had serious limitations. This style of governance was no longer suited to administer a large territory. Under Nguyen Hoang's personalised rule, many urgent matters were neglected. Evidence of this is the lack of an up-to-date land-tax registry in 1586 for the two provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam.⁸

In order to resolve this administrative problem, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen revived the Tam Ty, the provincial administrative apparatus set up earlier under the Le. With this, he relinquished the bulk of the administrative tasks. This allowed him space and time to concentrate on other more pressing problems such as the consolidation of his position and power, especially against possible challenges posed by his brothers and relations.

Since then, the Tam Ty became the standard administrative body in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. Even with these reforms in the administrative structure, Nguyen's rule was still very much militarily-oriented. Cristoforo Borri, the Jesuit priest who was living in southern Vietnam from 1618 to 1621, commented that

⁷ Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l'Histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam Meridional (1600-1775)*, Geneva: Editions Olizane, 1992, pp. 98-99. For a study on the background of Hoi An, see Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi An (Faifo)*, Carbondale: Center for Vietnamese Studies, Southern Illinois University, 1974, pp. 1-31.

⁸ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 14a.

the Nguyen normally “dispatched all their affairs more readily, rather according to the martial law [sic]”.⁹ This view is also shared by Nola Cooke who commented that the early Nguyen ruled southern Vietnam in a military fashion.¹⁰

When Nguyen Phuc Nguyen succeeded his father as governor of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam, he inherited a territory of considerable size. The territory stretched from Quang Binh in the north down to Phu Yen in the south, covering a length of around 300 kilometres. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen also continued most of his father’s policies. At the same time, he began to build up an effective military machinery.

He was also instrumental in promoting trade, and in putting the ports of southern Vietnam on the map of international trade. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen also began to invite and scout for talented people to join his service. But the most important event in Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s rule was his decision to break with the Trinh and the Le Court in the North. This decision became a watershed in the history of early modern Vietnam led to prolong internal political turmoil in Vietnam that had first started in 1527 when Mac Dang Dung usurped the throne.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s break with the Le and Trinh came after a series of *mal fide* (bad faith) correspondence between both sides and after meetings by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen with envoys from the Le Court in 1627. As governor of provinces under the Le rule, the Nguyen were obliged to send taxes to the central government. Twice, however, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen refused to send taxes and tribute to the Le Court. This resulted in the Le Court, then under the influence of the Trinh, dispatching a punitive force to the Nguyen borders in 1627.

⁹ Cristoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, London: 1633, this edition, Amsterdam, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970, p. H. For a discussion on the Tam Ty system, see Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l’Histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen*, p. 57. See also Dang Phuonh Nghi, *Les Institutions Publiques du Viet Nam au XVIIIe Siecle*, Paris: Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient, 1969, p. 73.

¹⁰ See Nola Cooke, “Regionalism and Nature of Nguyen Rule in Seventeenth Century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)”, *JSEAS*, Vol. 29, March 1998, p. 141.

As a provincial governor, it was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's duty to ensure that taxes were collected annually to be sent to the central government. When Nguyen Hoang was sent to govern Thuan Hoa in 1558, his responsibilities included the sending of taxes to the Le government.¹¹ The *Phu Bien Tap Luc* for instance, provided us with a picture of the amounts to be collected from each of the counties in Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. The taxes were generally divided into two main categories, namely the poll tax and income tax.¹² These taxes were collected based on a registry that was updated every three years.¹³ Between the two provinces, Quang Nam contributed more largely because it had a larger population.

Unless exempted by the central government on grounds or reasons such as natural disasters, failure to deliver the taxes was deemed a form of defiance. Thus, when Nguyen Phuc Nguyen openly refused to submit taxes to the Le Court, his actions were looked upon as a form of revolt.¹⁴

Northern sources including the *Phu Bien Tap Luc* placed the blame for the Nguyen's 'revolt' on Dao Duy Tu, one of those who came into Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's service. Tu was a failed candidate in the Le public examinations. He became later a social outcast. He had wandered to the south and offered his services to Nguyen Phuc Nguyen who took him into his employment.¹⁵ Dao Duy Tu only entered Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's service in 1625 but his arrival was timely to the Nguyen. A native of Thanh Hoa, the same province as the Nguyen family, Tu was said to have a good knowledge concerning war strategies. He was also a master ele-

¹¹ *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 6.

¹² *PBTL*, Vol. 3. In this chapter, Le Quy Don discussed the taxation system of the Nguyen. See also Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asian Studies Program, 1998, pp. 48-56, and Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l'Histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen*, pp. 68-72.

¹³ *Nam Ha Tiep Luc (NHTL)*, Vol. I: 34.

¹⁴ See *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

¹⁵ According to *PBTL*, Dao Duy Tu (1572-1634) was from Ngoc Son in Thanh Hoa, see *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22-23..

phant trainer.¹⁶ It was probably at his suggestion that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen moved his headquarters from Ai Tu slightly further south to Phuc An in Quang Dien in 1626.¹⁷ The move was an attempt to shield the Nguyen family from any eventual attack of the Trinh as Ai Tu was too close to the north.

According to *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Dao Duy Tu had asked Nguyen Phuc Nguyen not to submit taxes and tribute to the Le Court. Tu also asked the Nguyen ruler to stock up on grains and to strengthen his army. It was also Tu who suggested the construction of fortified walls of Dong Khoi and Truong Duc in Quang Binh which were carried out in July to August 1630. The walls later became part of the Nguyen's impregnable defence line against the Trinh.¹⁸

However, it is important to note that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's break with the North was not a decision made in haste. Neither was the decision made solely at the prompting of Dao Duy Tu, though one cannot deny Tu's role in convincing Nguyen Phuc Nguyen that he was strong enough to resist the military might of the Trinh.

In actual fact, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen had wanted to be independent even when Nguyen Hoang was still alive. One sign of this was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's letter to the Tokugawa Shogun in 1604. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen who was writing in his capacity as the governor of Quang Nam, had asked the latter to prevent or discourage Japanese trading ships from visiting the ports of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An in the Trinh north. He explained that it was be-

¹⁶ For an official biography on Dao Duy Tu, see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 10-16. For a recent study on Dao Duy Tu, see Dang Qui Dich, *Dao Duy Tu Khao Bien* [A Study of Dao Duy Tu], Thanh Hoa: Nha Xuat Ban Thanh Hoa, 1998. See also Do Duy Dinh, "Dao Duy Tu-Tham The Va Su Ngiap" (Dao Duy Tu – His Life and His Activities), *Nghien Cuu Lich Su*, No. 4 (257), 1991, pp. 42-48.

¹⁷ This was the first of a series of shifts of capital by the Nguyen. See L. Cadriere, "Les Residences des rois de Cochinchine avant Gia Long", *Bulletin de la Commission Archeologique de l'Indochinoise*, 1913, pp. 103-185.

¹⁸ L. Cadriere, "Le Mur de Dong Khoi", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient*, (hereafter, *BEFEO*) p. 136, see also L. Aourousseau, "Notes Sur l'Histoire et la Geographie du Pays d'Annam", *BEFEO*, 1920-1922, p. 38.

cause his 'Kingdom' was at odds with the Trinh.¹⁹ In another letter to the Governor of Nagasaki, dated May 1619, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen wrote, "The two kingdoms [Japan and Nguyen Southern Vietnam]...was like a family with good relationship, and since the establishment of our kingdom, you have shown kindness ...".²⁰ In the same letter, he also used the title of 'Annam Quoc Chua' (Lord of the Kingdom of Annam). Judging from the term used it is likely that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen entertained ambitions to rule as an independent monarch.

The manner in which he addressed the Japanese ruler in the letter was more direct when compared to the correspondences Nguyen Hoang maintained with the Tokugawa Shogunate. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen also did not address the letter to the proper channel, namely, the Tokugawa Shogunate. Instead the letter was addressed to the 'King of Japan' indicating his own status as monarch.

An examination of the rich resources amassed by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen since 1613 also demonstrates how he had harboured the desire to be free from Trinh control prior to 1627. A year after the restructuring of the Tam Ty, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen ordered his treasurer (Lenh Su Ty) to begin collecting various commodities and goods. Among other things, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen purchased and stockpiled large quantities of copper brought in by ships from Fujian, Guangdong and Japan.²¹ At the same time, he also began to stockpile gold leaves. It was reported that at one point, there was as much as 90,000 leaves of gold being made and stored in Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's warehouses.²² Other goods that were also sought after by the Nguyen were silver, iron ore, bee wax, incense (fragrant) oil, elephant tusks, rattan mat, honey, olive, calambac

¹⁹ "Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to the King of Japan", June, 1604, as cited in *Nam Phong Tap Chi*, No. 54, December 1921, p. 203. The letter is not included in the *Gaiban Tsuusho So Mokuroku* but is part of the collection in *Gu Shi Rei Wan*.

²⁰ "Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to Governor of Nagasaki", *Gaiban Tsuusho So Mokuroku*, Vol. 13: 119.

²¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4.

²² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4b.

and eaglewood. All these goods were important resources²³ that would allow him to (by hindsight but can plan to be more independent) take a stronger and more independent position vis-à-vis the Trinh.

Le Quy Don, the Trinh administrator who compiled the *Phu Bien Tap Luc* in 1776 based on documents in the collection of the Nguyen archives, commented that when Nguyen Phuc Nguyen took over from Nguyen Hoang, he was “forceful and after surveying the geography and the strategic value of the place, he conceived the idea of passing on the land to his descendants, and refused to pay tribute”.²⁴

The immediate grounds for Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s refusal to pay tribute was the regicide conspired by Trinh Tung (r. 1571-1623), the son of Trinh Khiem. In 1619 Trinh Tung was said to have forced the Le Emperor, Le Kinh Tong (r. 1600-1619) to commit suicide and appointed the latter’s son as Emperor Le Than Tong (r. 1619-1643).²⁵ Nguyen Phuc Nguyen regarded the act as treason and proof of the treachery and danger of the Trinh.

The threat of the Trinh materialised a year later when Trinh Tung supported Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s two younger brothers, Hiep and Trach to overthrow Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. The attempt was foiled but not before the two brothers had taken control of the granary at Ai Tu. The two brothers were persuaded to give up their fight against Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. Both died in prison soon after.²⁶ At the same time, Trinh Tung brought a force of 5,000 soldiers to the borders at Nhat Le River mouth.²⁷ It was after

²³ Regardless of these figures being inflated by the *Tien Bien*, what is important to note here is Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s efforts to accumulate resources so as to enable him to become independent.

²⁴ *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (hereafter *PBTL*), Vol. 2: 9.

²⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 5b. The episode was recorded by the *Toan Thu* as a conspiracy by the Le Emperor to kill Trinh Tung. When the latter found out he ordered his officers to force the emperor to commit suicide, see *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 935. See also Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Viet Nam: Histoire et Civilisation*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955, p. 246.

²⁶ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 5b. See also *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22. The incident however, is not recorded in the *Toan Thu*.

²⁷ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 5a.

this episode that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen made the decision not to send tax returns to the Le government as he considered it hostile.

In 1624, Trinh Trang (r. 1623-1657) who succeeded Trinh Tung, sent two officials to Nguyen Phuc Nguyen demanding that taxes be remitted to the Le government. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen refused under the pretext that, due to a poor harvest, revenue could not be collected.²⁸ The main reason, as suggested by the *Tien Bien*, was that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen feared that the tax revenue would be used by the Trinh to finance another attack on his administration.²⁹

These two incidents prompted the desire to break with the north even before 1627. They also show that the decision was made before the arrival in 1625 of Dao Duy Tu, the man credited by Vietnamese sources to have influenced Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's decision to break with the North.³⁰

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's open defiance against the Trinh coupled with the consolidation process undertaken by him in the region, both militarily and economically, made Trinh Trang suspicious of him. This prompted Trinh Trang to act and in 1627 issued an ultimatum to the Nguyen to pay taxes to the Le government in the form of goods for a tribute mission to China.³¹ Trinh Trang had placed an army of 5,000 at the region bordering Thuan Hoa on ready alert and sent in his envoy to demand the taxes. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was also asked to present himself at the Le Court at Thang Long. In addition, the emissary brought a request from Ngoc Tu, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's sister who was married to Trinh Tung, asking for the children of Hiep and Trach, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's two brothers who had rebelled against him.³² All these requests were rejected by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. He scorned at the

²⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 8a.

²⁹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 10.

³⁰ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: and *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22-23.

³¹ Among the items included in Trinh Trang's list were 30 male elephants and 30 seagoing vessels. See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 10.

³² For biographies of Hiep and Trach, see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 29-30. The biography recorded that of the two, only Hiep had sons, and Trach's line ended with him.

idea of the Le court continued in sending a tribute to a Ming China that was weakened by internal strife and Manchu invasion.³³

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rejection of Trinh Trang's ultimatum led to an attack from the Trinh in April of 1627. A battle broke out at Nhat Le. Although significantly superior to the Nguyen forces, the Trinh army was nevertheless forced to retreat on Trinh Trang's order. There were two reasons why the Trinh forces withdrew. One was that there were rumours of a conspiracy to oust Trinh Trang in Thang Long.³⁴ The northern Annals of *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* however, reports that the Trinh forces suffered battle loses and were forced to retreat.³⁵ This second explanation is perhaps more probable.

The conflict at Nhat Le was interpreted differently by both sides. Trinh Trang who brought the Le Emperor to Nhat Le, saw his moves as legitimate and as essentially an attempt by the central government to bring the Nguyen under its control.³⁶ The Nguyen however, saw Trinh's bringing the Emperor to the battlefield as evidence of Trinh's manipulation of the emperor. This, to Nguyen, was nothing less than an act of treason.³⁷

Even though the decision to break with the North seems unavoidable, especially in the light of family feuds between the Nguyen and the Trinh, the Nguyen were actually in a disadvantaged position. The break brought with it a number of negative consequences. First, there was the problem of legitimising Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's act of defiance against the central government which was an act of treason against the Le Court. There is no reference in the northern annals branding Nguyen Phuc Nguyen as traitor. But a map, believed to be drawn in the north in 1645,

³³ The Le Court's demand for elephants and boats to be part of the Le tribute to China could have some truth as three years later in 1630, two envoys were sent by the Ming Court demanding tribute from Dai Viet. See *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 941.

³⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 11b. Le Thanh Khoi subscribed to this argument of rumours of revolt in the Red River Delta which had prompted Trinh Trang to retreat. See Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Vietnam*, p. 247.

³⁵ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

³⁶ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

³⁷ In the words of the *Tien Bien*, what the Trinh did was an act of treason. The Nguyen used this as their justification in breaking with the Trinh.

marks out the 'grave of the treacherous Nguyen' or 'Binh Nguyen'. The map is part of the *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do* which was probably made for the Trinh's military campaigns against the Nguyen.³⁸ This condemnation was to trouble the Nguyen for years to come. The question of loyalty had indeed affected many who were in the Nguyen's service. From the time of his succeeding to his father's position, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was already being challenged by some of his own family members, in particular by two of his brothers, Nguyen Phuc Hiep and Nguyen Phuc Trach. They contacted Trinh Tung offering to assist the Trinh army to enter Thuan Hoa in order to overthrow Nguyen Phuc Nguyen.

Secondly, the Nguyen was relatively inferior in almost every aspect when compared to the Trinh. This is especially so in terms of human resources. While the two Nguyen provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam were rich in natural resources, the same could not be said of its human resource. The population of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam had no doubt increased since the arrival of Nguyen Hoang. Various factors mentioned earlier such as unfavourable living conditions in the north and the desire to seek a new beginning in a new place, had resulted in a regular drift of people to Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. Despite this increase, the population of the two provinces at the beginning of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rule probably numbered only about one-tenth of the population in the north. There is however no complete population data on Nguyen Southern Vietnam. An estimate of the population of Thuan Hoa by Li Tana from data collected from the *O Chau Can Luc* (Recent News from O Chau) shows that in 1555, there were 1,436 villages in Thuan Hoa with a population of 75,680 households, representing a population of 378,000. The figure only increased twofold to 789,800 in 1770. A similar estimate of the population of Dien Ban prefecture in Quang Nam in 1555 was 29,040 and 86,680 in 1777.³⁹ Around the same period, the esti-

³⁸ See *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do*, p. 73 in *Tien Dai Van Tam*, collection of the Societe Asiatique in Paris, MS SA 2123.

³⁹ Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 29.

mated population of Trinh North stood at 4,769,050 in 1634 to 1643, and grew to around 6,471,300 in 1730s.⁴⁰

A third disadvantage had to do with attacks by uplanders, the Chams and to some extent, the Cambodians. Between 1613 and 1627, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen faced at least one major intrusion by the uplanders, and probably several others which were not reported. Though such intrusions did not happen very frequently, they nevertheless, presented a threat to the security of the two Nguyen provinces, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Apart from the Chams, Uplander disturbances also disrupted the important highland-lowland trading activities that was an integral part of the supply system to Quang Nam's markets. In 1621, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen had to face an attack from the Ai Lao-Luu Hoan tribe that had crossed the River Giao, the border line between Nguyen Southern Vietnam and the western highlands on the western part of Thuan Hoa. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen had to dispatch a force to overcome the Luu Hoan force. Following this incident, a garrison called Ai Lao Dinh (Ai Lao Garrison) was set up at the borders to prevent further incursions from the west.⁴¹ The strategic importance of this route is described by the *Tien Bien*: "Nguyen Phuc Nguyen learned that at Cam Lo (name of a xa, village in Dang Xuong sub-prefecture), bordering the river was connected to Ai Lao, Luu Hoan, Ban Tuong, Tran Ninh, Quy Hop and other tribes. He decided to settle some people and left a garrison of troops at the place and called it Ai Lao dinh".⁴²

With all these difficulties, it became necessary for Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to garner sufficient support from those in his service as well as those who dwelled within his jurisdiction in order to strengthen his hold on power. At the same time, Nguyen Phuc

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁴¹ The incident is merely mentioned by *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6; while Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* provides more information including the name of the Nguyen officer in charge of the troops, see *PBTL*, Vol. 1:22. The fort is also named as Ba Huu Fort, guarding the approaches of the River Cam Lo. See *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do*, p. 63 in *Tien Dai Van Tam*, collection of the Societe Asiatique in Paris, MS SA 2123.

⁴² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6.

Nguyen also had to utilize the best possible means to extract benefits controlling the various groups of people including uplanders that he was in contact with. It is with these needs in mind that the Nguyen began to look to external relations as a means to overcome the three major difficulties mentioned above.

The break with the north marked the beginning of a shift in Nguyen Southern Vietnam's conduct and involvement in foreign relations. Under Nguyen Hoang, foreign relations were mainly an extension of the Le Government's foreign relations. This is evident in the manner Nguyen Hoang had maintained the position of being a loyal servant of the Le Court, especially during the period before 1600. The period after 1600 seemed to suggest some independent measures taken by Nguyen Hoang in foreign relations, as evident in his dealings with the Tokugawa Shogunate. Nevertheless, even at that stage, Nguyen foreign relations was still an extension of the Le foreign relations.⁴³ However, subsequent to 1627 when Nguyen Southern Vietnam was in a state of war with the central authority, the two Nguyen provinces were cut off from the Le Court. With such constraints, the Nguyen were left to act independently of the central government at Thang-long. It is in this light that a new dimension emerged in the Nguyen's dealings with external factors, whereby the Nguyen began to take on the role thus far reserved for the Le Court.

The open conflict between the Nguyen and the Trinh had actually thrust Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and his successors into a situation where they had to develop policies that ensured their survival against the Trinh. These policies involved engaging with foreigners and foreign countries.

Southward Expansion: Champa and Cambodia, 1672-1698

The military stalemate that lasted from 1672 and 1691 is an important period in the history of Nguyen rule in southern Vietnam. Freed for the first time from the demands of military conflict, the Nguyen were able to establish and develop its administration, pay

⁴³ See previous chapter's discussion on Nguyen-Japan relations.

attention to cultural and religious activities as well as promote trade. Due to this lull also, the Nguyen were able to concentrate on conducting its foreign relations in the manner a sovereign kingdom would. This is demonstrated in its relations with its southern neighbours, Champa and Cambodia.

Nguyen foreign policy between 1627 and 1672 was influenced by the war with the Trinh. However, the Nguyen also paid attention to the situation in the south. In its relations with Champa and Cambodia, the Nguyen initially maintained a cordial relationship. After the 1650s however, they reacted aggressively, choosing military action against Champa in 1693 and the incorporating a large part of Khmer Mekong under its control. This section will pay attention to the Nguyen's relations with these two neighbours throughout the entire period of Nguyen-Trinh War of 1627 to 1672 and the immediate post-1672 years up to 1698. It will first look at the Nguyen's dealings with the uplanders, both within and without its boundaries.

Since Nguyen Hoang's administration from 1558 to 1613, Nguyen's attitude toward the uplanders is a continuation of the policy laid down by the Le. Likewise, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen also fell back on the same policies and adopted a similar stance when dealing with the uplanders. Like the Le Court before him, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen regarded the uplanders as Moi or savages who were culturally inferior to the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese also generally believed that interaction with the highlanders would corrupt their superior culture. Therefore, certain measures that were introduced by the Le Court were continued by the Nguyen. This included the 1449 decree which forbade marriages between Vietnamese and uplanders, as well as between the Vietnamese and with the Cham people.⁴⁴

After Nguyen Hoang's death, Nguyen chronicles contained more reports describing Nguyen policy with the uplanders. In 1621, native chiefs from Luu Huan in Ai Lao sent fighting men across the Giao River and attacked the Vietnamese settlers in those

⁴⁴ Gerald Cannon Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains: Ethno History of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1982, p. 154.

areas. To counter this problem, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen employed traders as bait to ambush the raiding parties. Instead of punishing them, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen tried to show his magnanimity by letting them return to Luu Huan, with provisions and their weapons.⁴⁵ The following year, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen dispatched a total of six troops of boat soldiers to garrison the passages between Cam Lo (in Dang Trang sub-prefecture) and the three areas of Luu Huan in Ai Lao, Van Tuong and Tran Ninh, all on the western side of Nguyen borders. The garrison was named Ai Lao Dinh (garrison).⁴⁶ The manner in which Nguyen Phuc Nguyen treated the uplanders from Luu Huan could be seen as a strategic move to bring these uplanders under Nguyen influence so as to ensure the security of the western boundaries of the Nguyen domain are firmly secured. This was important to protect the lucrative highland trade.

Despite this, the Nguyen had little actual control over the uplanders. Christoforo Borri, the Italian Jesuit priest who was living in southern Vietnam at that time, says that the Nguyen had no suzerainty over the 'Mountain People'(Kemoi).⁴⁷ Up until 1621, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's dealings with the uplanders was centred upon exerting control over the various tribes in order to ensure stability in areas bordering the mountainous regions and areas where there were uplander settlements. This was crucial in order to make sure that his administration of the two provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam would not be disrupted by disturbances from uplanders living within the region under his jurisdiction. After 1627, he also had to make sure that no uplanders from the western mountainous areas would pose a security threat to the Nguyen in the face of military threat from the Trinh.

Apart from security, the uplanders were extremely important to Nguyen's international trade. The uplanders were responsible for supplying the Nguyen fairs at the major ports like Hoi An

⁴⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6.

⁴⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6, see also *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22.7. As for the troops, each troop, or Doi, is equivalent to a company of soldiers, see Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l'Histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam Meridional (1600-1775)*, Geneva: Editions Olizane, 1992, p. 241.

⁴⁷ Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. B1 & B2.

with the much-sought after jungle produce such as wax, bird's nests, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, rattan, honey, deer horn, and sandalwood.

As for relations between Nguyen Southern Vietnam and Champa there had been very little interaction since the defeat of the Chams by the Nguyen Army in 1611. In that year, a Nguyen force crossed the old boundaries set in 1471 for the first time to prevent the Champa forces from intruding into Vietnamese territories. In 1629, a Champa Army attacked the region of Phu Yen, possibly to avenge a loss they suffered in 1611. A force under Nguyen Phuc Vinh was sent to stop the Chams.⁴⁸ The campaign was a success for the Nguyen army which captured the region north of Phan Rang River. The newly annexed area was designated as the garrison (*dinh*)⁴⁹ of Tran Bien.⁵⁰ The setting up of this garrison marked the expansion of the Vietnamese frontiers in the South beyond the old boundary of Phu Yen for the first time since the days of Emperor Le Anh Tong in 1471.

One interesting point in relation to the event of 1629 is the manner the event was recorded in the Nguyen chronicles. The *Tien Bien* termed it as a 'revolt' by Champa,⁵¹ suggesting that Champa had submitted to the Nguyen and was already a tributary state of the Nguyen. But the same source is silent on Champa having sent a tribute.

This may have been an attempt to cover up a Nguyen attack on the Chams as Champa was considered a potential security concern for the Nguyen at their southern frontier. According to the *Tien Bien*, during his early administration in Thuan Hoa, Nguyen Hoang's main security concern was "to resist the Cham and to

⁴⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2, p. 14b.

⁴⁹ A *dinh* is equivalent to a military base or garrison in Vietnam.

⁵⁰ The usage of the term Tran Bien or boundary station actually refers to all immediate southern frontiers, newly conquered during the early days of the expansion, and should not be confused with Tran Bien or present day Bien Hoa, which was only wrested from the Khmer kingdom in 1698. See explanation in the Nguyen Chronicle, *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 15 and *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (hereafter *DNNTC*), Vol. 10: Binh Dinh, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: p. 15.

safeguard against the forces of the Mac usurper”.⁵² After the outbreak of the Nguyen-Trinh war in 1627, this was translated to defence against the Trinh in the North and resisting Champa in the South. The Nguyen’s preoccupation with Champa was again highlighted by Van Khue, one of the last official Nguyen envoys sent to the Le Court in 1630. Van Khue’s mission was to explain the reasons behind the Nguyen’s failure to contribute to the Le tributary mission to China and to provide military support to the central army against the remnants of the Mac forces at Cao Bang at the borders between Le-Vietnam and China. Among other things, he emphasised Nguyen Phuc Nguyen’s concern over Champa’s military threat in the South.⁵³ While the Champa threat was real to the Nguyen, the threat was used as an excuse to not to send tax and tribute to the Le Court.⁵⁴

This is confirmed by Christoforo Borri’s note about the Cham as a military concern of the Nguyen Lords in early 1620s:

“He [Nguyen Phuc Nguyen] kept in continuall alarmes on the west-side in the last province of his kingdom called Renram [Phu Yen], by the King of Chiampa, whose assaults he doth easily repell, in regard he is not so mighty as himself, and needeth no other forces there unto but those of the same province, the Governor whereof with his souldiers, is sufficient to defend it”.⁵⁵

⁵² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2, p. 17b.

⁵³ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 17. Van Khue is one of the personalities whose family name is not mentioned in the chronicles.

⁵⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 7.

⁵⁵ Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.

Borri's observation further strengthens the argument that the Nguyen used Champa as an excuse not to pay tribute to the Le and harboured ambitions to subjugate the Chams.

During the period of the first three Nguyen (1558-1648), the southern Vietnamese were preoccupied with the affairs in the north – first, to assist the Le Court in its fight against the Mac; secondly, after 1627, to resist a series of battles against the Trinh. This preoccupation with the north forced the Nguyen to co-exist with Champa with the Tran Bien garrison as the front line. Between 1629 and 1648, the year of Nguyen Phuc Lan's death, the Chams hardly troubled the Nguyen, or at least there are no historical sources to date which suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, the Nguyen were constantly wary of the possibility of Champa launching attacks against them in a bid to regain lost territories. Alexander De Rhodes, one of the most famous and earliest Jesuit priests in Vietnam recounted how sometime in 1639, the Nguyen had placed many galleys in the ports of Ran Ran (Phu Yen) in the south to prevent maritime inroads from Champa.⁵⁶ At that time, Champa was still maintaining its hold on Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Rang, and the two ports were frequently visited by Portuguese ships from Macao at least until 1639.⁵⁷

Apart from paying attention to Champa, the Nguyen also began to look further south to the land of the Khmer people in Cambodia. Unlike the Siamese who had begun their intervention in Cambodia since the early 1400s, the Vietnamese got involved almost two centuries later. In 1605, when the Siamese king, Naresuen (1590-1605) passed away, Preah Sri Soriyopor (Paramaraja VII, 1602-1619), the new ruler of Cambodia decided not to send tribute to the Siam Court at Ayudhya. The move came mainly

⁵⁶ Alexander de Rhodes, *The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes in China and Other Kingdoms of the Orient*, Solange Hertz (trans.), Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1966, p. 88; see also Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Vol. III, Book Three*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 1271.

⁵⁷ Pierre-Bernard Lafont, "Hubungan antara Champa dengan Asia Tenggara", in *Dunia Melayu dan Dunia Indocina*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, p. 215.

through Soriyopor's perception that with the passing of Naresuan, a weaker Siam would not be able to impose its sovereignty on Cambodia like before. Secondly, Soriyopor despised the Siamese for what they did to him and his family.⁵⁸ His son, and heir to the Cambodian throne, Chey Chetta II was a captive in the Siam court until 1604. Soriyopor's reading of the strength of the Siam Court was proven right when Naresuen's brother and successor, Ekatosaroat (also known as Intaraja II, r.1605-1620), choose not to do anything about the Cambodian's refusal to send tribute. But as a counter weight to the Siamese, Sri Soriyopor decided to seek an alliance with the Vietnamese. This alliance was sealed in 1619 through a marriage between Chey Chetta II and a daughter of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen.⁵⁹

This important event which the French scholar, Khin Sok described as the beginning of the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodian affairs,⁶⁰ is not mentioned in any Vietnamese sources. Neither the *Tien Bien* nor the *Liet Truyen Tien Bien* offers any account of the event. In fact, the first record of Cambodia found in the *Tien Bien* was for the year 1658, when a Nguyen army intervened in Cambodia for three years.⁶¹

Reference to the alliance between the Nguyen and the Cambodian court of 1618 is only found in the Cambodian sources.⁶² According to the *Royal Chronicles of Cambodia*, King Soriyopor of Cambodia sent an emissary bearing gifts and letters to the Nguyen court, then based at Ai Tu, Quang Binh. The mission was to propose a marriage between his son Chey Chetta II and a Vietnamese princess. The proposition was accepted by

⁵⁸ According to W. A. R. Wood, King Soriyopor or Srisup'anma remained loyal to the Siamese and it was Chey Chetta II who declared independence from Siam. See W. A. R. Wood, *A History of Siam*, Bangkok: 1924, p. 166. Wood's view is different from the Cambodian account.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Sellers gives the date of the marriage in 1623, see Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, p. 11.

⁶⁰ Khin Sok, *Le Cambodge Entre Le Siam et Le Vietnam (de 1775 a 1860)*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1991, p. 32.

⁶¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 22.

⁶² Mak Phoeun (ed.), *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge (de 1594-1677)*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1981, ff. 335-337, p. 120.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen after consulting his officials. A date was later decided, and on the appointed day, a Nguyen barge sent Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's daughter with an entourage of two Vietnamese officials and 500 soldiers to the Cambodian court at Lovek, about 40 km north of Phnom Penh.⁶³

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's decision to marry one of his daughters to the prince of Cambodia demonstrates pragmatism in dealing with his southern neighbour. The act was a part of the Nguyen diplomacy aimed at advancing its interests in the Mekong Delta. Indeed, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was not the first to employ marriage as a means of diplomacy or political manoeuvre. Earlier, one of his sisters, Nguyen Thi Ngoc Tu was married to Trinh Trang as a gesture of Nguyen Hoang's good will towards the central government.⁶⁴ Neither was this the last time such a diplomatic manoeuvre was used by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen as we shall see later.

According to Father Nicholas Gervaise, a French priest serving in the Siamese Court at Ayudhya in 1662, the arrival of the Nguyen forces accompanying the princess to Cambodia was immediately put to use by Chea Chetta II when he led a joint Cambodian-Nguyen army to defeat a Siamese Army that was advancing into Cambodia.⁶⁵ This incident, which took place some time between 1618 to 1620 is also not mentioned in any Vietnamese sources nor was it mentioned in Siamese works. The Cambodian sources mentioned a different account regarding the Siamese defeat. It recorded how the Siamese ruler, King Ekadas Sarath (Ekatosarat) decided not to attack the Cambodians at Lovek after learning that the "Khmer king was very courageous and his troops were numerous, and further more, he maintains good relationship

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁶⁴ See Vinh Cao et al. (comp.), *Nguyen Phuc Toc The Pha*, Hue: Nha Xuat Ban Thuan Hoa, 1995, p. 118.

⁶⁵ Nicholas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam*, (trans. & ed.), John Villiers, first published 1728, this edition, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1989, p. 195.

with the king of the Vietnamese”.⁶⁶ If the joint Khmer-Vietnamese forces did defeat the Siamese, it would be the first official encounter between the Nguyen and the Siamese.

It is important to note here that from an earlier period, the Cambodians were already seeing the Nguyen as the rulers of southern Vietnam, and regarded the daughter of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen a princess. This is evident from the Cambodian royal chronicles which addressed the Nguyen daughter a princess. Even Christophoro Borri, the Jesuit priest who spent four years in the Nguyen territories from 1617-1621 remarked that Cambodia was already a tribute vassal to the Nguyen Lords.⁶⁷ Such a perception by a contemporary observer indicates the Nguyen’s status as a de facto independent state.

The Vietnamese princess reported in the Cambodian chronicles was Nguyen Phuc Ngoc Van, the second daughter of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the official biographies of the Nguyen, *Liet Truyen Tien Bien* only acknowledges Ngoc Van as the daughter of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen with little information on her life.⁶⁹ She was also known as Ang Chea or Ang Cuv by the Cambodians.⁷⁰ She was to play an important role in advancing Vietnamese interests in Cambodia. Shortly after the wedding, Sri Soriyopor abdicated in 1618, in favour of Chey Chetta II. With the ascension of her husband to the Cambodian throne, Ngoc Van was named Bhaggavatti and Varakhsatri, or the “Grand Epouse”(Great wife or first wife).⁷¹ Chey Chetta II’s ascension to the Cambodian throne coincided with a Siamese attack led by a new king, Preah Chau Song Tham (Songt’am) in 1622. The attack was launched to reassert Siamese suzerainty over Cambodia and to force the latter into paying tribute it had not done so since 1605. The Khmer de-

⁶⁶ Mak Phoeun (ed.), *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge (de 1594-1677)*, p. 123.

⁶⁷ Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.

⁶⁸ See Vinh Cao et al. (comp.), *Nguyen Phuc Toc The Pha*, p. 126.

⁶⁹ *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 38.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, see also Thai Van Kiam, “La Plaine aux Cerfs et la Princesse de Jade”, *Bulletin du Societe D’Etude Indochine* (hereafter *BSEI*), Vol. XXXIV, No. 4, 1959, p. 389.

⁷¹ *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge (de 1594-1677)*, p. 126.

fence crumbled, and the Siamese gained control of Battambang, and several regions in western Cambodia. The Siamese however, did not venture further. According to Van Vliet, who was the Chief Dutch factor at Ayudhya from 1636 to 1641, the Siamese army was ambushed and was defeated by the Cambodians. The Cambodian monarchy was thus saved.⁷²

However, when writing about the Nguyen's relations with Cambodia during the years of his stay in southern Vietnam, Christoforo Borri commented that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen continued to lend support to the king of Cambodia, "who had married a naturall [sic] daughter of his, furnishing him with Gallies, and with men against the King of Siam".⁷³

As king, Chey Chetta II (or Jayajettha II, 1619-1627) was instrumental in introducing a new code of law to safeguard the interests of the people. Apart from an attack from the Siamese army in 1621, Chey Chetta II faced little opposition, and was regarded as one of the more enlightened kings of Cambodia. However, he began to be pressured by the Vietnamese. As early as in 1623, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen demanded from Chea Chetta II, the authorisation to control the commercial traffic in the provinces of Prei Nokor and Kompong Krabei (present day Saigon and Banh Nhe) in the Mekong Delta.⁷⁴ Both were supposed to have been promised by Soriyopor to the Nguyen in exchange for Ngoc Van's hand in marriage. Customs houses were set up by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen at Moi Xoai and Dong Nai to collect import and export duties from traders who plied the Cambodian borders for business.

While there is no concrete evidence on the volume of business conducted by the Vietnamese in Cambodia, the type of trade involved the importation of goods that could fetch high

⁷² See Ronald Bishop Smith, *Siam or the History of the Thais from 1569 to 1824*, Bethesda, Maryland: Decatur Press, 1967, p. 43.

⁷³ Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.

⁷⁴ Interestingly, the *Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi* (hereafter *GDTC*), the works which trace the background and development of the six southern most Nguyen provinces in the Mekong Delta, also did not refer to this event. See also Khin Sok, *Le Cambodge Entre Le Siam et Le Vietnam (de 1775-1860)*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1991, p. 34..

prices in the various trading centres in the Nguyen region, especially at the port of Hoi An. Cambodian goods prized by the Vietnamese included deer skins, fish products, shark skins, paint for making lacquer, and hardwood. Borri, the Jesuit priest also related how Nguyen Southern Vietnam had imported male elephants from Cambodia.⁷⁵

It would appear that in the 17th century, security concerns drove the Nguyen to act versus uplanders, Champa and Cambodia.

Champa as a Contesting Power (1629 to 1693)

In dealing with Champa, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen pursued a very firm policy aimed at subduing Champa in order to minimize a potential threat. He was also facing the military onslaught from the Trinh in the North. As it was crucial for Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to keep his southern borders secure, he had to act very swiftly and harshly against Champa.

Nonetheless, these early campaigns against the Cham were not successful in reducing that state into a tribute state. This was mainly due to the fact that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was probably more interested in securing its southern borders than to exercise control over Champa. Further more, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen conveniently interpreted the prerogative to accept tributes rested solely in the hands of the Le Court, and not with the Nguyen. This position changed during Nguyen Phuc Lan (1635-1648)'s time, when the Chams were obliged to send tribute. Nguyen Phuc Lan was more ready to exert control over Champa as, the Nguyen were finally separated from the Le Court.

Even though the Vietnamese did not annex any Cham territories during the reign of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and Nguyen Phuc Lan, the two military campaigns launched by them against Champa in 1611 and 1629 were significant as it established Nguyen military superiority and resulted in the resettlement of a large number of Vietnamese people on the contested areas. This put pressure on the Cham population.

⁷⁵ Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. D3.

Besides the use of force in the effort to secure their borders, the Nguyen also employed the device of marriage to forge an alliance with Champa. In 1631, bilateral relations between the Nguyen and Champa were cemented through the marriage of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's third daughter, Nguyen Phuc Ngoc Khoa to Po Rome, the King of Champa (r. 1627-1651). Again, this is not recorded in any of the official Vietnamese sources. It is also unclear how the union had come about. A recently published family genealogy of the Nguyen Phuc Nguyen acknowledges that Nguyen Phuc Ngoc Khoa, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's third daughter was married to the King of Chiem Thanh (Champa), Po Rome.⁷⁶ According to the same source, relations between the Nguyen and the Chams were very good. Ngoc Khoa's marriage with Po Rome is also found in a Cham manuscript. However, the name of the Nguyen 'princess' is not given.⁷⁷

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's diplomacy through marriage vis-à-vis Nguyen's relations with Champa took place during a time when the Nguyen were preoccupied the Trinh which broke into open hostilities in 1627. With the south relatively secured, the Nguyen were able to devote their attention to the war against the Trinh.

Until 1639 Portuguese ships from Macao continued to Cham ports at Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Rang.⁷⁸ Champa also traded with the Dutch beginning from the defeat of Portuguese by the Dutch at Malacca in 1641.⁷⁹ Champa-Dutch relations were good and two royal Cham delegations visited Batavia in 1680.

However, Nguyen-Champa relations lost its cordiality with the passing of Po Rome and his Vietnamese wife in 1651. Po Nraup, the elder brother of Po Rome, was hoping to recoup the

⁷⁶ Vinh Cao et al. (comp.), *Nguyen Phuc Toc The Pha*, p. 126.

⁷⁷ MS Cam 37 (12), "Legend of Po Debatasvar (Po Rome)", ff. 127-150. Like the case of Ngoc Van, the *Liet Truyen Tien Bien* also listed Ngoc Khoa's life as unknown, see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 38..

⁷⁸ Pierre B, Lafont, "Hubungan antara Champa dengan Asia Tenggara", in *Dunia Melayu dan Dunia Indocina*, Ismail Hussein, P-B. Lafont & Po Dharma (eds.), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, pp. 214-215.

⁷⁹ Pierre Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais Sur les Cotes du Viet Nam et du Champa*, p. 236

lost territories from the Nguyen led a Champa army and attacked Phu Yen in 1653. The Chams were also evidently threatened by the large number of Vietnamese who had settled at the border territories since the reign of Nguyen Phuc Lan in 1648.

King Po Nraup's action was probably based on the need to protect Cham interests from being encroached upon by more Vietnamese resettlement programmes as well as the belief that Nguyen Phuc Tan was still new to the administration and that the Nguyen having just ended military campaigns against the Trinh may be exhausted. However, he was proven wrong.

An army of 3,000 was sent by Nguyen Phuc Tan under the leadership of Hung Loc to face the attacking Chams. The Champa army was defeated by the Nguyen army in a surprise counter-attack near Phu Yen. It then retreated across the Phan Rang River and sued for peace. A peace treaty was concluded under which the Nguyen annexed the entire area north of the Phan Rang River. The area covered the region of Cu Mong to Kauthara (Khanh Hoa), and set up the two phu (prefectures) of Thai Khanh and Dien Ninh. Both came under the administration and protection of Dinh Thai Khanh (present day Ninh Hoa). The annexation of the area also meant that the Vietnamese under the Nguyen had extended their area of control beyond the Thach-Bi boundary marker for the first time since 1471. While Champa was still in control of the area south of the Phan Rang River, the king of Champa was obliged to send tributes to the Nguyen Court.⁸⁰ It was here that Champa's status as a vassal state of the Nguyen was confirmed for the first time in the *Tien Bien*.

The imposition of tributary relations meant that the nature of relationship between the Chams and the Nguyen had altered. Whereas in the past, the Chams were reported to have sent regular tribute to the Tran and later the Le Court at Thang Long, tribute was now being sent to the Nguyen Court at Thuan Hoa. The Nguyen were now behaving like a separate state in the South as charged by their rival, the Trinh at that time.⁸¹ Thus through its

⁸⁰ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4, p. 22.

⁸¹ The Trinh had launched their military campaigns against the Nguyen in order to subjugate a renegade regime that was trying to break away from central

relationship with Champa and later with Cambodia, the Nguyen began to act like an independent ruling house.

With the defeat of Po Nraup, the Nguyen came to have a common border with Cambodia in 1653 with the defeat of Po Nraup. Five years later in 1658, the Khmer kingdom was perceived by the Nguyen to be threatening its southern frontiers. This time, the course of action was to rid itself of this external threats.

When the Nguyen-Trinh War reached a stalemate with neither side able to prevail the next phase of Nguyen's relations with Champa and Cambodia took place – through confrontation.

Conclusion

The need to secure its southern frontiers resulted in an aggressive foreign policy against Champa. Eventually this led to expansionism and the colonisation of the Phan Rang region. What began as attempts to secure its southern frontiers led to what became known as the Southward Movement (Nam Tien) of the Vietnamese people.

Champa was the first and only state fully conquered by the Nguyen. Nonetheless, the Chams were allowed a certain degree of autonomy within the Nguyen realm. The accordance of the title of king on the Nguyen-installed Po Saktiraydaputih was an important act that helped boost the Nguyen's claim of being an independent political entity. The move was consistent with Nguyen Phuc Chu's policy of elevating his court vis-à-vis the Trinh position in the North.

In the case of Cambodia, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen took advantage of the peaceful overtures made by Cambodia in 1618 to begin interfering in the internal politics of the latter. He also began to eye the economic potential of the Mekong Delta. This is evident from the request for the setting up of custom houses to regulate the trade conducted by the Vietnamese in the region of Saigon and Ban Nhe in as early as 1621.

control. In the northern Trinh-Le records, *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu Thuc Bien*, Vol. 18: 938-939, 955, it was confirmed that the Nguyen's actions were those of a separate state.

By the mid-17th century however, the Nguyen's position in Cambodia was threatened by the emergence of an anti-Vietnamese faction in the Cambodian court, which resulted in a direct intervention by the Nguyen in 1658. This intervention in Cambodia and the 1653 attack on Champa are two occasions where tribute were exacted by the Nguyen from an independent nations. This marked a watershed in the Nguyen's achievement of independent statehood in its foreign relations. The subject of the following chapter continues with further inroads into the south, more specifically the Mekong Delta.

Chapter Four

Establishment of Binh Thuan Phu and Thuan Thanh Tran

The Nguyen strengthened its position in Cambodia by supporting Ang Non. Ang Non passed away in 1692 shortly after his retreat to Gia Dinh. He was succeeded by his son, Ang Im, who Nguyen Phuc Chu was hoping to put on the Cambodian throne. Such a policy was crucial in the overall Nguyen strategy of pacifying its distant neighbour. For the Nguyen, the southern frontiers not only had to be secured, its peaceful exploitation was crucial to the state coffer. But before anything could be carried out, Nguyen Phuc Chu was faced with a more immediate problem in the form of an attack by Champa in 1692.

Victory Over Champa, 1693

From 1658 until 1692, the Nguyen was preoccupied in the south with Cambodia. Their intervention in Cambodia resulted in the splitting of the Cambodian court into two, one supported by the Vietnamese and the other by the Siamese court at Ayudhya. Before 1692, Champa was trying to strengthen its position against the Nguyen through its dealings with other regional powers. In 1682, the French priest at the Court of Ayudhya reported that the King of Champa had submitted voluntarily to the King of Siam.¹ While no other information is available regarding this submission at the Court, the event suggests an attempt by the Chams to forge an alliance with Siam with the ultimate aim of resisting the Nguyen. During a stop at Pulo Ubi near the Gulf of Siam on 13 May 1687, William Dampier, the English traveller met a vessel of

¹ "Father Duchesue to Directors of the Seminary in Paris", 13 November 1682, AMEP: Siam, Vol. 878, f. 202.

Champa origin anchored on the eastern side of the island. The vessel carried rice and lacquer and was on its way to Malacca. There were 40 crew members, and all were Chams. They carried broad swords, lances and some guns. Dampier wrote that the Chams were actively involved in trade with the Dutch at Malacca.²

In 1692, the Chams were once again feeling confident enough to challenge the Vietnamese. In September 1692, Po Saut (or Po Sau, 1660-1692) or Ba-tranh as mentioned in the Nguyen sources,³ the King of Champa at Panduranga (Pho Hai-Phan Rang-Phan Ri region) began building fortifications and had his men attack the region of Dien Khanh (Dien Ninh prefecture and Binh Khang garrison).⁴ It is interesting to note that the *Tien Bien* had used the term 'rebellion' for all Champa military action against the Nguyen since 1629, even though Champa was then still an independent state. Such interpretation reveals that the Nguyen perceived Champa as its tributary vassal.

To counter this problem, a Vietnamese force under Nguyen Huu Kinh, consisting of the main garrison (Chinh dinh) and the garrison from Binh Khang in Quang Nam was sent by Nguyen Phuc Chu to curb Cham raids. The sending of the main garrison was clearly an indication of the Nguyen's ability to turn their attention from their usually heavy defence commitment in the north towards the south. It is also a sign that the Nguyen were able to spare forces from the northern borders for the campaign against Champa.

The campaign ended with the defeat of the Chams in the first month of 1693. However, Po Saut and his followers were only captured seven months later. Po Saut was brought back to Phu Xuan, where he was interned at the village of Ngoc-tran Son in the district of Tra-huong.⁵ During Po Saut's absence, the Cham

² William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World*, London: 1697. This edition, The Argonaut Press, 1927, p. 272.

³ The name Ba-tranh which is found in Vietnamese materials is the same person as Po Saut in the Cham Archives from Panduranga. See Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa) 1802-1835*, p. 67.

⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7, p. 4.

⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7:4.

Court at Pho Hai-Phan Rang-Phan Ri, previously known as Chiem Thanh to the Vietnamese, was renamed Thuan Thanh Tran. It was occupied by three Nguyen garrisons led by Nguyen Tri Thang (at Pho Hai), Nguyen Thanh Le (at Phan Ri) and Chu Kiem Thang (at Phan Rang), all battalion commanders or Cai Doi. Their mission was to prevent attacks from the remnants of the Cham forces.⁶ With the establishment of the garrisons, the Champa kingdom at Panduranga was finally subjugated. This led to the Nguyen attempts to exercise control over the newly annexed Chams territories.

The conquest of Champa can be related to *Nam Tien* or southward movement. The Chinese scholar, Yang Baoyun considers Champa a victim of the Nguyen's deliberate policy of subjugation, which stemmed from the principle of "maintaining good relations with countries of distance, and attack the neighbouring countries".⁷ Title-inscriptions found on a cannon cast in 1670 by Joao da Cruz (Jean de la Croix), the Portuguese gun founder in the service of the Nguyen sheds light on the matter. The title-inscription on the cannon reads, "for the King and grand Lord of Cochinchina, Champa and of Cambodia".⁸ It is most likely that Nguyen Phuc Tan had ordered Da Cruz to have the title inscribed as a testament to his victories over Champa in 1653 and the Cambodians in 1658 respectively.⁹ Naming the Nguyen as grand lord over Cambodia and Champa supports the existence of such policy. It also symbolises the Nguyen as overlord over its immediate neighbours.

In September 1693, Nguyen Phuc Chu decided to place his nominee to rule over Champa in place of Po Saut, held captive

⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7, p. 5b.

⁷ Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l'histoire de la principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam meridional (1600-1775)*, Geneva: Editions Olizane, 1992, p. 151.

⁸ Pierre Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais sur les Cotes du Vietnam et du Champa*, Paris: EFEO, 1972, pp. 206-207.

⁹ The title which was written in Latin read, "por Eerei Ecas De Cochinchina Champa e Camboia Ioao Dacrusae Esen 1670". The two surviving cannons cast by Joao Da Cruz in 1670, presently kept at the Ministry of War of Thailand in Bangkok. See L. Cadiere, "Compte Rendu de 'Deux Canons Cochinchinois au Ministre de la Guerre de Bangkok', de G. Coedes", *BAVH*, 1919, pp. 528-532.

in Phu Xuan since August. Po Saktiraydaputih or Ke-ba-tu¹⁰ who was Po Saut's lieutenant was sent back to Thuan Thanh, which was by now further elevated from a Tran (garrison town) to the status of a Phu (prefecture), and was renamed Binh Thuan Phu. Po Saktiraydaputih was given the rank of a Kham-ly (A Civil official) in the Nguyen bureaucracy. His three sons were given the military appointments of de-doc, de-lanh and cai-phu. The Chams were also ordered to change their costumes to that of the Han tradition which meant the costumes of the Vietnamese.¹¹ Thus began a process of Vietnamization in the Cham territories that was to continue throughout the 18th century.

The establishment of Binh Thuan Phu in the former Pho Hai-Phan Rang-Phan Ri area was followed by a series of battles between the Chams and the Vietnamese in 1693-94. This left the area in severe famine and led to the outbreak of the plagues.¹² Apart from the difficulties caused by the military clashes, the new Vietnamese administration was ill-prepared to govern the Chams. The main problem being the inability of the Nguyen at that point of time to establish an effective military presence in Champa. The problem was partly resolved when Nguyen Phuc Chu renamed the area Thuan Thanh Tran, and appointed Po Saktiraydaputih as the Ta Do Doc (governor) to administer the region on behalf of the Nguyen.¹³

While the Nguyen chronicles and sources are silent on Nguyen Phuc Chu's rationale in sending Po Saktiraydaputih back to Champa as ruler, several reasons could be suggested. First, Nguyen Phuc Chu who had just succeeded as ruler in 1691, was conscious of the difficulties of immediately extending Vietnamese rule over a newly defeated Champa with only Vietnamese officials. To do so would be tantamount to nothing less than an all-out suppression of the Cham people. He must have known that the Chams

¹⁰ Like the name of Po Saut, Po Saktiraydaputih was used in the Cham Chronicles of Panduranga, whereas Vietnamese sources used the name Ke-Ba-tu. See Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga(Campa), 1802-1835*, p. 68.

¹¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7, p. 5b-6a.

¹² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7, p. 9a.

¹³ Another term for military base or garrison.

would resist this and try to regain their territories. Thus Nguyen Phu Chu could see the value of Champa being ruled by a Cham, though nominated by his court. On top of that, Po Saktiraydaputih was a sensible choice as not only was he the lieutenant of Po Saut, he was also a member of the Cham royal family, beholden to the Nguyen. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the Cham people attempted to regain their kingdom in late 1693.

At the end of 1693, remnants of the Cham forces rallied to the call of a Cham official, Oc-nha who had teamed up with a Chinese named A-Ban, who was also called Ngo Lang. The latter was reputed to have shamanistic powers including the ability of being invulnerable to arms. Thus he was able to attract the support of the Chams who wanted to resist the new culture and political domination of the Vietnamese. Initially, the attacking Chams caught the Nguyen garrisons at Phan Rang-Phan Ri by surprise. Nguyen Tri Thang, the garrison commander at Pho Hai was defeated. The advance of the Cham forces was only halted at Phan Rang when Chu Kiam Thang, the Nguyen commander threatened to execute Po Saktiraydaputih should the Cham forces advance any further. Fearing for the life of Po Saktiraydaputih, Oc-nha That and his Cham forces retreated. In his analysis of the event, Po Dharma interpreted Oc-nha That's effort as a manifestation of anti-Vietnamese sentiment among the Cham people.¹⁴

In the early part of 1694, Po Saut passed away. The Nguyen sent two hundred quan of money to ensure that the burial was carried out in a proper manner. Such action was an act of magnanimity by a ruler over his subject as understood in the Vietnamese realm. A month later, Ngo Lang and Oc-nha That, again led a group of armed Chams to attack Phan Rang. Reinforcements for the defense of Phan Rang arrived from Binh Khang, and Ngo Lang's forces were forced back into Khmer territory and the siege was lifted. These revolts led Nguyen Phu Chu to grant Champa autonomy.

Nguyen Phuc Chu appointed Po Saktiraydaputih as the native king (*Phien Vuong*) of Thuan Thanh Tran, and the latter was

¹⁴ Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga(Campa), 1802-1835*, p. 68.

obliged to pay tribute to the Nguyen. Thus the tributary relationship was resumed. Nguyen Phuc Chu also returned to Po Saktiraydaputih, the royal seal of Champa together with captured weapons, horses and his population. Thirty Vietnamese soldiers or Kinh Binh (soldiers of the Imperial City) were sent to protect the new Cham ruler. The presence of the 30 Vietnamese soldiers is evident. In a register of the orders of the King of Champa dated 1738, five ligatures of kay dan were loaned by the King of Thuan Thanh to pay the salaries of the Vietnamese soldiers.¹⁵ It is obvious that Nguyen Phuc Chu, was acting the role of the benevolent ruler, pacifying and harmonizing from a distance. This elevated Nguyen's status in the region.

Nguyen Phuc Chu's decision to elevate Po Saktiraydaputih to the status of *phien vuong* (native king) marked the first of the Nguyen's ascendance as a separate state not unsimilar with the role of the Le. The Nguyen now had sufficient authority to accord a royal title to a subdued neighbour. If prior to this, Champa had been paying tribute to the Nguyen, these earlier instances of tribute was an extension of the Le-Champa tributary relations. The last Champa tribute mission to the Le Court took place in 1509. But the traditional link between the Champa court and the Le Court had been broken since the beginning of the Mac usurpation of the throne in 1529, to be followed by the Nguyen-Trinh confrontation in 1627. Since then, the Nguyen took over the role of the Le in dealing with Champa. This was because the Nguyen were the sole Vietnamese power that the Cham had come into contact with. The move to accord a royal title to the Cham ruler in 1694 reflected the Nguyen's objective of being rulers of a separate realm of their own. This objective was also being pursued later in the Nguyen's relationship with Cambodia, Ai Lao and the Uplanders who were treated in the same manner as Champa. To some

¹⁵ *Dai Nam Chinh Bien Liet Truyen, So Tap* or Biographical Records of the Eminent People of Dai Nam, Vol. I (hereafter *DNCBLT*), Chapter 33, p. 22b. See *Inventaire des Archives du Panduranga: du fonds de la Societe Asiatique de Paris*, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochine, 1984, p. 75. See "Governor of Binh Thuan to the King of Champa", 1738, Collections Cam, Societe Asiatique de Paris, piece No. 6.

degree, the growing confidence of the Nguyen rule, was bolstered by its military capability and flourishing economy reflected in Nguyen Phuc Chu's order to have all the military establishments and shops to be roofed using tiles.¹⁶

The Cham people, now under the Nguyen-installed Po Saktiraydaputih, maintained tributary relations with the Nguyen. It is important at this point to determine the actual nature of this relationship, given the fact that the Kingdom of Champa no longer existed as an independent entity, but had been integrated as part of the Nguyen domains. The Cham people continued to exist in small pockets from the region of Quang Nam down to the Pho Hai-Phan Rang-Phan Ri region where the seat of the Cham Court under Po Saktiraydaputih was situated. Po Saktiraydaputih's actual palace was situated at Bal Chanar, not far from Phan Ri.¹⁷

Even though the Chams continued to refer to their Kingdom at Pho Hai-Phan Rang-Phan Ri region as Panduranga, it was actually occupied territory. The Cham court co-existed with a Vietnamese garrison based at Binh Khang. In the eyes of the Vietnamese, Thuan Thanh Tran was no more than another frontier garrison under the jurisdiction of Binh Khanh. In September 1697, the region west of the Phan Rang River was redesigned as the districts of An Phuoc and this included the villages at Ham Thuan (Phan Thiet) and the area west of Phan Rang River as well as of Hoa Da which was East of Phan Ri.¹⁸ All these were placed under the jurisdiction of the new prefecture called Binh Thuan. The Chams were powerless to prevent such a move.

The actual Vietnamese-Cham relations after 1697 under Nguyen Phuc Chu was based on a central-regional relations where the rulers of the Cham were reduced to being no more than a governor of his own people. He became more of a cultural and economic leader than a political one. But it was probably due to such a relationship that the Cham people were able to co-exist with the

¹⁶ See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 7.

¹⁷ It was from here that he gave audience to officers of the French East India Company ship, *La Galatee* in 1720. See Le Thanh Khoi, *Viet-Nam Un Histoire*, pp. 264-265.

¹⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7:12.

Vietnamese during the southward expansion of the Nguyen up to the early 19th Century.

The Nguyen-Champa tributary relationship provides an insight into the attitude of the Nguyen with regard to its new status as a suzerain. On one hand, the sending of the tribute had great economic and practical value to the Nguyen. More significantly, this self-created tributary relationship is a manifestation of Nguyen Phuc Chu's achievement of an independent state ruling over its newly acquired tributary state, Champa. The Nguyen court was now centre of a system of tributary states that were made up of weaker states and uplanders.

In terms of tribute, both the *Tien Bien* and *Phu Bien Tap Luc* [Miscellaneous Records of the Pacified Frontiers] list the goods sent by Po Saktiraydaputih to Nguyen Phuc Chu as tribute in 1694 and 1709 respectively¹⁹ The following table provides a list of prized goods accompanying the Champa tribute:

¹⁹ *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (hereafter *PBTL*) or Miscellaneous Records of the Pacified Frontiers, written by Le Quy Don in 1776 provided a list of the tribute of 1709. The list bore similar items to that of the 1694 list except for an extra male elephant recorded for the 1709 tribute, see *PBTL*, Vol. 2, p. 30a. Li Tana in her 1993 translation of the excerpt made an error in reading the 60-year Chinese cycle of *Ky Suu* as 1769, see Li Tana, "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6: *Phu Bien Tap Luc* by Le Quy Don", in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on the Economic History of Cochinchina [Dang Trong] 1602-1777*, Li Tana and Anthony Reid (eds.), pp. 100-101. The same *Ky Suu* also means year 1709 when Po Saktiraydaputih sent a tribute to the Nguyen, see *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8, p. 7a for a correct corroboration.

Table 4: Contents of Tribute Sent by Champa to Nguyen in 1694 and 1709

Item	Quantity
Male elephants	2
Yellow Oxen	20
Elephants tusks	6
Rhinoceros horn	10
White scarves	500 pieces
Long boat ²⁰	One
Yellow wax	50 catties
Dark wood	200 trees
Fish skins	200 catties
Hot sand	400 pails
Leaves for weaving conical hats	500 pieces

Source: *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 2: 30a.

The letter from Po Saktiraydaputih which accompanied his submission stated, “Chinh (Tran)-thon-ba-hu of Thuan Thanh tran (Thy Servant, Po Saktiraydaputih of Thuan Thanh), prostrate to present the annual gift of 1709²¹ These goods were stored in the Nguyen’s central storage house, for the personal use or as gifts. Cash was also accepted in replacement for items undelivered. The *Phu Bien Tap Luc* records, mentioned three male elephants as part of the 1709 tribute, out of which, two were actually delivered at Binh Khang prefecture, and one was replaced by a payment of 150

²⁰ The length of the boat was 7 tam or about 22.4 metres, see *PBTL*, Vol. 2, p. 30a.

²¹ *PBTL*, Vol. 2, p. 30a.

quan tax-money.²² In the same way, each of the oxen sent in 1709 could be redeemed by paying 60 quan in cash.²³

No data is available to help determine if any other tribute was sent between 1694 and 1709. In any case, any irregularity in the sending of tribute was probably due to Po Saktiraydaputih's inability to raise a respectable tribute, given the fact that his people were still recovering from famine and disease that plagued the Cham territories in 1697. The other possibility was due to the Nguyen's appreciation of the neutrality offered by the Chams during the Nguyen's struggle against Cambodia during the period 1700 to 1709. Such neutrality was important for the Nguyen military campaign against Cambodia.

The cordial relationship between Po Saktiraydaputih and Nguyen Phuc Chu however, did not prevent friction from taking place in day-to-day affairs between the Cham people and the Vietnamese settlers. There was also dissatisfaction among the Cham people with the Vietnamese government administration of Binh Khanh prefecture whose jurisdiction covered the Cham territories at Pho Hai-Phan Rang-Phan Ri (Panduranga) region. Such friction involved the jurisdiction of law enforcement, the question of trade, trading taxes, slaves and labour contracts, and administrative boundaries.²⁴ The Chams were at a disadvantage when dealing with the Vietnamese in these matters.

An agreement was made in the ninth month of 1712 between Nguyen Phuc Chu and Po Saktiraydaputih under which five provisions were agreed upon to regulate or govern the Vietnamese-Cham relations in Binh Khang. Nguyen records mentioned

²² See *PBTL*, Vol. 2, p. 30a.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Both the *Tien Bien* and *PBTL* are silent on the problems faced by the two peoples residing at dinh Binh Khanh. However, later correspondence (between 1702 to 1810 from the Cham Archives of Panduranga (Societe Asiatique Collections) gives an idea of the nature of the friction. See also *Inventaire des Archives du Panduranga: du font de la Societe Asiatique de Paris*, Paris: Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise, 1984. See also Yoshiaki Ishizawa, *Les Archives Cam Redigees en Caracteres Chinois au Fins de la Societe Asiatique avec Annotation Analyse*, Kagoshima: Historical Science Reports, Vol. 29, Kagoshima University, 1980.

that the agreement was made at the request of Po Saktiraydaputih, and that Nguyen Phuc Chu ‘granted’ a list of rules (and not agreement).²⁵ It is difficult to ascertain if Po Saktiraydaputih really requested such an agreement, but clearly, the agreement was an important one, at least to safeguard the interests of the Chams. Nevertheless, some of the articles were biased against the interests of the Chams:

- 1) Anyone who petitioned at the Royal palace (of Po Saktiraydaputih) has to pay 20 string of cash (quan) to each of the Left-Right Tra (court official), and 10 string of cash to each of the Left-right Phan dung; Whereas those who petitioned at dinh Binh Khanh has to pay 10 string of cash to the Left-Right Tra, and 2 string of cash to each of the Left-Right Phan dung.
- 2) All disputes among Han people (Vietnamese); or between Vietnamese and a resident of Thuan Thanh shall be judged by the Phien Vuong (Cham King) together with a *Cai ba* or treasurer and a *Ky Luc* or judicial official (both Vietnamese officials); Disputes among the people of Thuan Thanh shall be judged by the Cham King.
- 3) The two stations of Kien-kien and O-cam shall be defended more carefully against spies. The authorities shall have no power to arrest residents of the two stations.
- 4) All traders who wish to enter the land of the registered barbarians (Man de) must obtain a pass from the various relevant stations.
- 5) All Chams from Thuan Thanh who drifted to Phien Tran (borders with Cambodia) must be well treated.

²⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8, p. 14a.

From the agreement, it is apparent that the Chams territories were well-penetrated by Vietnamese settlers and that there was no distinctive demarcation between a Cham and a Vietnamese area in the Binh Khang Garrison (Thuan Thanh area). The terms of the agreement also suggest that the Nguyen had conceded a great deal of authority in administering the Champa people to their sponsored-Cham king. However, the fact remained that such great influx of foreign culture and large numbers of people inevitably forced the Chams to accept the presence of the Viet people while at the same time adopting some of the latter's ways of life, including the wearing of Vietnamese costumes, and the usage of the Vietnamese language.

Nguyen-Champa relations between 1697 to 1728 was described by Vietnamese sources as amicable. In the seventh month of 1714 for instance, after the completion of the renovation of the Thien Mu Temple in Phu Xuan, Po Saktiraydaputih brought his three sons to attend a religious celebration hosted by Nguyen Phuc Chu. Chu, a devoted Buddhist, was "very pleased" with their presence. He appointed each of Po Saktiraydaputih's sons as Hau, or noble in-charge of a village.²⁶

Three months later, Po Saktiraydaputih requested assistance from the Nguyen for the establishment of an official court. The *Tien Bien* recorded how Nguyen Phuc Chu ordered a plan to be drawn up for the Cham ruler where the respective positions of the military and civil officials in the court were specified.²⁷ Given the nature of the Nguyen chronicles, it is difficult to be sure if Po Saktiraydaputih had actually made such a request, or whether the whole system was imposed upon the Chams. Nevertheless, it represented another step towards the Vietnamization of the Chams.

Under Po Saktiraydaputih, the Cham people remained subordinate to Nguyen authority, between 1700 and 1728, during a period when the Nguyen expanded their power into Cambodian territories. However, even when the Nguyen were preoccupied

²⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8, p. 18b.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 20b.

with the situation in Cambodia, the Chams did not take the opportunity to free itself from the Nguyen.

No Cham ruler after the death of Po Saktiraydaputih ever developed a close relationship with the individual Nguyen ruler as that between Po Saktiraydaputih and Nguyen Phuc Chu. Nguyen-Champa relations underwent a shift after the death Po Saktiraydaputih's death in 1728. In that year, the Chams rose against the Vietnamese, but were swiftly defeated.²⁸ This led to further Vietnamization to the extent that subsequent Cham rulers adopted the Vietnamese family name of Nguyen.²⁹

After 1728, Nguyen relations with Champa were downgraded to that of a prefecture. The Cham rulers continued to be from the line of Po Saktiraydaputih (of the Po Rome line), conducting their affairs with the prefects of Binh Thuan prefecture and rarely having any direct contact with the Nguyen capital at Phu Xuan. A survey of the the Cham Archives of Panduranga however, provide us with some information on post-1728 Nguyen-Champa relations. These relations were still governed by the regulations set by Nguyen Phuc Chu and Po Saktiraydaputih, and thus, there was a continuity of the pre-1728 relationship.

The process of Vietnamization continued, and soon, the position of the Chams became more and more vulnerable by the day. Po Dharma described the remnant areas of Champa as spots on a leopard skin.³⁰ The Vietnamese swamped the Cham area, and the autonomous rule of the Cham rulers became more untenable. At the same time, even though the Cham ruler was an autonomous ruler within the Nguyen domain, he had no access to the Nguyen. All transactions between Champa and the Nguyen were conducted through the local Vietnamese prefectures of Binh Khanh and Binh

²⁸ This revolt is not found in other sources, see "De Flory to another Priest", 1728, AMEP: Cochinchine, Vol. 739, f. 600.

²⁹ It is not known when did the first Champa ruler first adopt or was given the family name of Nguyen. When Emperor Gia Long established his dynasty, he appointed Nguyen Van Hau, a chieftain from Thuan Thanh as Phien Vuong (Native King), and the successors of Nguyen Van Hau were using the name of Nguyen until 1835. See *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi*, Vol. 10: Binh Thuan, p. 19.

³⁰ Po Dharma, "Les Frontieres du Campa (derbier etat des recherches), in *Les Frontieres du Vietnam*, P. B. Lafont (ed.), Paris: L'Hamattan, 1989, p. 134.

Thuan, set up in the Phan Rang-Phan Ri-Phan Thiet region. Thus, in many ways, the autonomous Champa ruler as envisaged by Nguyen Phuc Chu was nothing more than a local chieftain under the jurisdiction of the prefecture administrators.

After 1728, there was no major Champa resistance against Nguyen rule. The last one was the attempt by Duong Bao Lai and Ye Ma Linh, two leaders of the 'barbarians of Thuan Thanh who led a gang of people attacking Tran Bien dinh.³¹ The actual nature of this resistance is unknown, but it was defeated by the garrison force from *Tran Bien*.

Beyond state level relations, Champa's own cultural identity was threatened by the large number of Vietnamese in its territories. Not only did the Vietnamese people swamp Champa, they also began to break down the traditional economic positions of the Chams. The Vietnamese began to take over the Chams' role in the collection of jungle produce from the highlands. This included the direct collection of calambac (Gharu) and eaglewood. The Vietnamese also began to deal directly with the uplanders for jungle produce. In the process, they marginalized the Chams.³² According to Po Dharma, many Chams became indebted to the Vietnamese through borrowing money from them at an exorbitant interest rate of 150%. This resulted in the the Chams losing their land, rice fields, slaves, their children and even their parents.³³

Conclusion

The need to secure its southern frontiers resulted in an aggressive foreign policy against Champa. Eventually this led to expansionism and the colonisation of the Phan Rang region. What began as attempts to secure its southern frontiers led to what became known as the Southward Movement (Nam Tien) of the Vietnamese people.

³¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 13.

³² Gerald Hickey, *Sons of the Mountain*, p. 160.

³³ Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa) 1802-1835*, p. 71.

Champa was the first and only state fully conquered by the Nguyen. Nonetheless, the Chams were allowed a certain degree of autonomy within the Nguyen realm. The accordance of the title of king on the Nguyen-installed Po Saktiraydaputih was an important act that helped boost the Nguyen's claim of being an independent political entity. The move was consistent with Nguyen Phuc Chu's policy of elevating his court vis-à-vis the Trinh position in the North.

In the case of Cambodia, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen took advantage of the peaceful overtures made by Cambodia in 1618 to begin interfering in the internal politics of the latter. He also began to eye the economic potential of the Mekong Delta. This is evident from the request for the setting up of custom houses to regulate the trade conducted by the Vietnamese in the region of Saigon and Ban Nhe in as early as 1621.

By the mid-17th century however, the Nguyen's position in Cambodia was threatened by the emergence of an anti-Vietnamese faction in the Cambodian court, which resulted in a direct intervention by the Nguyen in 1658. This intervention in Cambodia and the 1653 attack on Champa are two occasions where tribute were exacted by the Nguyen from an independent nations. This marked a watershed in the Nguyen's achievement of independent statehood in its foreign relations. The subject of the following chapter continues with further inroads into the south, more specifically the Mekong Delta.

Chapter Five

Fall of Nguyen and Temporary Cessation of Nguyen-Champa Relations, 1738-1776

The last thirty years of Nguyen rule under its two rulers, Nguyen Phuc Khoat (1738-1765) and Nguyen Phuc Tuan (1765-1776) saw many changes taking place within the Nguyen territories. Chief among these changes was Nguyen Phuc Khoat's unilateral proclamation as King over southern Vietnam. Another change was the decline of international trade in the Indochina Peninsula, on which the Nguyen had strongly depended on and which had been vital to its survival. This chapter will investigate how these changes had a bearing over the Nguyen's relations with its southern neighbours, including Champa. This is especially so when the Nguyen was facing challenges from an increasingly powerful Siam over Cambodia. In this case, the Cham sided strongly with the Nguyen.

The Nguyen's Change of Status, 1744

When Nguyen Phuc Tru passed away in 1738, he was succeeded by his eldest son Nguyen Phuc Khoat (r. 1738-1765). The southern Vietnam that he inherited was perhaps at the height of its territorial expansion. Both Nguyen Phuc Chu and Nguyen Phuc Tru's campaigns against Champa, the Cambodians and the Siamese had extended Nguyen control beyond the region south of Phu Yen to dominate much of the Lower Mekong. Achievements in territorial expansion and the growing power of the Nguyen prompted Nguyen Phuc Khoat to address the question of disparity of status between the Nguyen and the Trinh.

It was in this light that the most significant event during Nguyen Phuc Khoat's reign took place – his unilateral proclama-

tion as a *Vuong* (king)¹ and the subsequent transformation of his government's structure to suit his new status. This event that took place on 4 June 1744 was the culmination of the aspiration of successive Nguyen rulers since the day Nguyen Phuc Nguyen defied the Le-Trinh Court in 1627. It was also a fulfilment of Nguyen Phuc Chu's wish to attain the same rank as the Trinh family, when he attempted to seek admission to the Chinese tributary system in 1702.²

The *Tien Bien* provides a brief description of Nguyen Phuc Khoat's unilateral proclamation as *Vuong* (king). Apparently, the initiatives came from Nguyen Phuc Khoat's officials, especially Nguyen Dang Thanh,³ who implored Nguyen Phuc Khoat to proclaim himself as *Vuong*. After refusing to do so three times, Nguyen Phuc Khoat finally relented and accepted the proposition.⁴

Following this 1744 proclamation, Nguyen Phuc Khoat, who now styled himself as *Vo Vuong* [King Vo], began a series of programmes aimed at elevating the state apparatus to be in line with his new status. First on the list was the transformation of his court from a provincial governorship to that of a royal household. This involved two stages. The first was the adoption of new royal titles for his immediate and extended families. Titles of queen, royal concubines, princes and princesses were introduced, along

¹ The Vietnamese term of *Vuong* refers to the status of King or Prince. The paramount ruler however, was known as *Vua* or Emperor.

² See earlier discussion on Nguyen Phuc Chu's attempt to gain admission to the tributary system in Chapter Five. See also *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 20 & *PBTL*, Vol. 5: 27-29.

³ Nguyen Dang Thanh was a scion of a mandarin family that originated from Nghe An. Among his ancestors was Trinh Cam Thi, who was once secretary of the Ministry of War under the Le. The family moved to Thuan Hoa after the Mac usurpation in 1529. The family's name was changed to Nguyen after Dang Thanh's brother, Dang Di, entered the service of Nguyen Phuc Chu. Nguyen Dang Thanh was known to be talented and entered Nguyen Phuc Chu's service. He held the rank of a *Van Chih* and commissioner of prisons, before being made a tutor for Nguyen Phuc Khoat as before being appointed the *Cai Pha* of Quang Nam. Dang Thanh passed away in 1755. See *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien* (hereafter *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*), Vol. 5: 4.

⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 5-6.

with the honorific title of Ton That (Respected Member of the Royal Family) and Ton Nu (for females).⁵ This was followed by the re-designation of the official residence and court as palaces (Cong Dien).⁶ Prior to 1738, the residence of all Nguyen rulers were referred to as Chinh Dinh or Chinh Pho, which meant main encampment and official residence respectively. Extensive building plans aimed at either renovating existing buildings or the construction of new palaces were being carried out. Pierre Poivre, the French merchant who had visited Hoi An and Phu Xuan in 1749 to 1750, recalled seeing three palaces in Hue.⁷ The process of renovating the palaces went on until 1756.⁸ Nguyen Phuc Khoat even issued a decree, granting amnesty to prisoners.⁹

Nguyen Phuc Khoat also introduced a change of costumes for his court by changing his own apparel and those of the members of the Court with attire reserved for royalty.¹⁰ The new royal court adopted Ming Chinese costumes, discarding the existing costumes that resembled the costume of northern Vietnam. This change in costume was in a way, a manifestation of the Nguyen's sense of independence from the practices of the Le Court. The change was significant enough to prompt the Trinh, when it managed to defeat the Nguyen in 1776, to issue a decree to reverse the costume of the people back to those modelled after the northerners.¹¹ These changes were noticed by Father Jean Koffler, a Jesuit who was living in southern Vietnam at that time. According to Koffler, in order to make the changes effective, Nguyen Phuc Khoat had actually promulgated a new law that helped to enforce

⁵ Even though the compilers of *Tien Bien* use these titles all the time, i.e. for those before Phuc Khoat, they were posthumously given and does not reflect the actual contemporary use of titles in the Nguyen Court. The use of royal titles only began with Nguyen Phuc Khoat in 1744. See *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 36.

⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 7 & *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 36.

⁷ Pierre Poivre, "Descriptions de la Cochinchine", p. 98.

⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 22.

⁹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 7.

¹⁰ See also L. Cadere, "Le Changement de Costume sous Vo Vuong, Ou Une Crise Religieuse a Hue au XVIII Siecle", *BAVH*, 1915, No. 4, pp. 417-424.

¹¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 6-12. See also *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 43.

the change in costume throughout the Nguyen domain.¹² Koffler also said that, “the change of costume by Nguyen Phuc Khoat was meant to reintroduce the old customs of China before the Manchu invasion”¹³.

This was followed by the changes of the administrative apparatus from what was essentially a provincial governorship to the elaborate six boards (ministries) modelled after the Le Court.¹⁴ For this, Nguyen Phuc Khoat first elevated the status of the Secretariat (Van Thuc) to that of Han Lam Vien (Han Lin Academy). The six Boards were set up by transforming the office of Ky Luc (Judges) to Lai Bo (Board of Personnel), the Nha Ve (Governor of the Magistrate) to Le Bo (Board of Rites), Do Tri (provincial magistrates) to Hinh Bo (Board of Justice), the Cai Ba (Magistrate-Administrator) and Assistant Treasury to be Ho Bo (Board of Revenue). Two separate boards of Cong (Board of Works) and Binh (Board of War) were newly creation.¹⁵ The changes were significant as it symbolised the Nguyen having attained the status of royalty, to be served upon by a correspondingly elaborate bureaucracy.

While the six boards closely resembled the system practiced by both the Ming and Qing governments in China, there was no separate agency being set up to deal with foreigners as in the case of the Li Fan Yuan (Office of Barbarian Affairs) in China.¹⁶ If it was the practice in China to place the administration of tributary relations under the charge of the Board of Rites, there is no evidence suggesting a similar set up in Nguyen Phuc Khoat’s administration. Generally, Nguyen sources are silent on this matter. It is likely that the administration of the uplanders were entrusted

¹² Jean Koffler, “Descriptions de la Cochinchine”, *Revue Indochinoise*, 1911, p. 597.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

¹⁴ Dang Phuong Nghi, *Les Institutions Publiques du Viet-Nam au XVIIIe Siècle*, p. 29; see also John K. Whitmore, “The Development of the Le Government in Fifteenth Century Vietnam”, Ph. D. Thesis, Cornell University, 1968, Chapter 4 -6.

¹⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 11.

¹⁶ See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985, p. 86.

to the respective regional commanders or governors. It also suggests that despite this upgrading exercise in the Nguyen administrative apparatus in 1744, many of the decisions regarding the uplanders and foreign relations remained in the hands of the respective Nguyen rulers who delegated the tasks to the provincial governors.

In many ways, the process of elevating the status of the administrative apparatus was carried out merely to suit the changing status of Nguyen Phuc Khoat. It was a change that was not sustained by actual meaningful reform in the recruitment of suitable candidates to take on the demanding task of managing the now much expanded administration with various departments. Lack of suitable personnel to lead these various boards proved a burden rather than a boon to the Nguyen administration. During the first phase of this transformation for instance, Nguyen Phuc Khoat had to place the two Boards of Rites and Personnel under the charge of Nguyen Dang Thanh,¹⁷ the man who was instrumental in urging Nguyen Phuc Khoat to elevate his status to that of a *Vuong*, while the two Boards of Revenue and of War were entrusted to Le Quang Thai.¹⁸

Symbolically, the proclamation of 1744 was a triumph for the Nguyen family. The move finally helped the Nguyen to attain the rank of *Vuong* that had thus far, been illusive to them. The rank also made them equal to their rival, the Trinh. However, in the long run, the change was a disaster in the making. The upgrading of the family and the bureaucracy saw a more elaborate administrative structure being put in the place of the much more rudimentary old structure. But at the same time, the newly installed structure was still being staffed by the same people who were only qualified to run the old provincial administrative system. With the

¹⁷ See *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 5: 4.

¹⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 12. Le Quang Thai was a native of Phu Vinh in Thua Thien district, Thuan Hoa. He came from a family of mandarins. He was first an official at Binh Thuan before Nguyen Phuc Tru appointed him as the magistrate (Cai Ba) of Quang Nam, a post he held for 13 years. He was appointed to be the secretary for the Ministry of War and Ministry of Revenue in 1744 and died the following year. See *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 5: 33.

introduction of these administrative changes, lesser men were given new ranks and high positions that they were not able to handle. Le Quy Don highlighted this problem when he made comments on the system of taking suitable candidates for the Nguyen service where the requirement was reduced to rudimentary levels. According to him, the Nguyen service only placed emphasis on the Chinese language.¹⁹ This was obviously insufficient in so far as the need to fill the positions in an upgraded administrative apparatus introduced by Nguyen Phuc Khoat.

New Nguyen Tributary Relations

Apart from helping the Nguyen to elevate its status, Nguyen's tributary relations with the uplanders also had strategic and economic dimensions. The demand for elephants from the uplanders and the Nguyen's other neighbours to be part of the tribute system was strategically important for the Nguyen. First, the Nguyen needed to have sufficient supply of elephants for their own use, both as beasts of burden and beasts of war.²⁰ The Nguyen's reliance on elephants can be traced to the days of Nguyen Hoang. According to Cadiere, by 1626, there were already elephant enclosures (Tau Tuong) outside the main residence of the Nguyen.²¹ According to the Jesuit Father Koffler, there were at least 50 war elephants being kept around Phu Xuan, while others were placed at the northern borders.²² Both Champa and Cambodian tributes also included elephants as gifts. This ensured sufficient supply of elephants for the Nguyen in beefing up their elephant troops and those for court duties.

The annual acquisition of elephants from the uplanders through tribute-tax probably had also helped the Nguyen to ensure that the uplanders do not have sufficient elephants to be a security threat to the Nguyen. As many of the uplanders, particularly those

¹⁹ *PBTL*, Vol. 5: 1-2.

²⁰ For a study on the Nguyen's usage of elephants, see L. Cadiere, "Les Elephants Royaux", *BAVH*, No. 1, 1922, pp. 41-102.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 43. See also Jean Koffler, "Description of Indochina", p. 571.

from the central mountain range were proficient in the handling of elephants, the demand of male elephants as tribute, normally the larger ones would ensure that the uplanders would have little time to acquire and train new ones for war.

Other items sent by the uplanders as part of their tribute also contributed to the Nguyen's revenue. Many of the items were of great importance for both domestic use as well as for external trade of the Nguyen. Most of the linen and clothes received were kept for domestic use, either as daily usage items or as gifts to reward officials. Throughout the *Tien Bien*, there are many instances where the Nguyen rewarded their officials with gold, silver and clothing. It is likely that most of the rewards actually originated from the tribute-tax from the uplanders.

For other items such as pepper, olive, scented wood such as calambac and eaglewood, rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks, and rattan received were sold to Europeans and Chinese traders who frequented Nguyen ports.²³ All these items fetched good prices when traded in the international market at Hoi An and other places. Three observations can be made from the Nguyen-uplanders relations. Firstly, The complexity of Nguyen-uplander relations is captured in the confusion of the *Tien Bien* in its attempt to define the tributary system prevailing in the 18th century. The compilers of the *Tien Bien* were unsure of several issues while reconstructing the events, which they acknowledged in a note in the *Tien Bien*.²⁴ For example, the compilers admitted their failure to establish if the two uplanders tribes were actually located in the borders of Phu Yen and Binh Dinh, or from 'Hoa Quoc', which means the kingdom of Hoa Xa, a major Jarai tribe.²⁵

²³ These items were among those offered for sale in the Nguyen domains, see Pierre Poivre, "Voyage de Pierre Poivre en Cochinchine, Description de la Cochinchine (1749-1750), *Revue de l'Extreme-Orient*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1885, pp. 81-121, cited in Li Tana and Anthony Reid (eds.), *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen*, p. 92-94.

²⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 10.

²⁵ Hickey suggests 1751 as the year when a tributary relations was started between the Nguyen with the Thuy Xa and Hoa Xa, Hickey, *Sons of the Mountain*, p. 159; For a Vietnamese perspective of this, see Nguyen Tham, "Tim Hieu Dong

Secondly, Nguyen Phuc Chu's action in rewarding the tribal chiefs with official robes and other goods can be seen as an attempt to use the tributary protocol normally practised by the Chinese and the Le. The granting of gifts, normally several times greater in value than the actual tribute sent was regarded as essential in demonstrating the benevolent and greatness of the tribute-receiving court, in this case, the Nguyen. Another occasion where a similar scenario took place was in 1712 when the king of Nga Ban Quoc²⁶ sent a tribute emissary to the Nguyen Court.²⁷

Thirdly, the Court historians who compiled the *Tien Bien* had used the term 'King' to denote the status of the tribal chieftains. On one hand, it may seem that the Court historians were influenced by the 19th century type of relations between the later Nguyen Dynasty with its neighbours where a clearly defined tributary relations actually existed.²⁸ Such practices of according kingship status to tribal chiefs could have been started during this time as it was clearly consistent with the thinking of Nguyen Phuc Chu regarding his authority.

The uplanders were among the first to come under Nguyen's sphere of influence. If in the past it was satisfied with trading with these tribes, subsequently the Nguyen decided to control them directly thus securing jungle produce, its main commodity of exchange with international traders.

Nguyen's dominance of the uplanders also led to the shaping of its aggressive foreign policy toward its lesser neighbours. Much of Nguyen policy subsequent to the stalemate with the Trinh was still much influenced by past dealings with the various non-Viet peoples. Its long history with the Trinh meant the Nguyen understood the dynamics of power. The next section is a case in

Bao Thuong"(Understanding the Highland Comrades), *Que Huong*, No. 31, 1962, p. 137.

²⁶ Unable to establish the origins of this group of Uplanders. But it is interesting to note that it was accorded the status of a kingdom, or Quoc by the Nguyen. Thus, it can be speculate that the 'Kingdom' of Nga Pan was a large tribe that was probably the Banhnar tribe.

²⁷ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8, p.14.

²⁸ Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, pp. 234-246.

point of a new phase in Nguyen foreign policy, one characterised by aggression and aggressive diplomacy.

Last Phase of Nguyen-Champa Relations

During the thirteen years of his rule over southern Vietnam, Nguyen Phuc Tru had spent much of his time and energy in consolidating Nguyen power over the territories acquired by his father, Nguyen Phuc Chu. In the process, he also extended Nguyen rule over the Mekong delta region through the annexation of Long Ho and Nguyen Chau at the expense of a weak Cambodia. Nguyen suzerainty over Cambodia however, was never total. Ang Da (Sathar II), their sponsored king in Cambodia was only in control of the Lower Mekong, north of the Bassac River, whereas the upper Mekong was still under the control of a Siam-sponsored Cambodian king, based in Oudong.

Even as the Nguyen were facing challenges in the Mekong against the Cambodians, another factor in its foreign relations equation unraveled when Po Saktiraydaputih, the Nguyen-sponsored king of the Cham ruling over the autonomous kingdom of Thuan Thanh in Binh Thuan, passed away in 1728. That year, Po Saktiraydaputih, the Nguyen-sponsored king of the Cham autonomous kingdom of Thuan Thanh in Binh Thuan, passed away. Apparently, the cordial relations that Po Saktiraydaputih had cultivated with Nguyen Phuc Chu was not accepted by his own people as he was deemed to have represented the Vietnamese. Shortly after Po Saktiraydaputih's death, the Chams at Phan Ri revolted in 1728.²⁹ As a subdued region, that was given the status of a kingdom by Nguyen Phuc Chu, Champa (Thuan Thanh) was crucial to the prestige of the Nguyen rule, especially in the context of the Nguyen-imposed tributary relations. Even though the French missionary, Father De Flory's account remained the only one available regarding the revolt, it did not offer details concerning the revolt. Nonetheless, it is possible that the roots of the revolt

²⁹ "Father De Flory to Langellerie" 28 Nay 1728, AMEP: Cochinchine, Vol. 739, f. 600.

could be traced to several issues which were beneath the framework of tributary relations between the autonomous kingdom of Thuan Thanh and the Nguyen rule.

When Nguyen Phuc Chu made Po Saktiraydaputih King of Thuan Thanh in 1694, he also set up the Vietnamese prefecture of Binh Thuan. The prefecture encompassed the entire Thuan Thanh. This created a situation where Vietnamese authority was overlapping with the jurisdiction of Po Saktiraydaputih. At the same time, Nguyen policy also encouraged the resettlement of the Vietnamese in Binh Thuan, resulting in an influx of Vietnamese settlers taking up land in and around Binh Thuan. The sudden flooding of Cham land by Vietnamese settlers with a different culture and religion, inevitably contributed to the conflict. Given the Vietnamese' sense of cultural superiority towards all non-Viet people, the Vietnamese looked down on the Chams, especially after his victories over the Chams. These frictions resulted in resentment on the part of the Chams towards the Vietnamese which transformed into anti-Vietnamese activities, culminating in the 1728 revolt.

In response, Nguyen Phuc Tru dispatched a military force to re-establish control over Thuan Thanh. He then reinforced Vietnamese presence in the area by the resettlement of more Vietnamese people in Thuan Thanh. As a result, there was a large influx of Viet people into the annexed territory. This led inevitably to rivalry for space and resources.

In their dealings with the Vietnamese, the Chams often lost their land and rice fields, slaves and even family members to the Vietnamese settlers. Economic dealings also involved borrowing of money at exorbitantly high interest. In some cases, the interest rate was fixed at 150% per annum by the Vietnamese.³⁰

According to Po Dharma, the main factor that had brought about the Cham recolt of 1728 was Chams dissatisfaction over this socio-economic situation with the Viets. This in turn, brought about the emergence of anti-Vietnamese movements.³¹ After

³⁰ Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa)*, 1802-1835, Paris: EFEO, 1987, p. 71.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Nguyen Phuc Tru managed to calm the situation in 1728, subsequent Cham rulers proved to be subservient to the Nguyen's authority. Far from revolting or attempting to break free from the Nguyen control, the Cham rulers and elites at Thuan Thanh supported the Nguyen, especially in the latter's wars against Cambodia and Siam. In fact, a French missionary who was in Lam Thuyen, Thuan Thanh, wrote in 1746 that since 1728, there were hardly any problems in Champa.³²

The Uplanders in Late Nguyen Foreign Relations

If Italian Jesuit Cristoforo Borri had reported that the Nguyen Lordship had no control over the uplanders whom he termed as Kemoi during the early part of 17th Century,³³ the situation had definitely changed by the time of Nguyen Phuc Khoat's reign. It was during Nguyen Phuc Khoat's time that Vietnamese authority was extended into the highlands of present day Savannakhet province in Laos. Partly due to the efforts made by Nguyen Phuc Chu in 1699 where a garrison was established at the Ai Lao Pass, (named Dinh Ai Lao), inroads into the mountainous region were made. Since then, Vietnamese traders, along with their Chinese counterparts, began to venture into the Ai Lao area to trade with the uplander tribes.

In the context of the Nguyen's tributary relations with the hill tribes, trade was an essential component. Vietnamese as well as Chinese traders or possibly Japanese in the earlier period, had taken the opportunity made possible by the cordial tributary relations between the Nguyen and the uplanders to venture into the highlands. Usually, this lowland-highland trade had brought more benefit to the Vietnamese compared to the uplanders.

Tangible trade aside, the Nguyen Court looked upon this trading activities in a different light. They regarded the permission

³² "Father Bennetat to M. Dufau", 20 July 1746, AMEP: Cochinchine, Vol. 742, f. 652.

³³ Cristoforo Borri, *Cochin China: Containing Many Admirable Ranties and Singularities of that Countrey*, London: Robert Ashley for Richard Clutterbuck, 1633, pp. B1 & B2.

to trade for the uplanders as part of the tribute-trade arrangement permitted by the Nguyen Court, though in actual fact, it was the Vietnamese and their Chinese counterparts who usually took the initiative to venture to the highland in carrying out trading activities.

The Nguyen's attempt to link trade with tribute is evident in the manner in which the sending of tribute from Ban Tuong (present day Van Chang in Laos) in 1761 was recorded. The tribute mission came through the route that linked Ai Lao and Cam Lo via Luu Hoa`n. In return for the tribute gifts, Nguyen Phuc Khoat rewarded the King of Ban Tuong with clothes and official robes.³⁴ According to the *Tien Bien*, the trading relations between Viet people and the uplanders (hence Barbarians in the Vietnamese sense) at Cam Lo, existed much earlier. The Nguyen had granted permission for the uplanders from Cam Lo to trade with the Vietnamese as a means of manifesting the greatness of the Nguyen Court. The 1761 mission was the last recorded tribute mission from the uplanders in the Nguyen chronicles. It is possible that further missions were sent but went unrecorded.

Writing about his brief visit to Nguyen Phuc Khoat's court in 1749 to 1750, Pierre Poivre observed how every year, Nguyen Phuc Khoat viewed with great pleasure, the arrivals of the tribute delegations from Thuan Thanh (Champa), Cambodia and the various uplanders or smaller kingdoms like Laos. According to Poivre, these four entities sent regular tributes to the Nguyen.³⁵ Poivre also observed how Nguyen Phuc Khoat was extremely arrogant towards tribute emissaries from Champa.³⁶ This reflected the Nguyen Court as the centre of a tributary system in relations to its immediate neighbours. This was especially so after the unilateral proclamation by Nguyen Phuc Khoat as *Vuong*, or King in 1744. This new found confidence in assuming the central position in a tributary system they created was important as a means to equalise its position vis-a-vis the Trinh. However, this system was not as

³⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 31.

³⁵ Pierre Poivre, "Journal d'Un Voyage a La Cochinchine (du 29 aout au 11 fevrier 1750)", *Revue Extreme-Orient*, Vol. III, 1887, p. 488.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

clearly defined as the tributary system practiced in the later Nguyen Dynasty.³⁷

At the beginning of the 18th Century, the Pheng Ly a Mon-Khmer speaking group that the Nguyen chronicles conveniently termed as Ai Lao, and who was reported to have paid tribute to the Nguyen were attacked by the Tai speaking Phuthai tribe from northern Laos and the Sue. As a result of the attack, the Pheng Ly dispersed. Many later came down to the Vietnamese plains via the Cam Lo River and settled at the vicinity of Cam Lo in Thuan Hoa. The Phuthai divided the former Pheng Ly land into the principalities of Vang, Champone, Tchepone and Pheng which acknowledged the authority of the Phuthai, based in Vientiane. In his efforts to reassert authority over the former Pheng Ly area, Nguyen Phuc Khoat notified the four principalities and Vientiane that the former annual tribute of an elephant would continue to be paid by the four principalities.³⁸

During Nguyen Phuc Khoat's reign, there were on no less than three occasions where the Nguyen's foreign relations had involved the uplanders. All these events connected to the Nguyen's relations with Cambodia. On all three occasions, the uplanders were on the side of the Nguyen. The involvement of uplanders in Nguyen's foreign relations was inevitable mainly due to two reasons, namely strategic considerations and tributary relations.

As some of the uplander tribes were living in the southern highlands areas which covered Vietnam's boundaries with Cambodia, they were also inevitably in control of passes and routes which armies had to pass through before getting into Cambodia. The control of mountain passes or routes by the uplanders was known among the Vietnamese. In 1754, Nguyen Phuc Khoat ordered the Gia Dinh native chiefs appointed as head of the various

³⁷ For a discussion on the tributary relations of the Nguyen Dynasty, see Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, pp. 246-261. Even then, Woodside was suggesting that it was still very much a case of "model versus reality".

³⁸ Bernard Bourotte, "Essai d'histoire de Populations Montagnards du Sud-Indochinois jusqu'à 1945", *Bulletin de la Societe d'Etudes Indochinoises*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1955.

nguồn (tribes) in the Son Phong System (mountain defence system) at Vu Truong (near Cam Lo) to monitor the entries to the passes which linked the northern borders of the Nguyen domain with the Cambodian borders. This was to detect any movement of Trinh army allegedly in league with the anti-Vietnamese Cambodian king.³⁹

More importantly, the uplanders were also caught in the middle of conflicts that took place between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians. On several occasions, the *Tien Bien* recounted how the anti-Vietnamese Cambodians rulers had attacked the uplanders, which resulted in the latter seeking help from the Nguyen. In the second month of 1750, the Chru and Maa tribes were attacked by a Cambodian army. The *Tien Bien* remarked that many of these tribes or the ‘Kun Moi’ drifted into the borders of Cambodia. The text was probably referring to the occupation of the Maa country by the Vietnamese in the late 17th century (1698) when the Nguyen army under General Nguyen Huu Canh attacked and annexed the area which corresponds with present day Phuc Long, Bien Hoa, Thanh Binh and Gia Dinh. A garrison was set up and more than 40,000 Viet families were moved from an area south of Bo Chinh (Quang Binh and Binh Thuan) to the newly annexed region.⁴⁰ The mass emigration of the Vietnamese undoubtedly had started the exodus of the Maa and the Chru into the Khmer region. In many ways, the uplanders were considered ‘pawns’ in the major game of the Vietnamese-Siamese (and Cambodian) contest.

What happened subsequently was rather confusing. This is especially so when the Nguyen chronicles did not offer much insight on the period immediately between 1750 and 1753. The *Tien Bien* recorded how Nguyen Phuc Khoat sent a letter to the Siamese Court at Ayudhya rebuking the Siamese King for supporting the Cambodians who were “threatening our [the Nguyen’s] subdued barbarians”.⁴¹ The letter to the Siamese Court was considered

³⁹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 24.

⁴⁰ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 14.

⁴¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 17. It is interesting to note that despite this rebuking letter, whose existence has yet be verified, the Nguyen and the Siamese probably

necessary as the Cambodian Court at Oudong was under the suzerainty of the Siamese Court. The ruler there, King Ang Im was installed by the Siamese King in 1748.⁴² Ang Im was the sole ruler for Cambodia at that time, his chief rival, the Vietnamese-supported king Ang Ta had died in Gia Dinh as a political refugee in 1748.

What transpired during the period between the letter to Siam in 1750 and 1753 when the Nguyen Army was preparing to attack Cambodia is not mentioned in the *Tien Bien*. Father Piquel, a French Missionary who was at that time serving in Cambodia, reported to his superiors of a devastating war between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians which took place in 1752. As a result of that, the Nguyen installed a new king in Cambodia. According to Father Piquel, the new king was even compelled to follow the new edict of the Nguyen Lord in persecuting the Christians, issued after the Poivre affair.⁴³ No mention however, was made by Piquel of the hill tribes whose welfare the *Tien Bien* claimed to have been the main concern of Nguyen Phuc Khoat in launching the 1752-1753 attacks against the Cambodians.

As the Nguyen army was entering Cambodia in the sixth month of 1753, they recruited the Chru tribe to join them in the fight against the Khmers. The campaign against the pro-Siam Cambodians lasted into the spring of 1755. In the ensure battles in 1755, the Chru had more than 5,000 men serving in the Nguyen

maintained a cordial relationship, especially in matters relating to trade. See records on trade and shipping arrangements between Siam and the Nguyen, *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 25. The Nguyen-Siam relations only turned for the worst in the 1760s when open conflict took place between the two over Ha Tien and Cambodia.

⁴² Since 1711, as the Nguyen further extended their influence into the Cambodian territories, they had to be content with the fact that over the other side of the Cambodian borders was Siam. Siam's tussles with the Nguyen inside Cambodia mainly took the form of supplanting one another with their respectively installed Cambodian kings.

⁴³ "Piquel to the Directors of the MEP", 15th July 1752, AMEP: Cochinchine, Vol. 744, f. 11.

Army.⁴⁴ And at the battle near present day My Tho, the Chru army was routed by the Cambodians. Only at the intervention of a Vietnamese army under Nguyen Cu Trinh that the Chru forces were able to retreat to safety. At the closing stage of the campaign, the Chru served as guides and soldiers in the Vietnamese army that defeated the Cambodians and entered Phnom Penh.⁴⁵ The Chru were eventually settled at the Noi Ba Den, or Black Lady Mountains, near Tay Ninh.

The involvement of the uplanders, and in this case, the Chru in the Nguyen Army against the Cambodians had to some extent, demonstrated the binding ties that existed in the tributary relations between the Nguyen and its vassal states. In this case, the Nguyen coming to the rescue of its vassal subject, the Chru. On the other hand, the decision to extend protection to the Chru was also made on the need to crush the resurgence of anti-Vietnamese Cambodia under the influence of Siam. This was especially important in the absence of a credible pro-Nguyen Cambodian king since the demise of Ang Ta in 1748.

The Nguyen Lords were also quick to exploit, to their favour, the sticky relations between the uplanders and Cambodia. This was especially true of the Jarai who were traditionally Cambodia's ally. The Jarai were in fact, important to the national identity of the Cambodians as they were regarded the sacred keeper of the royal relics of the Khmer kings until quite recently, possibly in 1920s.⁴⁶ The traditional bond of these two peoples was broken and it was to the advantage of the Nguyen when the Jarais came under its control.

The incorporation of the Jarai into the Nguyen tributary system had a significant bearing upon the former's relations with Cambodia. Divided into two tribes, namely, the Fire Jarai (or Hoa Xa in Vietnamese) and the Water Jarai (Thuy Xa), the Jarais were led by two shaman chiefs. Historically, the two shaman chiefs

⁴⁴ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 25. The Chru are closely related to the Chams. Po Rome, the most celebrated King of Champa (1627-1651) was in fact of Chru origin.

⁴⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 25.

⁴⁶ See Gerard Hickey, *Sons of the Mountains*, pp. 140-141.

were keepers of the treasures of the Khmer Royal family, having assisted the Khmer kings in defeating an invading Cham Army in the ninth century.⁴⁷ With yje breaking up of the Jarai-Cambodian ties, the Cambodians were left without their traditional ally. Apart from the problem of tributary relations, the Nguyen were also trying to use the Jarai who were living in area between the Nguyen and Cambodia to filter Vietnamese influence into Cambodia.

The Jarai probably started to acknowledge Vietnamese suzerainty through the Nguyen during the late 17th Century. In return, the Nguyen, first under Nguyen Phuc Chu, accorded the status of kingship to the two chieftains of the Jarai tribes and elevated the tribe to the status of a kingdoms. Such a status probably meant little to the chieftains who were called Patao, as they were the de facto rulers over their people. The move however, meant a great deal to the Nguyen as it inevitably placed the Nguyen Lordship in a world of tributary relations they created, which elevated the Nguyen's status to a tribute granting entity. The move also confirmed that the tributary relations that was practiced by the Chinese Court, later aptly applied by Emperor Gia Long (1802-1819) and especially Emperor Minh Menh (1820-1840) in the later Nguyen Dynasty, was already in place during Nguyen Phuc Chu's (1691-1725) time and perfected during Nguyen Phuc Khoat's reign.

Father Jean Koffler, the Jesuit, provides us with the only account of the reception of tribute from the uplanders by the Nguyen:

Every five years, they [the uplanders tribes] sent a delegation to the Court at Cochinchina to foster friendship with the king and to offer different presents. Each of these delegations normally consisted of around 50 officers and

⁴⁷ Hickey, *Sons of the Mountain*, p. 140. For a recent study on the relations between the Cambodians and the Jarais, see Michel Tranet, "Etude sur la Savatar Vatt Sampuk", *Sasa Khmer*, No. 6, 1983, pp. 75-107.

well-equipped robust soldiers. From the capital, the King of CochinChina sent four galleys to receive the ambassadors with great honour and accompanied them into the royal city with a mandarin, and five cohorts of soldiers as escort. They were treated by the King to a sumptuous function all day at the court. At the end of the reception, the ambassadors received their presents, destined for their masters, and they returned via the same way with similar ceremony as they had arrived.⁴⁸

At the Court, there were interpreters who assisted the mandarins to conduct the transactions with the uplander delegations. But Koffler remarked that as the language of the uplanders was difficult to understand, they were often misunderstood.⁴⁹

Unlike the Trinh in the North which strictly prohibited Vietnamese from having contacts with the uplanders, the Nguyen's relations with these uplanders was much less restrained. This is especially so in the military aspect. Under Nguyen Phuc Khoat, the Nguyen Army was made up of Vietnamese as well as non-Vietnamese troops. The inclusion of the uplanders as part of the Nguyen armed forces was something unheard of in the Trinh army or traditional military forces.

According to *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, there were at least three units of Nguyen Phuc Khoat's army that were made up of non-Viet people, namely the units attached to Vietnamese garrisons at Binh Thuan, Tran Bien and Phien Tran. Part of the garrison at Binh Thuan was made up of units who were entirely Cham. This

⁴⁸ Jean Koffler, "Descriptions de la Cochinchine", *Revue Indochinoise*, pp. 457-458.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

force, consisting of four troops of calvary and seven boats troops, was under the direct command of the King of Thuan Thanh or the King of Champa. The Nguyen administration only exempted the province from paying rice tax for the troops but the King of Champa was responsible for the wages and supplies. Though under the King of Champa, the troops also had a Vietnamese Cai Bo and a Cai Doi (administrator and commander of a company of troops). The rest of the officers were Chams.⁵⁰ At Tran Bien, there were three boat units each with nine boats and 50 soldiers on each boat. All the members of these units were members of the uplanders or Khmers who had drifted into Nguyen Southern Vietnam. In Phien Tran, there were three boat troops, each with 12 boats and each boat with 50 men. Like those in Thuan Thanh-Champa, the two garrisons were exempted from paying rice tax for the troops but the rest, including the wages and food supplies came from the local commanders.⁵¹

Father Jean Koffler reported that even part of the royal guard of Nguyen Phuc Khoat was made up of tanned-coloured uplanders called Lai [possibly Jarai] who lived in “Upper Cochinchina”. There were four companies of them and they were called Young Guards of the Palace. Koffler thought they were rather fearsome and feared by all.⁵²

The policy of incorporating non-Vietnamese troops in the Nguyen Army was a very important decision. Thus far, the Nguyen prided itself with the continued employment of Viet people in their armed forces, with those from Thanh Hoa regarded as the prime troops. However, it became clear that as the Nguyen had annexed more territories, the task of garrisoning these newly acquired lands also became increasingly more difficult. Hence the decision to allow the formation of the non-Vietnamese units in its armed forces. This practice was not confined to the southern-most territories. In fact, the practice was also carried out in Quang

⁵⁰ *PBTL*, Vol. 3: 83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*.

⁵² Jean Koffler, “Descriptions de la Cochinchine”, *Revue Indochinoise*, 1911, p. 570.

Nam.⁵³ Together with the resettling of Vietnamese in the newly acquired territories, this strategy, according to Le Quy Don, effectively suppressed Champa and the Khmers. It also beefed up Vietnamese defence against Siam.⁵⁴

As early as the reign of Nguyen Phuc Chu (1691-1725), the growing confidence had already become visible. When it became more apparent by the 1740s, Nguyen Phuc Khoat felt confident enough to allow the ruler of Champa (King of Thuan Thanh) to maintain an army of his own.⁵⁵ The Nguyen army that was stationed at Binh Thuan was partly made up of the Chams under the jurisdiction and command of the Cham ruler. The Champa army under Nguyen jurisdiction was made up of four troops of horse cavalry and some riverine flotillas. Under this arrangement, the Nguyen administration was responsible in the provision food and supplies to the Cham serving in the Nguyen army, while the Cham ruler paid the salaris. All the recruitment of this Champa army was done through the Cham ruler.⁵⁶ According to *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, the Nguyen allowed the practice of recruiting natives of Champa and Khmer as well as other non-Viet people including hill tribes to serve in the local army in the four southern most prefectures of Dinh Khanh, Binh Khanh, Binh Thuan and Gia Dinh.⁵⁷ Such practices can be traced back to the 1720s when the Nguyen began to face challenges from Siam over their contest for influence in Cambodia. Just like the Champa units in the Nguyen army, these non-Vietnamese hill tribe (Thu Nhan) troops made up different branches of the Nguyen forces, including foot soldiers and riverine flotillas. Unlike the Champa troops and the Khmer troops that were meant for defence,⁵⁸ the uplanders were used by Nguyen Phuc Khoat to attack Cambodia in 1753.⁵⁹

⁵³ *PBTL*, Vol. 3: 85.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *PBTL*, Vol. 3: 83.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *PBTL*, Vol. 3: 90.

⁵⁸ *PBTL*, Vol. 3:83.

⁵⁹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 24a.

The extent of the Nguyen's confidence in dealing with foreigners including the Chams, was also evident in the court. Unlike previous practices where trusted high officials were normally of Thanh Hoa origins, Nguyen Phuc Khoat had in his service, a Khmer-born commander by the name of Tam who held the rank of a Cai Doi (captain). According to Poivre, this Tam, who worked as a general of palace guards and was well-placed. He was also known to be trusted by Nguyen Phuc Khoat.⁶⁰

However, the Nguyen's belief in the trustworthiness and allegiance from its tribute-sending vassal states did not always guarantee peaceful co-existence. In 1746, a rebellion took place among the Cham community in Thuan Thanh. The rebels, who were led by Duong Bao Lai and Ye Ma Linh, attacked Tran Bien near Gia Dinh. However, it was quickly put down by the Nguyen army.⁶¹

The last disturbance caused by the hill tribes as recorded in the official chronicle was that of 1770, a year before the Tay Son Rebellion. In July of that year, Nguyen Phuc Thanh, the Ky Luc of Quang Nam, was appointed Cai Bo (Magistrate-administrator). He was responsible for the welfare of five prefectures (phu) in the south and was ordered to lead the Nguyen forces from Qui Nhon and Phu Yen. His army's mission was to stop the uplanders around that region from conducting raids and plundering activities at the vicinity of Phu Yen. It is not clear if the disturbances at Phu Yen was a prelude to the Tay Son, considering the fact that Qui Nhon, the Tay Son's original base is just situated next to it.

Nguyen's relations with the uplander tribe "states" reflect its realist, almost utilitarian approach. In its early days, the Nguyen did not directly exert control over these tribes but encouraged active trading with them. Eventually, this policy developed into an open tributary system where Nguyen aggression was tamped by tributes. Trade was also more regulated.

⁶⁰ Pierre Poivre, "Voyage en Cochinchine". P. 373.

⁶¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 10: 14.

In the final years before its decline, the Nguyen ruling elite saw itself fit enough to exert more control over these tribes requiring them to serve in its war efforts against Cambodia. This policy not only guaranteed the safety of its settlements, it also expanded its military capacity. Nguyen expansion into the Mekong already partly described in the previous chapter, brought it into direct conflict with Cambodia and a resurgent Siam.

Conclusion

Nguyen-Champa relations during the last few decades of the Nguyen rule was characterised by a subservient attitude adopted by the ruler of Thuan Thanh, or the recognised King of Champa to the Nguyen. Not only was there no further military resistance against the Nguyen since 1728, the level of cooperation had increased between the two as demonstrated in the manner the Chams were providing military personnel to the Nguyen army. The co-existence of the Cham King at Panduranga and the Binh Thuan Phu garrison was not challenged nor disrupted until the Nguyen lost control over the region to the Tayson rebellion in 1771. Hence the temporary cessation of the tributary relations established in the 1650s.

It was not until Nguyen Anh, who would be Emperor Gia Long (1802-1819) came to power that this old relationship was restored. The newly restored relations however did not last long. By 1832, the ruler of Champa had sided with a renegade viceroy in the south to resist Nguyen rule. This would finally led to the final annihilation of what remained as Champa would be totally wiped out from the face of the Nguyen ruler, Emperor Minh Menh's campaign to have the Chams annihilated.

Conclusion

This study started out with an investigation of the Nguyen rulers of southern Vietnam with Champa during the period from 1558 when the Nguyen rule was established to 1776 when it ended.

In looking at the development of Nguyen rule, it began with the banishment of Nguyen Hoang from the Le Court to Thuan Hoa province in 1558 where he served as governor. However, in the course of 17th century, as the Nguyen were able to build their sphere of influence in the south vis-à-vis their neighbours, developed the internal governmental structure, the Nguyen began to act as independent state. By early 18th century, the Nguyen had clearly transformed their position from being loyal servants of Le to become rulers of a de facto state in the South.

The beginning of this transformation can be traced to the time of Nguyen Hoang. In his efforts to re-establish the family's formerly eminent position in the central government, Nguyen Hoang was unsuccessful. This study takes the position that with the central government firmly in the hands of the Trinh family, Nguyen Hoang had since 1600, turned his attention to building a power base in the south. At the same time, he did not sever his ties with the Le Court but remained hopeful in reinstating the family in the highest hierarchy of power in the Le Court. This was a two-prong strategy that Nguyen Hoang and his successors sought to implement.

Strategy one is based on the consideration of building a separate power-base in the south, with the view of realising the objective of the building of a separate state. In strategy two, the Nguyen were to maintain their links with the view of waiting for the opportunity to return to their rightful position as the premier aristocrat family in the Le Court, now under the control of the rival family, the Trinh Lords. The pursuit of this second strategy would go as far to the point where it was no longer feasible for the

Nguyen to realise their goal in re-establishing themselves as the premier family in the Le Court. Only when there was no chance of that would the Nguyen abandon strategy two and go all out to pursue strategy one.

The pursuit of this two-prong strategy as described in this study is present in the various policies of all Nguyen rulers, beginning with Nguyen Phuc Nguyen who broke with the central government resulting in a civil war that lasted from 1627 to 1672. As discussed in Chapter Two, this situation shaped the early phase of the Nguyen's foreign relations. Trading activities, dealings with foreigners, including Champa and the occupation of Southern Vietnam proper, gave the Nguyen a new sense of being rooted to their contemporary situation. It must be acknowledged that in this early period, this sense of being a new state was tempered by nostalgia for the Le Court. It was not until 1600 that the Nguyen were confident enough to make a break with the north.

One important consequence of this break with the north is the increase by the Nguyen in exercising de facto rule including the conduct of foreign relations with their neighbours including Champa. In relation to this, Nguyen foreign relations have to be understood in the context of the state formation process. The underlying factor being the employment of foreign relations to realise their ambition of defeating the Trinh and to firmly entrench themselves in southern Vietnam. This important phase also solidified for the Nguyen their first impressions of foreign traders, missionaries and its neighbours characterised by the decaying Champa and Cambodian powers. It is not surprising that the Nguyen thought of itself in highly ornamental terms. Throughout its reign, the Nguyen saw itself as the rightful heirs of the Le Court and in its rebirth in southern Vietnam, felt itself the central military and civilising force. In other words, the Nguyen learned the dynamics of war and power.

This self-image is important when we consider what constituted Nguyen foreign relations. In this study, foreign relations refers to state-to-state relations as well as all forms of contacts with external entities – foreign

nationals (traders, missionaries) and non-state groups (non-Vietnamese elements within or beyond its boundaries). Secondly, due to the war and the exigencies of having to immediately deal with 'situations', Nguyen foreign policy in the early phase was definitely propelled by emerging circumstances. If a foreign policy theory has to be applied to elucidate this situation then this study has shown that Nguyen approach to foreign policy is a realist one and is similar to the neo-classical European situation.

This study shows that by the 18th century, the Nguyen had shifted their position from being traditionally bound to their northern rulers to being an independent nation with its identity forged in south Vietnam. In relation to the central thesis, four aspects are covered in this study. Firstly, the Nguyen became a de facto kingdom through the exercise of foreign relations. Secondly, the evolution in the growing strength of the Nguyen made possibility of a separate statehood real. Thirdly, a tributary system was being built up through the Nguyen's relations with smaller nations. And finally, apart from exercising foreign relations, the Nguyen also devoted their efforts in developing internal government apparatus in order to consolidate its position as a polity. This is especially evident after 1672.

In the first instance, the Nguyen had used foreign relations to bolster their image where they were placed in a position to act as a de facto independent state. Geographically and politically separated from the Le Court in the north by the 1627-1672 Nguyen-Trinh War, the Nguyen were thrust into the position of acting as a de facto kingdom, especially in their dealings with foreigners and neighbours. The Nguyen had to react to these foreign elements just as a sovereign state would do so. This amounts to the exercise of authority as de facto rulers of a state.

Contemporaries who were in Nguyen Southern Vietnam also saw the Nguyen as rulers of southern Vietnam. Among the foreign travellers who were in Nguyen Southern Vietnam were Christoforo Borri (1617-1621), Alexander de Rhodes (1624-1645), Da Shan (1695-

96), Thomas Bowyear (1695), who repeatedly referred to the Nguyen rulers as Kings and their territories as a kingdom. The Nguyen's de facto status of independent ruler was also acknowledged by their rivals, the Trinh. In fact, it was based on this perception that the Trinh had regarded the Nguyen as a renegade regime.

When the Nguyen felt that they were strong enough after the civil war with the Trinh came to a stand still in 1672, they began to build on their growing strength in order to look into the possibility of becoming an independent state. Efforts in the promotion of trade, the improvement of the administrative system and the development of religious and cultural activities were keenly pursued. As a culmination to these efforts, the Nguyen in 1702 again drew on foreign relations as a means of attaining their goal by obtaining political recognition from China. Even though the attempt failed, the possibility of attaining independent statehood remained a goal that was unilaterally 'announced' when Nguyen Phuc Khoat declared himself as *vuong* (king) in 1744.

In spite of the importance of foreign relations as a tool to achieve its purpose of state formation, the Nguyen did not have the luxury to formulate a foreign policy, but to react to circumstances and actual situations as they emerged or happened. This is particularly apparent in the discussion in Chapters Two and Three where the Nguyen, being in a weaker position (*vis-à-vis* the Trinh and even occasionally *vis-à-vis* their southern neighbours, Champa and Cambodia), had to adopt a 'Realist' approach when they did not strictly enforce tribute collection.

The Nguyen's realist approach in conducting foreign relations is most apparent during the course of the Nguyen-Trinh war of 1627-1672. During this period when Nguyen survival was threatened by a militarily more powerful Trinh force, they fully utilised foreign relations as a means to bolster the Nguyen's position. This included the opening up of Nguyen Southern Vietnam to international trade through which strategic materials could be obtained, and the coffers of the state enriched. The Nguyen also used marriage diplomacy with Champa when

a daughter of Nguyen rulers was married off to the King of Champa in 1631. The marriage helped to secure peace for the Nguyen in the south when it was facing severe threat from the Trinh in the north. However, when the Nguyen had become stronger in the post-1672 period, it began to intervene in the South including conquering Champa.

In imposing tributary relations, this realist approach only came about when the Nguyen felt strong enough to impose the system on its neighbours, notably, on Champa when tribute was first exacted in 1653 and later on Cambodia in 1658. Since then, tributary relations became a common practice of the Nguyen in conducting its foreign policy, particularly towards weaker states. The Nguyen's understanding of tributary relations came from the Chinese model of a tributary system. Their adoption of such practices has to be seen in the context of China as the dominant power in Southeast Asia during the early modern era, if not earlier. There were others who also practised tributary relations in Southeast Asia including Burma, Siam and even Vietnam (Le Government) on the mainland and Malacca, Brunei and Sulu in the insular states.

This study has set out to investigate the nature of Nguyen- Champa relations within the framework of the Nguyen's broader foreign relations. In so doing, the distinctive features of the Nguyen's dealings with Champa helped to support the notion that the Nguyen had utilised foreign relations as a means to achieve its overall goal of becoming independent in the south.

It is the hope of this study to fill this gap regarding the Nguyen rule during the 17th and 18th century by addressing specifically on its foreign relations with Champa, in order to contribute another piece of the picture of southern Vietnam under the Nguyen from the mid-16th century to 18th century.

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Notes on Source Abbreviations

BEFEO = Bulletin D’Ecole Francaise D’Etreme-Orient

BSEI = Bulletin de la Societe Etude Indochinoise

BAVH = Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue

JMBRAS = Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

RI = Revue Indochinoise

Appendix One

List of Nguyen Rulers of Southern Vietnam

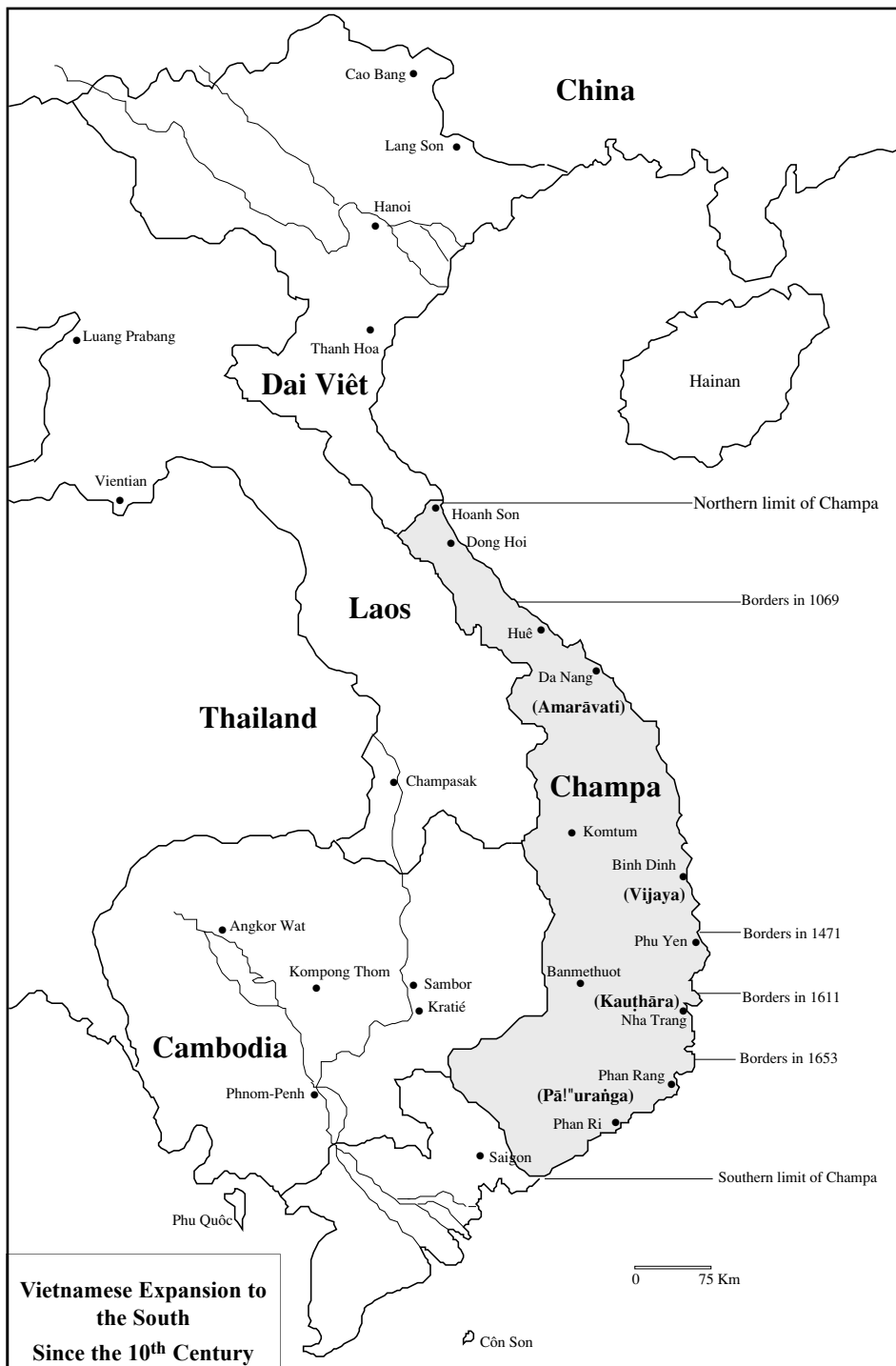
Nguyen Hoang	(1558-1613)	
Nguyen Phuc Nguyen	(1613-1635)	
Nguyen Phuc Lan	(1635-1648)	
Nguyen Phuc Tan	(1648-1687)	
Nguyen Phuc Tran	(1687-1691)	
Nguyen Phuc Chu	(1691-1725)	
Nguyen Phuc Tru	(1725-1738)	
Nguyen Phuc Khoat Vuong in 1744	(1738-1765)	proclaimed Vo
Nguyen Phuc Thuan	(1765-1776)	Dinh Vuong

Appendix Two

List of Kings of Champa (1622-1780)

Po Mah Tuha	1622-1627
Po Rome	1627-1651
Po Nraup	1652-1653

Po Phikitiraydapaguh	1654-1657
Po Jatamah	1657-1659
Po Saut	1660-1692
Po Saktiraydaputih	1693-1728
Po Ganluhputih	1728-1730
Po Thuttiraidaputih	1731-1732
Po Rattiraydaputih	1735-1763
Po Tisundimahrai	1763-1765
Po Tisuntiraydapaguh	1768-1780



Vietnamese Expansion to the South Since the 10th Century