

**TRADE AND SECURITY ISSUES IN
SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS 1802-1874**

ZHANG LEIPING

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Summary

Vietnamese rulers since the tenth century endeavored to create a kingdom domain that has become the basis for modern Vietnam's territorial claims. This expansion in the shadow of the northern giant, China, was in terms of politics, economics, culture and demographics. The political and economic centre of Vietnam had shifted with the kingdom's consolidation, the expansion of territories and the dynasties' fortunes. This dissertation covers a number of intriguing questions that arise from events related to Vietnam's history from 1802 to 1874. In this time span, issues of trade and Sino-Vietnamese relations compounded important elements in Vietnam's national development.

Nguyễn Vietnam expanded commercial contacts with China in 1802 along the familiar lines of traditional Sino-Vietnamese relations, namely tributary relations. Some of the prominent official activities between Vietnam and China included tributary trade, extraditing and repatriating criminals and rescuing wrecked Chinese ships. The Nguyễn dynasty was seemingly comfortable in retaining the traditional mould of the Sino Vietnamese relationship. In addition, authorised Sino-Vietnamese commerce also proceeded quickly. Plying junks and itinerant merchants knitted a huge commercial network in northern Vietnam.

Aside from this legal commercial network, the invisible network of illegal trade also existed. The commercial activities performed by illegal merchants such as pirates, bandits, fraud merchants and officials not only influenced the economic but also the security policies in Nguyễn Vietnam. Therefore, Vietnam issued royal edicts forbidding items of all kinds and consolidated national defence in an attempt to solve some problems that originated from a burgeoning Asian economy.

These trade and security issues signaled how Nguyễn Vietnam endeavored to adjust traditional Sino-Vietnamese relations while at the same time seeking greater commercial profit.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Questions

This paper covers a number of intriguing questions that arise from events in Vietnamese history during the period 1802 to 1874, during which trade and Sino-Vietnamese relations compounded important elements in national development. Before we go any further, a brief account of the principal events is necessary to understand the context in which my questions are posed. The questions then follow this account.

During their reigns, Vietnam's rulers oversaw the extraordinary expansion of Nam tiến, which lasted more than two centuries, creating a kingdom domain that has become the basis for modern Vietnam's territorial claims. This expansion was political, economic, cultural and demographic. The political and economic centres of Vietnam shifted southward, and the expansion of territory shifted with the rise and decline of dynasties.

The prelude to Sino-Vietnamese relations began when the Qin Emperor (BC 247) established Nan Hai (南海), Gui Lin (桂林) and Xiang (象郡) as administrative units in Southern China. Triệu Đà(赵佗) did not achieve his aim to make Nam Việt into an independent kingdom ruled by the Han dynasty. Before the seventh century, China had undergone various different separatist regimes by force of arms. Such regimes in southern China fostered Vietnamese (Jiao Zhi 交址) independence from China. In the tenth century, northern Vietnam completed independence from China, when the Song

occupied half of the country and were busy fighting with the northern Liao. However, it was not easy for the Vietnamese to survive in the shadow of the northern giant. Subsequently, they began to dance to China's tune in terms of war and tribute relations. Đại Việt did not stop developing even though it suffered under the Ming in the fourteenth century. After its independence from China, Vietnam moved through the dynasties of Đinh (968–980), Lê (980–1009), Lý (1010–1225), Trần (1225–1400), Hồ (1400–1407) and later Trần dynasty (1407–1413), and Lê (1428–1527). After the Ming occupation, the Lê dynasty united Đại Việt until the fifteenth century. Soon afterward, Đại Việt was divided into two parts, between the Trịnh family and the Nguyễn families, after the Mạc had usurped the throne. The Trịnh controlled Đàng Ngoài, while the Nguyễn family occupied Đàng Trong. It is well known that the southward expansion begun by Nguyễn Hoàng lasted nearly two centuries, and was the basis for the birth of Nguyễn Vietnam in 1802. Then, in the 1780s, the Tây Sơn (西山) Nguyễn brothers defeated the Trịnh Lord, and in 1786 entered Thăng Long (升龙), the capital of the Lê dynasty at the time. However, Tây Sơn supremacy under Quang-Trung (光中) did not last long. By the end of the eighteenth century, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh had finally defeated Quang-Trung and reunited Vietnam with the help of French mercenaries.

Nguyễn Phúc Ánh reunited Vietnam and set the capital at Huế in the centre of the kingdom in 1802, so as to control both southern and northern Vietnam. The expansion of Nguyễn Vietnam did not halt, but continued after the Nguyễn Dynasty was founded. The imperial successors of the Nguyễn family in the nineteenth century henceforth ruled

the whole of Vietnam, based on the stable foundation provided by their predecessors. Commerce was crucial while the Nguyễn Lord managed the south, and they presented a bastion for Vietnam and offered ‘a new way of being Vietnamese’.¹ The successful localisation mechanisms developed by the Nguyễn family in the south undoubtedly influenced the mode of ruling the kingdom for succeeding leaders of the new dynasty in both southern and northern Vietnam. With the rise and decline of the dynasty, numerous social vicissitudes occurred on the northern frontier, both on land and at sea, as the political and economic centres of Vietnam shifted southward even though the northern frontier as a historically the fundamental part did not seem to be a huge territorial alteration geographically. China, as both Vietnam’s major partner and threat, also played a historically significant role in the process of Nguyễn’s state-formation, through the Sino-Vietnamese commercial relationship. The question that the Nguyễn faced in making the transition from being just Chúa Nguyễn (Lord Nguyễn) ruling over Đàng Trung to being Nguyễn ruling over all of Đại Nam was how to maintain a balance between the traditional northern frontier and the new political and economic centres in the south in their differing administrative management strategies and policies and how to tackle the multi-dimensional relationships with China and other neighbours such as Laos and Cambodia in overland Southeast Asia.

¹ Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998), p. 99.

The foundation of this new dynasty in the nineteenth century has triggered some of the major questions involved in this study. What was the commercial policy, especially in terms of trade, set for Chinese merchants in northern Vietnam during the new dynasty? To what degree did tributary, private, and even illicit trade with the Chinese influence Sino-Vietnamese relations? How did Sino-Vietnamese trade shape the northern frontier, and in turn, how did these changes in frontier policy in northern Vietnam originating from commercial contact between the Chinese and Vietnamese lead to the consolidation of centralised power and help to intensify frontier defence? What was the connection between trade and security?

These questions will be answered in the following chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 1 introduces the historical background of border trade between China and northern Vietnam, reviews academic literature on this issue, raises my research questions, introduces the theoretical framework, and presents my hypothesis. Chapter 2 discusses the new trends in Sino-Vietnamese traditional tributary relations during this period. The internal mechanism that generated these new hallmarks is revealed from the point of view of the Huế court rather than of the Beijing court. It also elaborates on how the new trends in Sino-Vietnamese relations that emerged during the nineteenth century helped to shape the ideas that Nguyễn Vietnam used to settle its affairs with its other neighbours. Furthermore, the role that Vietnam played in the change of China's tributary system and the relations between Sino-Vietnamese tribute trade and common trade contacts is examined here. Chapter 3 outlines the cross-border and marine trade

with the Chinese at the non-government level in northern Vietnam during this period.

Some correlated issues are revealed in this chapter, such as the main component and flow of trade, the structure of the goods, trade methods, the relations with tribute trade, the relations with common Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts, and other related issues.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, smuggling and forbidden items policy are discussed. The role of smuggling in northern Vietnam with the Chinese is also described. Additionally, the contraband² connected with smuggling is analysed in these two chapters, including how smuggling and contraband had an effect on Sino-Vietnamese relations in the global context, and what the connections were between authorised and illicit trade. Also examined in this chapter is the confrontation and strife between reinforcing central power while managing local power forces on frontiers and dealing with its neighbours at the same time. This conflict frequently sparked off a chain of reactions on frontline security, starting with the curbing of smuggling and the royal monopolising of specific cargos so as to maintain and benefit the vested interests of the central government. The sixth chapter delves into the security and defence of the Nguyễn court. These security and defence problems that influenced the Sino-Vietnamese political and diplomatic relations originated, in a sense, from trade activities and commercial interaction between the Chinese and Vietnamese in overland

² Here, in ancient Vietnam, ‘contraband’ as a term to describe smuggling goods in English does not cover the phenomenon completely in Vietnam in the nineteenth century. On this point, please refer to the ‘terms’ part in this chapter.

and maritime frontiers in northern Vietnam. The final chapter concludes with discussion of the possible part that maritime and overland trade with the Chinese in northern Vietnam may have played in the development of Sino-Vietnamese relations and Vietnamese history.

2. Labels

Definitions of smugglers such as pirates and bandits are different in the different historical contexts and periods. Concurrently, definitions are also related to complicated aspects such as authorities, local people and ideology and technology development. The factors that resulted in smuggling were connected with frontier produce, transgression, the evolution of frontier, colony's interests and the like. Expanding state control and local resistance always occurred along a wide section of the frontier.³ The most important point is that the acknowledgement on the frontiers between local people and the central government demarcation was distinct. In this study, pirates and bandits were put into a specific historical context.

2.1 Pirates and Bandits

The terms 'bandits' and 'pirates' must be clarified. Pirates and bandits were not defined in northern Vietnam in the nineteenth century in the modern sense. The terms defining pirates and bandits in this period of study covered those groups that were seen in the

³ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret trades, porous borders: smuggling and states along a Southeast Asian frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

archives of Nguyễn Vietnam as unlawful groups. The Vietnamese authorities defined some groups as bandits or pirates. However, the terms describing ‘bandits and pirates’ in the Vietnamese archives such as *Tặc* (贼) or *Phi* (匪), *Thanh Phi* (清匪) or *Nghịch Phi* (逆匪), *Son Tặc* (山贼) or *Son Phi* (山匪), *Hội Phi* (会匪), could be the same interchangeable terms, but were used in different ways by the Qing and Nguyễn. Specifically, Vietnamese pirates who plundered within Chinese waters were not considered pirates, but were depicted as ‘Annamese’ by Qing China. In contrast, the Nguyễn authorities described them as pirates. Additionally, not all the Chinese who launched attacks on and looted along Vietnamese riparian frontiers were effectively regarded as Chinese pirates.

The meaning of the term ‘pirate’ changed during the different periods in the nineteenth century. Who these ‘pirates’ were, lurking just off Vietnamese shores and on its oceanic world, is a question well worth considering. These so-called ‘pirates’ were often traders, fishermen, or even cross-border coastland people from either China or Vietnam. Their status was ambiguous from the perspective of the Huế authorities. Offshore people would be branded ‘pirates’ or ‘smugglers’ once they had been caught engaging in deals or commercial exchanges without paying tax. Consequently, many coastal people such as fishermen or merchants ultimately became professional pirates or

smugglers. Many plying Chinese merchant ships were involved in smuggling and sporadic plundering.⁴

For bandits, those Chinese who joined forces with Vietnamese bandits were not named as Chinese bandits in the archives of Nguyễn Vietnam. They were just described as Chinese people who were in Vietnam, despite the fact that they had joined Vietnamese bandit gangs. They were punished as villains once they had been captured by the Vietnamese court. According to Vietnamese records, these Chinese were defined as bandits operating in Vietnam. However, we confine ourselves within this study to scrutinising those Chinese bandits who were described by Qing China to have fled to Vietnam and joined local bandit groups. The clarification of the concept of bandits and pirates will be further elaborated on in the fourth chapter.

2.2. Chinese

On the whole, the Chinese described in this study are the *Thanh Nhân* or *Qing Ren* (清人, people from Qing China) whose names were recorded in the archives of the Nguyễn Vietnam. The ‘People from Qing China’ were known as *Thanh Nhân* in the archives of the Huế court. Nevertheless, *Thanh Nhân* includes *Thanh Giap* (清贼, Chinese bandits or pirates), *Thanh Thương* (清商, Chinese merchants), *Thanh Ngư Hộ* (清渔户, Chinese fishermen) in the Vietnamese archives. All of these groups are described as ‘Chinese’ in

⁴ Trương Đăng Quế 张登桂. Đại Nam Thực Lục 大南实录 [Primary compilation of the Veritable Records of Imperial Vietnam] (Tokyo, 1963), Chính Biên II, Vol. 201, pp. 19–20. Hereafter referred to as ĐNTL.

this study for the convenience of discussion. The various categories under the term ‘Chinese’ are explained in context.

The ‘Chinese’ people should be categorised into two main groups. The first is the Chinese in Qing China_who had commercial dealings in Vietnam, namely the *Thanh Thuong*. Therefore, they itinerated or plied among China, Vietnam and even other places. The archives of the Nguyễn Vietnam described this group as a kind of *Thanh Nhân*.

The other group of Chinese was those who were operating in Nguyễn Vietnam, including Chinese fishermen, Chinese merchants, and other sojourned Chinese who were living in Vietnam temporarily or permanently. These Chinese were under the authority of Huế Vietnam. Distinguishing themselves from the Chinese in China, they registered in the government roll in Vietnam, and paid poll tax and corvee, since the Nguyễn court accepted them as Vietnam’s subjects. Moreover, most of them, including merchants and fishermen, the Nguyễn also catalogued them roughly. The Chinese in Nguyễn Vietnam were catalogued into roughly three parts. One is named *Thực Hộ* (实户). They have accommodations and stable occupations. The second is called *Khách Hộ* (客户), who were temporary residents and were exempted from taxes on some occasions. The last one is *Biệt Nạp Hộ* (别纳户), who lived in one place and worked in

another place. These Chinese paid taxes based on the government rules of Nguyễn Vietnam.⁵

Finally, *Minh Hương* must be clarified here before our study starts even though *Minh Hương* is not paid more attention in this study. *Minh Hương* (明乡) was called *Minh Hương* (明香) in early times of Chinese migration. Previously, *Minh Hương* was a kind of organisation built by Chinese migrants in Vietnam. The earlier Chinese migrants did not like to submit to reign of Qing and fled to Vietnam when the Ming dynasty ended. The Chinese migrants established the *Minh Hương* community in Hội An around 1650 in order to keep the Ming loyalty alive and multiply.⁶

Afterward, the Chinese migrants increasingly went to Vietnam. In 1671, Mo Jiu (莫玖) led the Chinese to settle southern Vietnam. Besides, in 1697, Yang Yandi (杨彦迪) and Chen Shangchuan (陈上川) led a great number of Chinese to southern Vietnam. Soon afterward, the Vietnamese government established *Thanh Hà* (清河) and *Minh Hương* (明香) communities for the Chinese in southern Vietnam.⁷ The places where *Minh Hương* resided were called *Minh Hương Xã* (明香社). From 1802 onward, Gia Long set *Minh Hương Xã* in the whole Vietnam so that to manage the Chinese migrants. In 1811, the places where *Bắc Khách* (北客, northern guests) were also called *Minh*

⁵ [越]朱海 Chu Hải; 李娜译, Li Na Translated. 十九世纪越南阮朝的华人政策, shi jiu shi ji yue nan ruan chao de hua ren zheng ce. [The policy on the Chinese in Nguyễn Dynasty of Vietnam in the nineteenth century]. 东南亚纵横, Around Southeast Asia. 广西. Guangxi, 3, 2003, pp. 55 - 56.

⁶ Chen Chingho, Qing chu zheng cheng gong can bu zhi yi zhi nan qi. 清初郑成功之移植南圻, 下. In Xin ya xue bao, 新亚学报. Vol 8, 2, p. 483, footnote 46.

⁷ ĐNTL, Tiền Biên, Vol. 5, p. 22; Vol. 7, p. 14.

Huong (明乡).⁸ In 1862, *Bắc Khách* was changed into *Minh Hương* (明乡).⁹

Afterward, all *Minh Hương* (明香) in Vietnam were changed into *Minh Hương* (明乡).

In the Nguyễn dynasty, the Chinese in Vietnam were divided into two parts. One was the old Chinese migrants, that is *Minh Hương*, the other was the new migrants, who were called *Thanh Nhân* (清人, the Chinese from Qing dynasty). Meanwhile, the Chinese migrants from Qing China were also called *Bắc Khách* or *Bắc Nhân* (北人, people from the north).¹⁰ Theoretically speaking, *Minh Hương* is not the main subject matter to be examined in this study. However, it was aforementioned that among the *Minh Hương*, there was one special group. The Nguyễn authorities described them as *Bắc Khách*. *Bắc Khách* were also the Chinese for making living in Lạng Sơn (谅山) of Vietnam. This group of Chinese also registered in the roll of Nguyễn Vietnam. Therefore, *Bắc Khách* is one of the groups examined in this study.

How did the first generation Chinese in Vietnam transform into *Minh Hương*? What was the transformation process? As to this point, the Nguyễn also had regulations. The sons and grandsons of the first generation Chinese were restricted to following Qing customs. Their heirs were obliged to join the local *Minh Hương* communities once they were 18 years old. Their offspring would be organised into a new *Minh Hương*

⁸ Phan Thúc Trục 潘叔直. *Quốc Sử Di Biên* 国史遗编 [A transmitted compilation of the dynasty's history]. Xiang gang zhong wen da xue wen hua yan jiu suo 香港中文大学新亚研究所 (Hong Kong New Asia Institute, 1965), p. 72.

⁹ Ibid, p. 163.

¹⁰ Wu Fengbin 吴凤斌 ed. *Dong nan ya hua qiao tong shi* 东南亚华侨通史. Fu jan ren min chu ban she 福建人民出版社 (1994), pp. 189–191.

community once the number of the second and third generation exceeded five, if a *Minh Hương* community had not already been established in their villages. If the number was less than five, they would be integrated into a new *Minh Hương* community along with another local Chinese family. Undoubtedly, it was compulsory for them to register and pay tax or else serve the corvee.¹¹

Chinese fishermen played a significant part among the Chinese in Vietnam. They survived in floating communities in cross-border regions or in offshore areas in northern Vietnam. They lived on their boats and spent their time in fishing, only occasionally coming ashore for necessities, such as fresh water and repairing wrecked boats. Particularly in many islands in Hải Dương and Quảng Yên, these Chinese fishermen were seen not only as groups that threatened the national security of Nguyễn, but they were used also mostly as the police of the Huế court for frontier defence.

Besides Chinese fishermen, the Chinese merchants in Vietnam also were a crucial part of Vietnamese society. These Chinese merchants were distinguished from the Chinese merchants in Qing China. Unlike those Chinese merchants who just paid customs taxes, these Chinese merchants in Vietnam were registered on the roll of the Nguyễn court and also had to pay poll tax, even though they could pay less than other Chinese Vietnamese. The Chinese merchants in Lạng Sơn were a good example.

Chinese merchants in Lạng Sơn paid tax three strings of cash if they had come into Vietnam in March and returned to China by June or July. Additionally, they paid a tax

¹¹ Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điển Sự Lệ 钦定大南汇典事例 [Official compendium of institutions and usage of Imperial Vietnam], A54, Vol. 44, p. 65. Hereafter referred to as KĐĐNHĐSL

of five strings of cash if they came in March and returned by August or by the end of the year. Whenever they returned, official registration was compulsory.

2.3 Terms

In this study, some terms in English are likely not proper words to describe some historical phenomena in ancient Vietnam. Here, two terms approached in my thesis need to be explained specifically and clearly.

Contraband

Based on the dictionary, contraband is the illegal or prohibited traffic or anything prohibited to be imported or exported.¹² In addition, ‘contraband’ also refers to goods forbidden by law to be imported and exported; smuggled merchandise.¹³ In the nineteenth century, ‘contraband’ as a specific term did not appear in official archives of the Nguyễn. There was no single Vietnamese term in Nguyễn government to describe merchandise that was strictly prohibited from import or export. The Huế court just issued many bans to prohibit some goods from import or export. Furthermore, these ‘prohibited goods’ were not invariable but changed according to the historical context at

¹² A P Cowie and J Windsor Lewis, *Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary of current English* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974). See ‘contraband’, p. 187. C.T. Onions, ed. *The shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). See ‘contraband’, p. 413.

¹³ David B. Guralnik, *Webster’s New World dictionary of the American language* (Cleveland World Pub: 1976). See ‘contraband’, p. 320.

that time. On some occasions, they were prohibited from being imported. Sometimes, they were forbidden for export. Therefore, ‘contraband’ did not fit properly in ancient Vietnam society. In this study, ‘forbidden items’, ‘prohibited goods’, ‘smuggling merchandise’ and the like are used in specific historical contexts and will be clarified in specific chapters.

Merchants involved in unauthorised deals

In this study, ‘merchants involved in unauthorised deals’ is used to describe one kind of merchants who engaged in smuggling by fraud or cheating. Those cheating commercial activities either occurred through the waiving of import or export duties or the making of profits by cooperation with high-ranking officials in Huế court. To some degree, these ‘unauthorised commercial activities’ should be considered a type of ‘smuggling’ category based on the dictionary.¹⁴ However, ‘merchants involved in unauthorised deals’ as one term did not cover all patterns but was only one pattern of smuggling in this study. Smugglers as private merchants could not be distinguished from other smuggling entities such as bandits and pirates if ‘merchants involved in unauthorised deals by cheating or fraud’ as a specific term was replaced by ‘smuggling merchants’ or ‘smugglers’. It was well known that the status between authorised merchants and

¹⁴ ‘Smuggle’ means to convert goods clandestinely into or out of a country or district in order to avoid payment of legal duties. Onions, ed. *The shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. See ‘smuggle’, p. 2031; Cowie and Lewis, *Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary of current English*. See ‘smuggle’, p. 830.

smugglers were easily convertible. So was the status among merchants, pirates and bandits, even fishermen and smugglers.

There are ambiguous lines between smugglers and authorised merchants. Authorised merchants could engage into smuggling temporarily and permanently. Smuggling merchants could be pirates and bandits or fishermen temporarily and permanently. Even for the Nguyễn Court, it was difficult to distinguish smugglers from sanctioned merchants. Therefore, the more regular words that Vietnam used to depict ‘merchants involved in unauthorised deals’ or likely to be ‘smugglers’ were not unlawful merchants but 奸商 (cunning merchants) and 狡商 (tricky merchants). The definitions in this study have to be put into specific historical contexts. Consequently, ‘merchants involved in unauthorised deals by fraud or cheating’ as one specific term were generalised from the narrations and recordings of Nguyễn government archives.

3. Time and place

3.1. Northern Vietnam

For the purposes of this study, trade with the Chinese will be explored in northern Vietnam. The geographical areas of northern Vietnam referred to in this dissertation were the Vietnamese administrative divisions during the Nguyễn dynasty, which is to say, the 13 provinces in northern Vietnam. As recorded in the *Đại Việt Cổ Kim Duyệt Cách Địa Chí Khảo*¹⁵, the 13 administrative units in northern Vietnam were Ninh Bình

¹⁵Đại Việt Cổ Kim Duyệt Cách Địa Chí Khảo 大越古今沿草地志考[A study of historical geography in imperial Vietnam]. Viện Hán Nôm. A.77

(宁平), Hà Nội (河内), Nam Định (南定), Hưng Yên (兴安), Hải Dương (海阳), Quảng Yên (广安), Sơn Tây (山西), Hưng Hóa (兴化), Tuyên Quang (宣光), Bắc Ninh (北宁), Thái Nguyên (太原), Lạng Sơn (谅山), Cao Bằng (高平). Commercial contacts and communications occurring in these northern thirteen provinces are of primary interest, particularly in marine and land frontiers. Notwithstanding, other places or domestic regions such as middle or southern Vietnam and even some areas in Southeast Asia will be involved in this study in pursuit of a comprehensive and precise narrative on commercial contacts and other relevant matters between the Chinese and Vietnamese. Unlawful trade is a good example. Illegal merchants in southern Vietnam or other parts of Southeast Asia are argued in this study as affording a complete and dynamic picture on clandestine commercial exchanges in Vietnam as a whole in this period. However, the part related to southern Vietnam and Southeast Asian was not so much in this study.

3.2. Timeframe

This dissertation covers the period from 1802 to 1874. It was in 1802 that Nguyễn Phúc Ánh established the last monarchical dynasty, the Nguyễn, in Vietnam. No former dynasty could be comparable to the Nguyễn Dynasty in Vietnamese history, whether in political, economical, administrative and cultural dimensions. 1802, in a sense, represented an outset, a new age in Vietnamese history. Nguyễn Vietnam ushered in another new age in 1874 when it signed the Philastre Treaty, which recognised French sovereignty over all of Cochin China since the 1862 treaty had ceded part of Cochin

China. The 1874 treaty called for a French official to be stationed in Huế as a kind of diplomatic representative. This was the beginning of direct French interference in Vietnam's political affairs. The treaty also gave France authority over Vietnam's foreign relations. Therefore it was a turning point in these two important ways. In the later part of the century, Huế Vietnam gradually evolved into a kind of society different from the earlier period of the Nguyễn Dynasty, due to multiple interacting elements including French influence penetrating into northern Vietnam. Consequently, the period in this study is confined to the years 1802 to 1874.

4. Literature Review

There is more and better research on China's southwest borders and frontiers than the study on Vietnam's northern frontier. The frontier-formation processes in China's history have attracted greater attention from academics. The frontier-formation processes of China, which were characterised by commercial, political, and cultural interconnections in the borderlands with its neighbours, are doomed to entangle with the relations between China and its neighbours. Furthermore, China was one of the greatest empires in Asia in ancient times, and it influenced its neighbours through commerce, especially in caravan trade, politics (the tribute system), and war etc. The historiography of China's frontier-formation processes can be classified into two categories. The first type of documentation is on the relationship between China and its neighbours in historical perspectives. Besides, this kind of documentation mainly focuses on how

China throughout its history portrayed its relations with its neighbours beyond its southern frontiers, particularly from a political point of view. The second type of documentation concerns dynamic development, particularly commercial development, in the border regions between southwest China and its neighbours. Many scholars have carried out excellent research on political and social resistance in multiple frontier societies under imperial frontier policy. The Sino-Southeast Asian relationship is explored against the complex backdrop of the imperial southwest frontier that distinguished itself through its varied topography, multi-ethnic groups, and disparate and transnational trade partners, among other unique features.¹⁶

As for the first point, the idea which one country was used to portray its relations with other countries must influence the decisions of statecraft on the affairs of frontiers between China and its neighbours. Accordingly, the ideas that China used to settle its affairs with other countries, and the relations between China and its neighbours in history should certainly be reviewed at the outset of this study. In addition, many Western scholars have also delved into the relations between China and other non-Chinese regions from a historical perspective. These monographs go some way in shedding light on Sino-Vietnamese relations during the nineteenth century. John King Fairbank has provided further analyses of the ideas that China used to describe people beyond its political and cultural borders.¹⁷ The characteristics of the way in which

¹⁶ David, G. Atwill, *Trading Places: Resistance, Ethnicity, and Governance in Nineteenth century Yunnan*. Robert J. Antony and Jane Kate Leonard, ed. *Dragons, Tigers, and Dogs, Qing Crisis Management and the Boundaries of State Power in Late Imperial China* (New York, Cornell University, 2002).

¹⁷ John R. Faust and Judith F. Kornberg, *China in world politics* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers,

China used to treat other neighbours in history, have undoubtedly become the predominant method that China has employed to settle its affairs with Vietnam since Vietnam became an independent country. The monographs and articles on Chinese borders or frontiers, and even those on Sino-Southeast Asia relations offer helpful insights into Sino-Vietnamese relations during this period. Besides, Geoff Wade analyses some topoi in southern border historiography during the Ming in China, and the cultural, historical, and social meaning behind the analyses on these topoi. 'This elite Chinese 'world-view' provided the framework for recording the hierarchy of the universe and China's relationship with the non-Chinese. It also provided the framework within which subsequent generations of Chinese people have understood the history of their nation's relations with non-Chinese people.'¹⁸ To some degree, coupled with the tribute system under the *Rites of Zhou*, establishing harmonious relations between all domains within the empire became a sign of proper government. Accordingly, political order and its administrative institutions were closely interconnected with regional accord and the empire's frontiers. The active participation of neighbouring kingdoms in the tribute system to demonstrate their legitimacy was indispensable, as were other

1995). John King Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese world order, traditional China's foreign relations* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968). Li Yunquan 李云泉, *chao gong zhi du shi lun 朝贡制度史论* [Studies on the history of paying tribute system], xin hua chu ban she 新华出版社, 2004.

¹⁸ Geoff Wade, "Some topoi in Southern border historiography during the Ming (and their modern relevance)" in Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak, ed. *China and her neighbors: borders, visions of the other, foreign policy 10th to 19th century* (Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), p. 137. Edward H. Schafer, *The vermilion bird; T'ang images of the South* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967). Morris Rossabi, ed. *China among equals: the Middle Kingdom and its neighbors, 10th–14th centuries* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983).

ritual responsibilities. Consequently, Vietnam had to promote Sino-Vietnamese commercial, diplomatic, and political relations in its scale of contributions on the tribute system.

Vietnam was one tributary of Qing China, and most Chinese scholars readily view the relationship between China and other neighbours as one aspect of China's world order, since the tributary system was the main ideology by which China defined its affairs with other neighbours. Over the past 50 years, scholars who read Chinese sources have produced an impressive body of work on historical Sino-Southeast Asian or Sino-Vietnamese relations.¹⁹

¹⁹ See Zhang Mingfu 张明富, *Altai he yun gui bian sheng de jing ji kai fa* 鄂尔泰于云贵边省的经济开发 [Altai and the economy in frontier provinces, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces] *Dong Bei shi da xue bao*, 东北师大学报. Vol 3, 1994; Yang Yuda 杨煜达, *qing chao qian qi de dui mian zheng ce he xi nan bian jiang* 清朝前期 (1662–1765) 的对缅政策和西南边疆 [The policy on Burma and the southwest frontier of China prior to Qing dynasty]. *Zhong guo li shi di li lun cong* 中国历史地理论丛. 3, 2004. Tang Kaijian and Tian Yu 汤开建, 田渝, *qing dai zhong xian gong ci wang lai yi ji qi ying xiang* 清代中暹贡赐往来及其影响 [The Sino –Siamese tribute relations and its influence]. *Guang xi min zu xue yuan xue bao*, 广西民族学院学报. Vol. 26 No. 2, 2004; Yu Dingbang and Yu Changsen 余定邦、喻常森, *jin dao zhong guo yu dong nan ya guan xi shi* .近代中国与东南亚关系史 [The relationship between China and Southeast Asian countries in modern age]. *Zhong shan da xue chu ban she* 中山大学出版社. 1999. Yun nan she hui ke xue yuan dong nan ya yan jiu suo. 云南省社会科学院东南亚研究所编, *Yun nan yu dong nan ya guan xi lun cong*. 云南与东南亚关系论丛. [Discussion on the relationship between China and Southeast Asian countries]. *Yun nan ren min chu ban she* 云南人民出版社, 1989. Han Zhenhua 韩振华, *Zhong guo yu dong nan ya guan xi shi yan jiu* 中国与东南亚关系史研究 [Studies on The Relationship Between China and Southeast Asian Countries. *Guang xi ren min chu ban she*] 广西人民出版社, 1992. Liu Shuichao 刘水焯, *Zhong guo dong nan ya yan jiu de hui gu yu qian zhan* 中国东南亚研究的回顾与前瞻 [Yesterday and Tomorrow of Studies on The Relationship Between China and Southeast Asian Countries]. *Guang dong ren min chu ban she* 广东人民出版社. 1994.

These works elaborate in great detail many aspects and functions of the tributary system. From these works, Sino-Vietnamese relations developed alongside China's worldview. Concurrently, Vietnam also adopted Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations in the relations with its Southeast Asian neighbours. Dai Kelai termed this 'sub-tributary' relations. Moreover, some scholars looked into the change in Sino-Vietnamese relations by analysing Vietnam's requests to change details on ritual precedents and the like while paying tribute. From these excellent works, different aspects of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship have unfolded before us. However, these works have not succeeded in discovering the deeper motives behind Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations in the early nineteenth century, especially for Vietnam.

The latest monograph by Sun Hongnian focuses on a great deal of information on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations during the whole of the Qing dynasty period in China. Many specific aspects of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship have been argued in this monograph such as tribute relations, illegal business in the borderlands, commercial activities, the activities of the overseas Chinese in Vietnam, and so on.²⁰ However, just like most other works by China-trained scholars, Sun presents us with a complete picture in history with less analysis of these historical details. His work also sees the Sino-Vietnamese relationship from the point of view of Qing China—not from Huế to Beijing, but in reverse. The

²⁰ Sun Hongnian 孙宏年, *qing dai zhong yue zong fan guanxi yanjiu* 清代中越宗藩关系研究 [The study on the tributary relations between Qing China and Vietnam during the Qing dynasty]. *hei long jiang jiao yu chu ban she* 黑龙江教育出版社. 2006.

Sino-Vietnamese relationship that involved in commercial, political, cultural and other aspects was not a one-way process, on the contrary, both sides influenced each other.

Besides Sun Hongnian, other China-trained scholars who documented Sino-Southeast Asian relations are also inclined to explore it from the China angle.

A few Western and Western-trained scholars have published a great number of works on Sino-Southeast Asian or Vietnamese relations. The first and most important work is *Vietnam and the Chinese model*, by Alexander Barton Woodside.²¹ This comparative historical study of China and Vietnam in the nineteenth century is unprecedented. It affords us the complete picture on many aspects from bureaucratic systemisation to imperial examinations. This exhaustive descriptive and analytical work, which focuses on a political and cultural comparison of Qing China and Nguyễn Vietnam, as well as detailing the bureaucratic authority and international relations of the Huế court with the outside world in the nineteenth century, has provided us with a broad conceptual framework from which to start our inquiry.

Besides this classic work, other scholars have also made significant contributions, such as Truong Buu Lam, Liam C. Kelly and other scholars. Truong Buu Lam seeks to outline the Sino-Vietnamese tribute relationship from 1788 to 1790 in his article. This article furnishes us with some fundamental ideas on the consistent policy and attitude that Qing China used to settle its diplomatic affairs with Vietnam.²² Unfortunately, this

²¹ Alexander Barton Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese model: a comparative study of Vietnamese and Chinese government in the first half of the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University; distributed by Harvard University Press, 1971).

²² Truong Buu Lam, "Intervention Versus tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1788–179" in John King

article reflects more Vietnam's passive response under the tributary system than the Vietnamese role that it played in consolidating and improving its tributary relationship with Qing China during this period. Did Vietnam change its attitude or policy during the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relations after Nguyễn Huệ unified Vietnam? What was the change? What was the impetus behind this change? These questions obviously cannot be addressed in just one article. With respect to the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese traditional tributary relations and the Vietnamese monarchy at the turn of the nineteenth century, the endeavours of Liam C. Kelly, and Brantly Womack have enlightened us with this present.²³ Other studies on the Sino-Siamese tributary system have also been most helpful to us in understanding how this system operated, including *Tribute and profit: Sino-Siamese trade, 1652–1853* by Sarasin Viraphol²⁴, Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University; distributed by Harvard University Press, 1977, and 'Sino Siamese tributary relations 1282–1835' by Suesang Promboon.²⁵

The last type of documentation on the China's southern frontier formation process is focused on commercial dynamic development. Latest works by scholars have made

Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese world order; traditional China's foreign relations* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968).

²³ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: the politics of asymmetry* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Liam C. Kelly, *Beyond the bronze pillars: Envoy poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese relationships* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press and Association for Asian Studies, 2005). Luong Nhi Ky, 'The Chinese in Vietnam: a study of Vietnamese-Chinese relations with special attention to the period 1862–1961', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1962.

²⁴ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and profit: Sino-Siamese trade, 1652–1853* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University; distributed by Harvard University Press, 1977).

²⁵ Suesang Promboon, 'Sino Siamese tributary relations 1282–1835', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971.

great contributions to multi-ethnic frontier studies of Sino-Southeast Asia, which have attempted to break away from a China-centric viewpoint. They have observed that the borderlands between China and other Southeast Asian regions were dynamic areas, which were characterised as being actively two-sided in terms of conquering and displacing, which occurred on both sides of the borders between infringing people and the local inhabitants. The border areas in the Sino-Southeast Asia were affected rather more by local indigenes than by any political influence of the Qing Empire. C. Patterson Giersch introduces a new framework designed to overcome Sino-centric preconceptions so as to explore the Qing China's frontier from rarely glimpsed perspectives.²⁶

An increasing number of scholars who have carried out research on the Southwest frontier of China have made great contributions on commercial penetration by the caravan trade, ethnic interactions, cultural mutual-assimilation and other such spheres outside political influence. Chiranan Prasertkul has made a serious effort to build a bridge across academic frontiers to investigate the socio-economic ties between Yunnan and its neighbours in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, this is also a kind of attempt to seek the roots of this complex frontier society. This work provides us with a new insight into the Sino-Vietnamese frontier and even into Sino-Vietnamese relations, which commercial communications among the border areas influenced behavioural patterns of its inhabitants and united into different special circles in the borderlands.²⁷

²⁶ C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian borderlands, the transformation of Qing China's Yunnan frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Chiranan Prasertkul, *Yunnan Trade in the Nineteenth Century: Southwest China's Cross-boundaries Functional System* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1990); Andrew DW

Besides this study, Sun Laichen's dissertation offers us a clear view of the overland interactions along the southwest frontier of China and mainland Southeast Asia.²⁸ His dissertation has turned our attention from maritime to overland stimuli, and he analyses the dynamic processes by which the centre of gravity shifted from northern Southeast Asia, which had enjoyed an advantageous position, mainly through the trading of military technology, overland trade, and internal migration with Ming China, to the ascendancy of southern mainland Southeast Asia after the arrival of the Europeans. His dissertation has equipped us with a clear picture of how the interactions and interconnections between the military, trade, and migration in the borderlands could result in northern mainland Southeast Asia's being an advantageous position, and even how the political map of Southeast Asia before the arrival of the Europeans in the early sixteenth century was changing. It was all aforementioned research on Sino-Southeast Asian transnational contacts that has contributed to our comprehension of the commercial, diplomatic, and national security of Vietnam in the maritime and overland history of its frontiers.

Forbes and David Henley, *The Haw: traders of the Golden Triangle* (Bangkok: Teak House, 1997). Piper Rae Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall: urban form and transformation on the Chinese frontiers* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996). Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen Siu, and Donald Sutton, ed. *Empire at the margins: culture, ethnicity, and frontier in early modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Yang Bin, *Between Winds and Clouds : the making of Yunnan (Second Century BCE-Twentieth Century BCE)*. (Manuscript)

²⁸ Sun Laichen, 'Ming-Southeast Asian Overland Interactions 1368–1644', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2000.

The maritime history, especially maritime trade, between China and other regions in Southeast Asia deserves some mention here, in relation to the history of the formation of the frontier between southern China and northern Vietnam. Countless monographs on trade in the South China Sea or on the maritime trade between China and other regions in Southeast Asia have given us a glimpse of the historical context in which Sino-Vietnamese commercial relations existed. Nevertheless, Vietnamese maritime trade and other relevant enterprises could not be fully and precisely explained in the considerable studies and articles that delve into Chinese maritime commercial history.²⁹ Various elements, including transnational migration, alien trade, the multi-ethnic milieu, and the variable influence of the central governments on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese marine and overland frontiers, along with maritime or inland cross-border commercial and other activities, created the tension between an expanding Vietnamese power force and other potential force groups. What sort of role these

²⁹ For this thesis, see Li Jinming 李金明, *Qing dai qian q ixia men yu dong nan ya de mao yi* 清代前期厦门与东南亚的贸易 *Trade between Xiamen and Southeast Asia in the early time of Qing*. *Xia men da xue xue bao* 厦门大学学报 (哲学社会科学版). vol. 2, 1996. Li Jinming 李金明, *Qing kang xi mo nian jin zhi nan yang mao yi dui nan yang hua qian de ying xiang* 清康熙末年禁止南洋贸易对南洋华侨的影响 [Prohibition Maritime Trade]. *Nan yang wenti yanjiu* 南洋问题研究. Vol. 4, 1995. Chen Xiyu 陈希育, *Zhong guo fan chuan yu hai wai mao yi* 中国帆船与海外贸易 [Chinese Clipper and Maritime Trade]. *xia men da xue chu ban she* 厦门大学出版社. 1991. Shen Guangyao 沈光耀, *Zhong guo gu dai dui wai mao yi shi* 中国古代对外贸易史 [Maritime Trade history of Ancient Chinese]. *Guang dong ren min chu ban she* 广东人民出版社. 1985. Nie Dening 聂德宁, *Ming qing hai wai mao yi shi yu hai wai hua shang mao yi wang luo yan jiu de xin tan suo* 明清海外贸易史与海外华商贸易网络研究的新探索(荷兰)包乐史著〈巴达维亚华人与中荷贸易〉评介 [Studies on Commercial and Trade Network of Overseas Chinese and Maritime Trade history in Ming and Qing]. *Zhong guo she hui jing ji shi yan jiu* 中国社会经济史研究. Vol. 3, 2003.

maritime and overland activities in northern Vietnam played in the frontier evolving process is a topic worthy of study. Thus, our purpose here is to uncover the role that the Sino-Vietnamese cross-border trade activities that sparked off a chain of reactions in political, diplomatic, and security fields played in Vietnam and even the Sino-Vietnamese relations during the nineteenth century.

Setting the capital city right in the middle of Vietnam inevitably made Huế a pivot of the two equally crucial southern and northern frontiers. Some historiographies on the formation of southern Vietnam's frontier that sprang from commerce are essential in thinking through Nguyễn dynastical history. Prior to the Nguyễn Dynasty, Vietnam had experienced a new mode of survival through commerce in the south.³⁰ The unique history of Vietnam has attracted great attention from scholars, and in particular, that of southern Vietnam. *Water frontier: commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong region, 1750–1880*, edited by Nola Cooke and Li Tana, is a collection of many articles on commercial development in southern Vietnam. This collection extends our limited understanding of southern Vietnam, and has shaped the concept of the 'water frontier' to denote the areas stretching from southern Vietnam and the regions further southward to eastern Cambodia and southwest Thailand, and has enlarged the field of vision on a socio-economic framework specifically for southern Vietnam. This collection also illustrates that this area was a separate trading zone, woven together by the regular plying of a great number of small and large trading junks, which made up the new

³⁰ Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*, 1998.

regional flourishing trade networks behind these overlapping plying, as well as the socio-economic complexities that are characteristic of mixed ethnicities and uncertain settlement.

It was Chakkri Siam and Nguyễn Vietnam that came out as two new powers in mainland Southeast Asia from this complex socio-economic position, and their strengths were the flourishing³¹ regional trade, and various articles on trade in southern Vietnam are valuable in portraying the history of Nguyễn Vietnam.³² The commercial activities, particularly regional trade, did not halt but instead continued after Huế centralised its bureaucratic authority from 1802. For regional commercial expansion in southern Vietnam, it was necessary to foster local power, which possibly impeded the consolidation of Huế's central power. Nguyễn Vietnam consistently maintained a watchful eye with regard to this point, as a power rising from the same flourishing place and with the same pattern to be a power to ultimately reunify Vietnam's northern and southern territories. Choi Byung Wook elaborates the fine balance between central policy and local power rising from the booming trade in southern Vietnam during the Minh Mạng period, which was the high point era of Huế's centralised power over the

³¹ Nola Cooke and Li Tana, ed. *Water frontier: commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880* (Singapore: Singapore University Press; Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

³² Li Tana, "Rice from Saigon: the Singapore Chinese and the Saigon Trade of the nineteenth century" in Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong, ed. *Maritime China in transition 1750–1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004). Nola Cooke, "The Myth of the Restoration: Dang Trong Influences in the Spiritual Life of the Early Nguyễn Dynasty 1802–1847" in Anthony Reid, ed. *The last stand of Asian autonomies: responses to modernity in the diverse states of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750–1900* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

whole kingdom.³³ Choi offers us a fresh way of viewing the processes by which the Huế court increasingly transformed the inhabitants of its socially heterogeneous, southern frontier region into more faithful and submissive subjects of the capital by concentrating on bureaucratic reforms and cultural policies. Southern Vietnam, as a particular and crucial region politically and commercially, offered the Huế regime a unique vitality, which had an effect on the administration of northern Vietnam in the Nguyễn's administrative management of the whole kingdom. Therefore, the research on southern Vietnam provides us with a broad picture and multiple elements with which to understand Nguyễn Vietnam as a whole after 1802.

The power of the central government of Nguyễn dynasty as the exclusive and effective rulers of Vietnam was increasingly strengthened during centralising of authority hand in hand with resistance by regional powers. The study of the local response to the centralising control of the capital, and the extension of this central power on the southern frontier during the socio-economic vicissitude, inspires us to ponder on some aspects of the relations between the central power and local forces in the northern frontier in Vietnam at this time. Few scholars have provided us with a complete picture of commerce and trade and the situation in which the central power and local forces in northern Vietnam and the changing Sino-Vietnamese political,

³³ Choi Byung Wook, *Southern Vietnam under the reign of Minh Mạng (1820–1841): Central Policies and Local Response* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publication, 2004).

diplomatic relations under the complex socio-economic evolved in northern Vietnam during this period.

Fortunately, Li Tana makes endeavours on this theme.³⁴ Her two articles on northern Vietnam furnish us with more ideas on the trade networks connected with southern China from mountain to sea in a historical perspective. In her article on Nagasaki, she shows how frequent itinerant trade was between southern China and northern Vietnam during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A similar process exists behind different historical phenomena, of which one was a number of regional overlapping trade networks between southern Vietnam and eastern Cambodia and Thailand, and the other was the flourishing trade zone between northern Vietnam and southern China.

Socio-economic, ethnic, and other non-political demarcations provide a new road into the history that is quite different from traditional nation formation or political history. Li Tana demonstrates that the Jiaozhi Ocean (the littoral areas from the Tonkin Gulf to areas further south) that lay alongside central Vietnam had been the hub of travel and trade between the east and the west for thousands of years, while the Tonkin Gulf was the extension of the trading zone in the Jiaozhi Ocean. Such trade on this road included slaves, horses, and salt, and others. Muslim trade also became the most

³⁴ Li Tana, *A view from the sea: perspectives on the northern and central Vietnamese coast*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 37(1), pp. 83–102, February 2006; Li Tana, '*national*' and '*overseas*' markets in the early 19th century Vietnam: a view from the mountains and the sea. For the workshop “Dynamic Rim lands and open Heartlands: Maritime Asia as a Site of Interactions”. Nagasaki, 27–28 Oct 2006.

important component on this trade route. It was the trade that closely connected Hainan with Cham and ‘the trade was surely an essential part of many people’s lives in this region.’³⁵ In her articles, the national stories behind the regional dynamics on the states that were founded later provide us with a new way of viewing other aspects of northern Vietnam in our study. However, her articles do not cover many aspects in great detail. The studies in these articles are not completely systematic, and focus only on a single aspect, that of interconnections in trade.

Finally, some fundamental aspects of Sino-Vietnamese trade have to be examined if our study on the Sino-Vietnamese relations in the historical context, coupled with the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese trade relations in northern Vietnam, is to go into greater depth. Authorised trade was crucial in the socio-economic circle of Nguyễn Vietnam’s northern frontier. Besides sanctioned trade, non-authorised trade, which filtered into the regions alongside legal trade, connected the ‘water world’ with the ‘overland world’. Furthermore, and together with legal trade, unlawful trade contacts built up the dynamic, complex and ever-changing nature of the northern frontier of Nguyễn during the nineteenth century. Unauthorised deals as a kind of glamorous force and on some occasions even as a potential threat to the economic interests of Nguyễn’s rulers, revealed its extreme flexibility in every aspect of politics, economics, security, and Sino-Vietnamese relations and so on. The available theoretical literature on illicit trade is indispensable for our study.

³⁵ Li Tana, *A view from the sea*, p. 93.

A small amount of historiography concentrates on some curial schemes correlated with smuggling such as contraband, the patterns of smugglers. The historiography on this theme can be categorised into two parts. One is on Chinese smuggling, especially on pirates in South China Sea. The other is on smuggling in Southeast Asia. On Chinese smuggling and piracy in South China Sea, Murray's book takes the first step in endeavouring to uncover the unique nature of the maritime realm of the South China Sea.³⁶ The practice of piracy throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is elaborated. The highlight of this work is the analysis of Vietnamese piracy in the early nineteenth century. Murray illustrates some crucial aspects of Vietnamese pirates who were active in South China Sea and in the Vietnamese waters. These aspects include the relations between Vietnamese pirates and the social organisation, the influence which the maritime trade had on these pirates, the relationship between pirates and Vietnamese authorities and the like, all of which shed light on the study of illicit trade in northern Vietnam after 1810, since piracy composed the main part of smuggling in the nineteenth century. However, the whole picture of piracy in Vietnam and other groups involving in smuggling, such as bandits and private merchants, during the nineteenth century are not revealed in this work.

Some monographs on Chinese piracy are necessary for an understanding of the Vietnamese piracy during this period such as the work of Robert J. Antony, Hunt Janin

³⁶ Dian H. Murray, *Pirates of the South China coast, 1790–1810* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1987).

and Zheng Guangnan.³⁷ Antony claims that pirates and seafarers helped to shape the maritime economy, society and culture, and that piracy had penetrated into South China's maritime society by the powerful conquest of such places as many coastal villages, port towns, and shipping or fishing enterprises. The boom in Chinese piracy during the first decade of the nineteenth century was a reflection of the endeavours Chinese seafarers made against poverty, prejudice, and injustice. Also, other functions of piracy, such as in politics, have not been explored.

Besides monographs on the Chinese piracy in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, several books on smuggling in Southeast Asia are worth more attention. One is *Sulu Zone and Iranun and Balangingi* by James Francis Warren.³⁸ The other is *Secret trades, porous borders: smuggling and states along a Southeast Asian frontier, 1865–1915* by Eric Tagliacozzo.³⁹ Warren used the framework of the 'centre-periphery' concept to interpret social interaction between ethnic groups within

³⁷ Robert J. Antony, *Like froth floating on the sea: the world of pirates and seafarers in late imperial south China* (Berkeley, Calif: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2003). Zheng guang nan 郑广南, *Zhong guo hai dao shi 中国海盜史 The History of Piracy in China*. hua dong li gong da xue chu ban she 华东理工大学出版社, 1998. Hunt Janin, *The India-China opium trade in the nineteenth century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1999). See Chapter 7, *Pirates of the South China Sea*, pp. 131–149.

³⁸ James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone 1768–1898: the dynamics of external trade, slavery, and ethnicity in the transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985). James Francis Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi: globalization, maritime raiding and the birth of ethnicity* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2002).

³⁹ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret trades, porous borders: smuggling and states along a Southeast Asian frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

the region's trade zone, which was full of lawful and illicit trade. Tagliacozzo's book is remarkable in its research on the contraband and smuggling during the formation of the frontier. This work analyses the nature, practice, and extent of various 'secret trades' along the various frontiers of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the role that smuggling played in the process of frontier formation is also revealed in this work. In addition, smuggling was also dynamically prevalent among different ethnic groups, geographical regions, and among different social classes. The burgeoning of contraband depended on the needs of the rulers in various states, which were to enforce authority, seize economic interests, and maintain security. Contraband could also 'mean the difference between maintaining or losing power to one's rivals'.⁴⁰ The traits of contraband and smuggling were similar, both in seafarers and in overland operators, to the archipelago regions of Southeast Asia. Nguyễn Vietnam also confronted similar problems during the nineteenth century. The evaluation of the role that contraband and smuggling played in the socio-economic flux and the consolidation of the northern traditional frontiers by the Huế court is the main purpose of our study.

The specific study of frontiers connected with southern China and other Southeast Asian neighbours is a useful reference on the processes of social vicissitude in northern Vietnam and southern China, as they unfolded. However, as far as these aforementioned and excellent works are concerned, three points should be noted before we begin our study. First, they did fail to treat the Sino-Southeast Asian relationship, which was

⁴⁰ Tagliacozzo, *Secret trades*, p. 5.

dynamic and interconnecting, as a whole. Second, by and large, most of them, particularly works by China-trained scholars, offer more descriptive detail rather than analytical views of the history. Third, with regard to source materials, these works largely used Chinese sources, whereas a great number of Vietnamese sources in many works are ignored, although some scholars attempted to use Vietnamese materials, such as Sun Hongnian. Because of this bias, the perspectives on the Sino-Southeast Asian and even the Sino-Vietnamese relationship are inevitably Sino-centric. Finally, the intricacies of Sino-Vietnamese relations on Vietnam's land and sea frontiers, interwoven with political, social, commercial, and ethnic elements, during the nineteenth century, as the last and only monarchy, is seldom explicitly delineated. Furthermore, the works that delve into the Sino-Vietnamese relationship during the nineteenth century in terms of commercial and trade perspectives still leave much more to be revealed.

5. Objectives of the Present Study

The chief purpose of this study is to reveal the intricacies of the commercial relationship between the Chinese and Vietnamese in northern Vietnam that influenced the Nguyễn Dynasty's diplomatic tendencies, policy-making procedure, national security defence, and related matters, from 1802 to 1874. This main goal is comprised of many sub-themes. The first of these is on the relations between the tribute trade and other commercial activities pertaining to tribute at a governmental level in the

Sino-Vietnamese tributary context of history. The second sub-theme relates to authorised trade activities, such as itinerant merchants in overland border trade, and plying merchants in the maritime frontiers of northern Vietnam. The last sub-theme concentrates on illicit trade. The last one based on the aforementioned sub-themes focuses on national security, which originated from the tension and the seizure of privileges and power between the central government, which expanded its power to the frontier, and the existing potential power forces at these frontiers. This work is an attempt to understand the history of this zone as a whole, as well as Sino-Vietnamese relations during this period. To achieve this, we have employed documentation on northern Vietnam's overland and maritime history, revolving around the interrelated themes of internal and external trade with the Chinese, such as tribute trade, cross-border trade, and smuggling. This trade is characterised by four elements: the authorised merchants, the officials at the Hué court, pirates and bandits, and the evolution of the northern frontier in which these parties were intricately bound up with one another.

In the last few decades, as far as works on Sino-Vietnamese relations or schemes related to it are concerned, most scholars have tended to focus on Sino-Vietnamese relations from a historical perspective, namely between two authorities, two countries, and two states, since China was a hugely influential power in Asian history. An increasing number of historians have made significant contributions to our understanding of this borderless history, such as commercial, migration history and

similar areas concerning the cross-border regions between China and other countries in Southeast Asia, and excluding political history. However, should the borderlands between southern China and northern Vietnam be regarded as part of the southward extension of the southwest frontier of China? We think not. In one respect, frontier policy in China had consistently evolved since the Qing dynasty. Different dynasties had different frontier policies, which had brought about economical or political changes to its frontier regions.

Furthermore, both the relations between local forces, especially different ethnic groups in frontier regions and the central government of China had an effect on local politics, economics and the social order. In other respects, the rise and decline of local less powerful and subject polities such as Laos and Burma, as well as Vietnam, meant frontiers were able to transform economically, ethnically, and politically. Therefore, the frontiers between southwest China and northern overland Southeast Asia were not the result of a southward extension of the southwest frontier of China. This region had its own unique characteristics. Furthermore, what Vietnam left in its historical narratives is merely the passive response to the potential threat from China as a coercive power in the suzerainty-tributary system. Without a doubt, Vietnam was an active player in China's world order during the nineteenth century. This dissertation endeavours to break away from Sino-centric ideas in researching the relationship between China and its neighbours. This dissertation chooses to approach this period from the Hué point of view rather than the Beijing angle, which has been overrepresented.

Besides, the Nguyễn Dynasty merits a larger place in Vietnamese history. The characteristics that make Vietnam similar to the rest of Southeast Asian countries has been increasingly recognised by more and more scholars, in both political and cultural fields. Excellent scholars with training in classical Chinese, such as Alexander Woodside, O.W. Wolters, and John K. Whitmore and others, are inclined to differentiate Vietnam from China's civilisation. 'Wolters, Whitmore, and Esta Ungar well represent the school that attributes a Southeast Asian identity to political and cultural patterns observed in Vietnamese'.⁴¹ However, one scholar (Liam Kelly) still insists on claiming that Vietnam was still one part of the northern giant's Chinese culture, with regard to the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship.⁴² Liam Kelly analyses the poems written by the most erudite of Vietnamese literati, who were selected to travel to the Beijing court, and to represent the Vietnamese rulers in the ritualised formalities of acknowledging suzerain-vassal relations. He also held that Vietnamese and Chinese 'partook in common cultures'.⁴³ However, concerning the Nguyễn Dynasty, we can neither neglect its 'Chinese' merits nor ignore its 'Southeast Asian' influence. This dissertation takes both Nguyễn's 'Chinese' and 'Southeast Asian' influences into account.

⁴¹ Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid, ed. *Vietnam borderless Histories* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 11.

⁴² See Liam C. Kelly, *Beyond the bronze pillars: Envoy poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese relationship* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

⁴³ Kelly, *Beyond the bronze pillars*, p. 36.

Finally, the interconnections between northern Vietnam and southern China have continued till the present time. Thus, many one-sided analyses have not reflected the complete picture of history in northern Vietnam and southern China. The flows of socio-economic or political and cultural interactions from northern Vietnam to southern China are explored in reverse in this study. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the political and socio-economic mechanisms in a commercial context of the history of northern Vietnam, rather than depicting socio-economic changes from a conceptual political viewpoint.

This study aims to make a contribution to the understanding of the history of Nguyễn Vietnam, and to re-evaluate the role that Nguyễn Vietnam played before Vietnam became a French colony. Moreover, it should afford a fresh understanding of the role Vietnam played in the relationship between the Chinese and Vietnamese, such as the contributions the Nguyễn made to China's world order and Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations, the endeavours the Huế made to Sino-Vietnamese diplomatic relations by Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts and Sino-Southeast Asia relations by the commercial, political and diplomatic evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Additionally, the effect Vietnam had on the trade networks of the South China Sea and Southeast Asia revealed in this dissertation might strengthen our grasp of the maritime and overland communication history between China and Southeast Asia. Concurrently, it might also offer valuable insights into security policy and national defence, and Nguyễn Vietnam's relations with other Southeast Asian countries.

6. A Note on Sources

6.1. Primary Archives

In this study, some chief sources, Chinese documents and Vietnamese archives, should be involved.

Several documents are very important for this study, such as *A Comprehensive History of the Qing Dynasty* (清代通史), *The History of the Qing Dynasty* (清史), *The Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* (清史稿), *Primary Compilation of the Veritable Records of the Imperial China in the Qing Dynasty* (清实录), *Gazetteer of Imperial China* (大清一统志), *the Official Compendium of Institutions and Usages of Imperial China* (钦定大清会典), *Gazetteers of Guangxi, Yunnan, Guangdong, and Hainan Provinces* (广西, 云南, 广东, 海南省志), *the Vermillion Books of the Qing Dynasty*, and the Memoranda of the various offices and foreign correspondences. Furthermore, the Agreement and Order Books are an important source of information on administrative matters, containing agreements, rules, regulations, and orders and so on. The Court Records hold invaluable information on legal and administrative matters that give us some insights on economic and social life. Besides these above, customs records and some correspondences of certain generals in Guangxi, Guangdong, Yunnan Provinces are indispensable. All of these documents are now regarded as fundamental and relevant sources with which to approach a study of Chinese history. However, all of these documents are not sufficient for this study. For these types of sources I will be

turning chiefly to the National Library of China and libraries in Guangxi, Guangdong, and Yunnan Provinces, among others.

For Vietnamese documents, for the most part, official records are still of the utmost importance, such as *Đại Nam Thực Lục*, (大南实录, *Primary Compilation of the Veritable Records of the Imperial in the Nguyễn Dynasty*), *Gazetteer of Imperial Vietnam*, *Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điển Sự Lệ* (钦定大南汇典事例, *Official Compendium of Institutions and Usage in Imperial Vietnam*), *Bắc Kỳ Các Tỉnh Địa Chí* (*Gazetteers of North Vietnam Provinces*), and *Nguyễn Triều Châu Bản* (阮朝硃本, *the Vermillion Books of the Nguyễn Dynasty*), memoranda of the various offices and foreign correspondence. Since illegal trade is usually connected with bandits and pirates along the borders between southern China and northern Vietnam, some vital official archives on policies and activities to combat bandits and pirates should not be ignored, for instance, *Khâm Định Tiểu Bình Bắc Kỳ Nghịch Phỉ Chính Biên*, (钦定剿平北圻逆匪正编, *Records of Subduing Bandits in Northern Vietnam*), and so on.

6.2. Fieldwork

Collecting materials is an important part of fieldwork. I visited some archives and libraries in China and Vietnam including Yunnan University Library, Yunnan Library, Guangxi Library, Academy of Social Science in Yunnan Province, Academy of Social Science in Guangxi Province, the First National Historical Archives of China, the National Library of China, Beijing University Library, Viện Hán Nôm, the National

Library of Vietnam, and the National Archives of Vietnam. Besides these, I went to some important ports and cities such as Đà Nẵng, Huế, Hồ Chí Minh City, Pingxiang, Gejiu and Kunming.

This extensive travelling throughout northern Vietnam and southern China, especially along the Red River to the river mouth of the Red River toward the sea provided me with important insights into my research, allowing me to appreciate a geographical landscape traversed by rivers, such as the Sông Ho (Black River), the Sông Hồng, (Red River) and the South China Sea. It was necessary to visit ports built on the wealth created by authorised deals along the Red River, to investigate old copper mines in the border of that period between Yunnan Province of the Qing Dynasty and Lai Châu in the Nguyễn Dynasty, to get a feel of what the environment must have been like for smugglers. In the meantime, I was also a participant observer. By seeing first-hand the present smuggling conditions, circumstances, and so forth, I was able to appreciate a sense of continuity from the past. The extensive travelling and the fieldwork helped to reinforce my archival research, giving me a better ‘feel’ for the documents.

Chapter 2: Paying tribute and Sino-Vietnamese relations

1. Introduction

Vietnam constructed its own social civilisation and local orders once it separated from China. However, the influence and stress from the northern giant of China still existed in Vietnam. Therefore, the history of Vietnam is connected with that of China. Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations played a significant role in traditional Sino-Vietnamese relations, both politically and diplomatically. Nonetheless, the ostensible affiliation under Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations had various subtle features, which were often at variance with domestic political, economic, and diplomatic changes and the like on both sides at different historical periods. By the nineteenth century, the tributary system as a kind of normalisation with which China handled its affairs with neighbours had improved. China's tributary system evolved flexibly and grounded in this flexibility, Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations also improved. Aside from the acknowledgement and investiture between suzerain and vassal, some new merits in the obligations under the tributary system appeared.

What were the new merits of the tributary system between Qing and Nguyễn? How did Nguyễn Vietnam go about managing and expanding the trade opportunities under the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship? What kind of contributions did the Nguyễn make to China's world order and the Sino-Vietnamese tributary system? What was the

connection between tribute trade and common Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts?

These questions are answered in this chapter.

2. The Chinese world order and the maritime trade ban during the Qing Dynasty

Tributary relations were the main framework and ideas with which China, as the Middle Kingdom in Asia, settled its international affairs with its neighbours. This normative pattern was the unique way in which China's rulers over the centuries owned, practised, and developed in this system. The relationship between every authority in China and their people in surrounding areas—which were non-Chinese in general—were coloured by 'the concept of Sino-centrism,' and were based on Confucian ideas, such as 'under the wide heaven, all is the king's land' and 'within the sea-boundaries of the land, all are the king's servants' (pu tian zhi xia, mo fei wang tu; shuai tu zhi bin, mo fei wang chen, 普天之下，莫非王土；率土之滨，莫非王臣).¹ The tributary relations with its neighbours also represented an 'assumption of Chinese superiority' in all aspects such as politics, economy, and culture. This 'Chinese world order', as described by John K. Fairbank, not only included the normative politics pattern, but also contained the principal trade pattern between China and other non-Chinese groups.² These tributary relations entirely supplanted other patterns, such as military conquest and administrative assimilation of its neighbours, and became the prevailing pattern of Chinese

¹ Zhou Zhenfu translated, 周振甫译注, *Shi jing xuan yi*, 诗经选译 [the selection of the book of songs]. Zhong hua shu ju. 中华书局, p. 224.

² John King Fairbank, 'The preliminary Framework' in John King Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese world order: traditional China's foreign relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 2–4.

international relations by the nineteenth century, before the treaty system used by Western powers advanced toward China and even Asia.

The function of the tribute system evolved over time in China. Generally, tribute relations included two parallel aspects. One was commerce, and the other was diplomacy. In diplomacy, different dynasties had different purposes. In the Song era (960—1127, 1127–1279), it was used mainly for defence, whereas in the Yuan (1206–1367), the tribute system served expansion purposes. However, in the Qing, the tribute system shifted towards advocating stability in foreign affairs.³ The tributary relations with its neighbours became increasingly one of stagnant inactivity, instead of bringing about rapid social change in other ways, such as military conquest by the Qing Dynasty. 'For China it was a lever and economical device for dealing with a bordering country which the Chinese rulers did not consider practical to control directly and yet wanted to keep revolving within the orbit of China's influence.'⁴ The main purpose was to keep potential dangers or threats outside the Chinese frontier, and maintain peace and order within border regions. Until the nineteenth century, inner Asia was consistently the concern of imperial foreign policy. Therefore, based on the tendency of diplomatic stability and the focus on inner Asia, war affairs seldom occurred in the southwest frontiers. It only once invaded Vietnam in a punitive operation when the Lê

³ John King Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast: the opening of the treaty ports, 1842–1854* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 31.

⁴ Mark Mancall, 'The Ch'ing Tributary System: An Interpretive Essay' in John King Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese world order: traditional China's foreign relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 63.

dynasty was overthrown by the Tây Sơn in 1789, an action that was seen as violating the ritual or moral value of the imperial tribute system. This characteristic of the Qing court of preferring to confine itself to revolving within the orbit of China's influence in its tributaries under the tributary relation system, rather than directly interfering in the internal affairs of Vietnam or having as little involvement as possible in order to maintain the tranquillity of its sea and overland frontiers did not change even when the new Nguyễn dynasty was found in Vietnam.

The commercial function of the tribute system was not the most important aspect in the earlier period of China's history. The diplomatic function of the tribute system was far more important than its commercial function during the early period of China's history. The tribute system was the political tool used to handle Sino-Vietnamese relations. From the Ming and Qing dynasties onward, tribute trade, to a large extent, was a strategy that the Vietnamese would use at times when maritime trade was restricted. However, it was the maritime ban that was an important factor in banding foreign trade and the tribute system together. As for China's maritime trade, the Song and Yuan periods in Chinese history were significant. In the Song dynasty, revenue coming from maritime trade, especially with Southeast Asian regions, became the economic basis for confronting the northern Liao. Spurred by political motives, maritime trade enjoyed prosperity.⁵ China's maritime trade reached a new peak under the encouragement of the central government of the Yuan dynasty. Later on, when the

⁵ Huang Chunyan 黄纯艳, *Song dai hai wai maoyi 宋代海外贸易* [the maritime trade in Song dynasty]. *She hui ke xue wen xian chu ban she 社会科学文献出版社*, 2003, p. 79.

Ming dynasty was established, Wo pirates (倭寇) became a critical issue that compelled Chu Yuanzhang (朱元璋) to consolidate the empire's coastal security. To exterminate Wo pirates entirely, the Ming issued a ban, *hai jin* (海禁), that forbade all people from travelling abroad by sea. This ban became the ultimate striving force that united the tribute system and trade as one.⁶

Therefore, tribute trade, maritime trade and diplomatic relations with other regions were united by the *hai jin* policy. The expanded diplomatic relations with more Southeast Asian regions was realised by Zheng He (郑和), who succeeded in integrating maritime trade into the tribute trade system.⁷ Besides, Zheng He voyaged to Southeast Asia, and integrated maritime trade by bringing a number of small sultanates under the tribute system and enrolling them as Ming vassals.⁸

Hai jin, which united maritime trade and the tributary system, was later adopted by the Qing dynasty. Tribute trade became an important part of the tribute system. On tributary trade, Mark Mancall believes that tributary trade in Qing China should be categorised into three parts, namely 'gift trade', 'market trade' and 'administrated trade'. 'Three main types of trade occurred in two-sided commerce, each based on a different integrative principle'. 'Gift trade' appeared in the outer areas, commencing with places

⁶ Zheng Yongchang 郑永常, *Lai zi hai yang de tiao zhan, ming dai hai wai mao yi zheng ce yan bian yan jiu* 来自海洋的挑战—明代海贸政策演变研究 [The study on the maritime trade policy in Ming dynasty]. Tai bei, Dao xiang chu ban she 台北, 稻香出版社 2004, pp. 16–20.

⁷ JK Fairbank and SY Teng, 'On the Ch'ing Tributary System', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 1941), p. 204.

⁸ Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast*, pp. 36–35.

such as Beijing or on the frontier. 'Market trade', which occurred in Canton, was a supply and demand mechanism, and correlated with European economies; while 'administrated trade' took place between permanent trading bodies, such as governments and government-licensed companies. Trade was conducted in a legal manner either by authorised government or approved companies.⁹ By the Qing period, tribute and trade were intricately but not necessarily directly interrelated. Trade could happen either with the immediate presentation of tribute to the emperor, or without the presentation in Peking. Trade could also occur at the border markets without the presentation under the tribute system.¹⁰ To some degree, the increase in the number of tribute missions was stimulated by commercial motives.¹¹ Commercial contact in tribute relations was multidimensional and was incorporated into various elements and demands.¹² Furthermore, the cross-payment of tribute among the tributaries themselves helped to transform trade patterns. Satellite tribute zones and the Chinese-dominated core gradually took shape in Asia's commercial network of contacts.¹³

The intermittent maritime ban during the Qing period interplayed with tribute trade with other countries. The imposition or rescinding of Chinese maritime bans could also change the pattern of maritime trade and tributary relations between China and its neighbours in Southeast Asia. In 1684, the Emperor Kang Xi rescinded the maritime

⁹ Mancall, 'The Ch'ing Tributary System' in *Chinese world order*, pp. 79–80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–76.

¹¹ Fairbank and Teng, 'On the Ch'ing Tributary System', p. 199.

¹² Takeshi Hamashita, 'The tribute trade system and modern Asia' in *Memoirs of Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 46, 1988, p. 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

ban, and Chinese junk trade revitalised. '(The Chinese vessels) whatever bigger or smaller, went to ocean in an endless stream.'¹⁴ However, in 1717, Qing reimposed the maritime ban, under which Chinese merchant ships were not allowed to trade in Southeast Asia. However, this restriction excluded Vietnam. Junks from Macao and Chinese vessels that travelled to Vietnam for trade were endorsed by the Qing court.¹⁵ The *Veritable Records of Qing* (*Qing shi lu* 清实录) do not demonstrate the specific reasons that Vietnam and Macao were not included in the maritime trade ban. Meanwhile, other countries in Southeast Asia were not mentioned here. However, these could be hypothesised from a report by the War Board in 1716. On one hand, the Qing believed that Dutch Batavia was the fiercest enemy in Nanyang and that Dutch Batavia's advanced military weapons were a threat. Therefore, these weapons had to be impounded before they were permitted to harbour in seaports. On the other hand, foreigners in Macao obeyed Chinese regulations in China, and did not make any trouble.¹⁶ Therefore, from this report, it can be seen that Vietnam, which was far away

¹⁴ Shi Lang, 施琅, 'lun kai hai jin shu 论开海禁疏 [The argument on rescission of maritime ban]', He Changling 贺长龄, ed. *qing shi wen bian chao*, 经世文编抄 [The collection of statecraft writing of Qing period], 1848, Vol. 33.

¹⁵ Sheng zu shi lu 圣祖实录. Vol. 277, p. 28 in Yun nan sheng li shi yan jiu suo 云南历史研究所. 'Qing shi lu'yue nan mian dian tai guo lao wo shi liao zhai chao, 《清实录》越南缅甸泰国老挝史料摘抄 [The collection of materials related to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma in the veritable records of Qing dynasty]. Yun nan ren min chu ban she 云南人民出版社, 1985. Hereafter qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, p. 15.

¹⁶ Qing shi lu 清实录 [The veritable records of Qing dynasty]. Bei jing, zhong hua shu ju 北京: 中华书局, 1987. Sheng zu shi lu 圣祖实录 Vol. 277, p. 14.

from Batavia and Macao, did not present any great threat for the Qing. Therefore, Vietnam benefited from this policy.

By the close of the eighteenth and opening of the early nineteenth century, the Qing court had to rescind the restriction on trade in Southeast Asia in order to import rice. The restrictions on maritime trade correlated with tributary relations during the Qing Dynasty. A complete maritime trade ban neither curbed potential security, which originated in the maritime activities along the south-eastern coast of China, nor improved regular commercial communications. However, the Qing court created a potential chance to maintain a balance between the two. In fact, the mode of tributary trade adapted from the Ming actually created a chance by the Qing period, and demonstrated the interest in opening commercial channels to foreign nations.¹⁷

With commercial development in Asia, the tribute trade, in tandem with the diplomatic tributary system, no longer met the demands of merchandise exchanges between Asian states and China. A great deal of Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia and pushed for local economic development. Meanwhile, the Chinese enhanced the commercial contacts between China and Southeast Asia. Sino-Southeast Asian commercial communication by the tribute system decreased. Soon afterwards, Chinese migration to Southeast Asia occurred at the end of the nineteenth century as the last phase of Chinese commercial expansion.¹⁸ In diplomatic rhetoric, the relations between

¹⁷ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and profit: Sino-Siamese trade, 1652–1853* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 45.

¹⁸ Fairbank, *Trade and diplomacy on the China coast*, pp. 36–37.

the Qing and other countries were being supplanted by fair trade or equally diplomatic relations, which was reflected in the change of terms that Beijing used to call Western countries from *chao gong guo* (朝贡国, tributary country) into *bang jiao* (邦交, diplomatic relations) or *hu shi guo* (互市国, trading country) in the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* (清史稿) or in the *Official compendium of institutions and usages of Imperial Qing* (大清会典). This alteration was the result of a change in ideology and the decline of the traditional tributary system.¹⁹ Subsequently, Western ‘expansion’ and ‘impact’ on Asia directly or indirectly contributed to the decline of the Asian trade zone that had been based on the tributary system, and deterred the change from the tributary system to the treaty system.²⁰

3. The evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations

3.1. The Sino-Vietnamese traditional relationship before the Nguyễn Dynasty

The traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship can be traced back to the Qin Dynasty in China. Some parts of northern Vietnam were administrative units of China during the Qin and Han dynasties. Han defeated Triệu Đà in northern Vietnam, and set up Jiao Zhi

¹⁹ Li Yunquan 李云泉, *chao gong zhi du shi lun* 朝贡制度史论 [Studies on the history of paying tribute system]. Beijing, Xin hua chu ban she,北京, 新华出版社, 2004, p. 142.

²⁰ Takeshi Hamashita, 'The tribute trade system and modern Asia', p. 8.

(Giao Chỉ), Jiu Zhen (Cửu Chân) and other seven districts. The name Jiao Zhi came about at that time.²¹

The relationship between Vietnam as an independent state and China began during the Song Dynasty of China. The tributary relationship became a formal Sino-Vietnamese diplomatic relationship. Vietnam's frequent tribute activities and the Song's bestowal of titles were accompanied by occasional wars. Tribute, intertwined with wars, continued for several hundred years from the Song era. During this period, successive dynastic changes occurred in Viet. By 1600, Vietnam had separated into two parts, which were controlled by the Trinh and Nguyễn families respectively. This division lasted more than 200 years until the establishment of the Nguyễn dynasty in 1802. The traditional Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship was adapted by the Qing. The most important procedure for Viet was to get the official titles from China to confirm its legitimacy as its own kingdom within the tributary system. Therefore, any usurper to the throne needed to request acknowledgement from China, as did the Nguyễn Brothers of Tây Sơn and Nguyễn Phúc Ánh later on.

3.2. Sino-Vietnamese relationship in Nguyễn dynasty

Gia Long period (1802–1819)

²¹ Phan Thanh Giản 潘清簡, Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cương Mục 欽定越史通鑑綱目 [Outline by imperial decree of the mirror of the history of the Great Viet]. Rare books in Chinese library. National University of Singapore. Tiền Biên Vol. 2, p. 3. Hereafter VSTGCM.

In 1802, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh reunited Vietnam and established the Nguyễn Dynasty. In one respect, it was necessary for Nguyễn Phúc Ánh to be acknowledged as the only legitimate ruler of Vietnam. In another respect, after three decades of civil war, Nguyễn Vietnam needed time and safe surroundings to recuperate and multiply its population. It was indispensable for the Nguyễn Dynasty to maintain a friendly relationship with its giant northern neighbour. Besides these two reasons, the most important aspect was that the Nguyễn needed to recover the tribute trade and other commercial transactions at the governmental level under the traditional Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations.

In 1802, Emperor Gia Long dispatched Trịnh Hoài Đức (郑怀德), President of the Revenue Board; Ngô Nhân Tĩnh (吴仁静), Right Honourable Grand Secretary of the War Board; Hoàng Ngọc Uẩn (黄玉蕴), Right Honourable Grand Secretary of the Punishment Board; and other followers on a mission to China to foster cordial relations.²² All of them were *Minh Hương* in Vietnam. In addition, the Vietnamese officials took Mo Guanfu (莫观夫) and other *Qi Wei* pirates, who were active in both Chinese and Vietnamese waters.²³ Apparently, whether it was the extradition of pirates

²² ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 17, p. 9.

²³ *Kì Ngụy Hải Phi* (Qi Wei hai fei, 奇桅海匪) was one branch of the Chinese pirates who were active in Chinese and Vietnamese waters during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. These Chinese pirates colluded with the Vietnamese, who were also utilised for Nguyễn Quang Toản by the late eighteenth century. On one hand, Nguyễn Quang Toản utilised them to fight Nguyễn Phúc Ánh in Huế. On the other hand, the plunders by these Chinese pirates could supplement Nguyễn Quang Toản's military equipment. These Chinese pirates' ships mostly came from the Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces of China. (Zhong guo she hui ke xue yuan li shi yan jiu suo 中国社会科学院历史研究所, Gu

or the dispatch of high-ranking *Minh Hương* missions to China, this was a kind of gesture aimed at revitalising Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations, and acquiring legitimacy for the Huế authority.

Besides submission, Vietnam made other requests. In 1803, Emperor Gia Long had dispatched the envoys to request China's approval to change the state's name to Nam Việt.²⁴ As part of their prerogative as suzerain, the Chinese would bestow a certain title on the Vietnamese ruler, but this name was not usually used in Vietnam. Therefore, the name of 'the kingdom of An Nam (安南国王)' was only used by the Chinese; the Vietnamese among themselves would not call themselves An Nam. China had known Viet as Jiao Zhi or Jiao Zhou since the Han Dynasty.²⁵ In 679, the Tang set up the An Nam Protectorate (An nan du hu fu, 安南都护府) in Vietnam. An Nam as Viet's name at the time. However, An Nam as the name of a country can be traced back to the Song

dai zhong yue guan xi shi zi liao xuan bian 古代中越关系史资料选编[The compilation on the ancient Sino Vietnamese relations]. Bei jing zhong guo she hui ke xue chu ban she 北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 1982. p. 581. Nguyễn Quang Toan entitled these pirates by imperial order. Wu Shi'er was a good example. He got the title from Nguyễn Quang Toan as General *Ninh Hải* 宁海大将军 and obtained a bronze official seal. (ming qing shi liao geng bian di san ben 明清史料庚编第三本 in Gu dai zhong yue guan xi shi zi liao xuan bian 中越古代关系史资料汇编. 1982. p. 581. Nguyễn Quang Toan used Zheng Qi (郑七) to recruit pirates for the sake of defeating Nguyễn Phúc Ánh. In 1802, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh captured Zhang Yalu (张亚禄), a Qi Wei pirate, and killed Zhengqi and repatriated their pirates (jun ji chu fu lu zou zhe 军机处录副奏折 in zhong yue gu dai guan xi shi zi liao hui bian 中越古代关系史资料汇编 1982, p. 583; ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 18, p. 5.

²⁴ ĐNTL, Chính Biên, I, Vol. 19, p. 9.

²⁵ VSTGCM, Tiền Biên Vol. 2, p. 3, p. 30.

Dynasty. In 1164²⁶, the Song Dynasty bestowed this title on the Viet kingdom and changed Jiao Zhi to An Nan Guo (安南国).²⁷

As for the names themselves, during the Han Dynasty, Triệu Đà was known as Nam Việt Vương (南越王).²⁸ From the Han to the Tang, kingdoms in Việt also called themselves different names, such as Lý Bôn (李贲)'s Nam Việt Đế (南越帝), Việt Vương (越王) by Triệu Quang (赵光) and Nam Đế (南帝) by Lý Phật Tử (李佛子).²⁹ In 968, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh (丁部领) named his kingdom Đại Cồ Việt (大瞿越).³⁰ In 1054, Đại Cồ Việt (大瞿越) was changed by the Vietnamese kingdom to Đại Việt (大越).³¹

In fact, renaming was the most important issue in Sino-Vietnamese negotiations. The Qing court refused this request, and argued that Nam Việt in Sino-Vietnamese history had included many of China's regions, such as Guangdong and Guangxi, whereas the areas united by Nguyễn Phúc Ánh were the regions that had been called Giao Chỉ (交趾) in the past. As to the kingdom of Nam Việt, it was because of the memory of that kingdom that the Chinese refused the request. However, the Vietnamese usually used Đại Nam inside the country even though the Qing gave them

²⁶ As Lịch Triều Hiến Chương Loại Chí recorded, it was in 1179 that Song bestowed Viet as An Nan Guo and gave the kingdom seal. Vol. 46, p. 4; Phan Huy Chú 潘辉注 Lịch Triều Hiến Chương Loại Chí. 历朝宪章类志 [A reference book of the institutions of successive dynasties]. Hereafter LHTLTC. 1962.

²⁷ VSTGCM, Chính Biên Vol. 5, p. 12, Ming hui yao 明会要 [Documents pertaining to Ming official matters], zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 1956, p. 1510.

²⁸ LHTLTC, Vol. 46, p. 4.

²⁹ VSTGCM, Tiền Biên Vol. 4, pp. 2, 7, 13.

³⁰ VSTGCM, Chính Biên Vol. 1, p.1.

³¹ VSTGCM, Chính Biên Vol. 3, p. 20.

the name Việt Nam. Furthermore, this request for renaming the state after defeating Nguyễn Quang Toàn by force made the Chinese court suspicious that Nguyễn Vietnam intended to militarily occupy the Guangdong and Guangxi regions of China.³² The Qing court's worry was based on two apparent motives. One was that Chinese troops had been defeated by Tây Sơn. Soon afterward, Emperor Gia Long defeated Tây Sơn, and united the whole of Vietnam by force. Therefore, the increasing military power in Nguyễn Vietnam would be a great threat to the peace and order of the south-eastern frontier of China. The other was that the Vietnamese envoys went to China on a tribute mission not by land, as stipulated by current regulations in the Sino-Vietnamese tributary system, but by sea, and this further aroused the suspicion of the Qing court.

Emperor Gia Long's attitude toward China is not clear. On one hand, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh endeavoured to recondition the traditional tribute system. On the other hand, Vietnam openly requested the renaming of the state, which annoyed China. The obscure stand held by the Nguyễn on Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations during the Gia Long period should be attributed to two main aspects. With eyes on its internal affairs, Huế continued to ensure Nguyễn legitimacy in Vietnam. Besides, it would take some time to consolidate Nguyễn sovereignty in Vietnam, improve the economy, increase central revenue and recondition the bureaucratic system, and so on. With respect to external affairs, the Nguyễn mitigated a potential threat from the north. Therefore, in the early

31 Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录. Vol. 106, p. 25 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 283.

period of the Nguyễn Dynasty, the main purpose of Nguyễn Phúc Ánh was to revive the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship held since the Lê Dynasty.

However, at the outset of the Nguyễn, Emperor Gia Long actually undertook commercial activities which were not allowed by regulations that China stipulated under the Sino-Vietnamese tributary system. In 1803, Vietnamese tribute ships intended to ship back more items than the Qing approved in Guangdong. Eventually, the Chinese emperor allowed the Vietnamese official vessels to sail back with these cargoes in order to express the ideas of conciliating barbarians. Furthermore, Emperor Gia Long had ordered a load of more than 101,000 jin of silk, bronze wares, and an official robe with gold designs of pythons.³³ As a symbol that represented the sovereign rule of the Qing emperor, an official robe with gold designs of pythons was definitely prohibited for export by Qing. Furthermore, 101,000 jin of silk was many times far beyond the quota stipulated by the Qing. From this event, the trade with China had become indispensable under the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship at the governmental level. Nevertheless, the Huế Court failed to seek more room for mass trade. The economic aspects in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship consistently influenced the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations. The aberrance in political relations that originated from economic motives became obvious by the Minh Mạng period.

³³ Gu gong bo wu yuan 故宫博物院, Qing dai wai jiao shi liao 清代外交史料行—嘉庆朝[The historical materials on diplomacy of Qing dynasty (Jiang Qing)]. Tai bei, cheng wen chu ban she 台北成文出版社, , 1968, pp. 39–41.

Minh Mạng period (1820–1840)

Unlike the Gia Long period, some obvious traits occurred under the tributary relations during the Minh Mạng period in Vietnam. The new trait originated from the Vietnamese first, and the greatest motif was to create more Sino-Vietnamese trade opportunities at the governmental level. Firstly, the Huế implored the emperor to modify the schedule and regulation of paying tribute to the Qing. Secondly, there was the Huế court's veiled criticism of the attitude of the Qing court when they settled international affairs such as the First Opium War. Finally, Nguyễn began to seek more room for trade from the tributary obligations, such as extraditing criminals and sending Chinese shipwrecks to China, and the like.

Schedules and regulations for tribute

The timetables and regulations of Vietnam's tribute were not regular before the Lý dynasty. Vietnam would only go to China to pay tribute after an indication from China.³⁴ In 1257, Tran dispatched missions to the Mongols, and the Mongols issued the timetable that Vietnam had to pay tribute once every three years.³⁵ In 1263, Vietnam dispatched a mission to Yuan. Yuan gradually began to regulate payment of tribute from Vietnam once every three years.³⁶ In 1374, Ming restated that Vietnam pay tribute once every three years.³⁷ During the Wan Li period of the Ming, China specified that Vietnam should pay tribute twice in a six-year period. In 1669, the Emperor Kang Xi

³⁴ LHTLTC, Vol. 46, p. 78.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 78.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 79.

³⁷ long wen bin, ming hui yao, 1956, Vol. 78, p. 1510.

revived this schedule.³⁸ By the eighteenth century, Vietnam paid tribute to China either once every two years, or once every three years, and even twice every four years during the Qing Dynasty period. In 1785, Qing China changed the schedule, and stipulated that Vietnam should pay tribute to China once every two years, replacing the former three-year interval. Additionally, Vietnam could dispatch envoys to China once every four years instead of once every six years.³⁹

There are no documents to show that the Huế court requested the Qing to modify the timetable and regulation of tribute during the Gia Long period. By contrast, the Emperor Minh Mạng openly sought to expand the frequency of tribute to China. In 1828, Nguyễn Vietnam dispatched envoys to China on a tribute-paying mission. The tribute mission included Nguyễn Trọng Vũ (阮仲瑀), Nguyễn Đình Tân, (阮廷宾) and Đặng Văn Khải (邓文启).⁴⁰ The following year, they arrived in Beijing and had an audience with the Chinese emperor to bring forward a petition to change the tribute route from land to sea as will be discussed below.⁴¹ The high-ranking (president or vice president of Six Boards) envoys sent to China indicated how the Huế stressed the importance of this petition, even though it was refused. Requests for modifying the timetable and regulation of tribute were set aside by the Manchu court until 1839, when the activities

³⁸ VSTGCM, Chính Biên Vol.33, p. 24.

³⁹ Kun gang 昆冈, Qin ding da qing hui dian 钦定大清会典[Official compendium of institutions and usages of the Imperial Qing]. Shang hai Shang hai gu ji chu ban she 上海: 上海古籍出版社, 1995, Vol. 503, p. 56.

⁴⁰ ĐNTL, Chính Biên, II, Vol. 55, p. 5.

⁴¹ Xun zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 158, p.36 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 296.

of the Western powers became urgent and of vital importance in Qing diplomatic affairs around the first Opium War. In 1839, the Qing court declared that Vietnam should pay tribute once every four years to Beijing instead of twice every four years.⁴² According to this new tributary regulation, besides Vietnam, the opportunities for tribute from the Ryukyus and Siam also decreased.

Soliciting waterborne trade and violating precedents

The usual route for Vietnamese missions since the Song Dynasty was from northern Vietnam via Guangxi and onward into China. However, this route was not fixed officially until the Ming period. This was the official road to China from Vietnam, whether for paying tribute, or for other diplomatic issues, such as extraditing criminals, releasing prisoners of war, and so on. However, there were two cases in which Vietnam violated this precedent in history. In 1394, Vietnam dispatched missions to pay tribute from Guangdong by sea. The Ming emperor was too angry to accept the Vietnamese tribute payment.⁴³ The likely reason for his rage was that the Ming would face more potential threats from China's southeast coast if Vietnam's tribute to Beijing by sea was approved as regulation. The security along coast and sea was a chief concern throughout the Ming dynasty. Therefore, the Ming did not approve the request of Vietnam, which had traditionally paid tribute by land, to change the tribute route and increase the threat from coast and sea. Besides, in 1457, the Lê Dynasty had taken criminals to China from

⁴² Kun Gang.qin ding da qing hui dian shi li. Vol. 504, p. 63.

⁴³ Long wenbin. ming hui yao, 1956, Vol. 15, p. 249.

Longzhou in Guangxi via Yunnan.⁴⁴ Aside from these two cases, there are no more documents on Vietnamese violation in the official records. However, by the Minh Mạng period, Vietnam had initiated its request to enter Guangdong by sea.

In 1829, the Nguyễn court deployed officials to take crews back to China on Vietnamese ships. Moreover, the official, Nguyễn Văn Chương (阮文章), formally presented the petition to trade by sea in Guangdong.⁴⁵ There was no specific document to show the reasons why Vietnam made this request. It is likely that Vietnam requested this change due to two reasons. One was the geographical aspect, as entry to China by sea was easier, faster and more convenient than by land since the Sino-Vietnamese overland borders were full of jungles and mountains. The other was that Vietnam could carry more cargo by sea than they could by land. It was significant that the Huế court not only requested a sea route for tribute, but also requested to trade directly with and openly in Guangdong, even though the Qing rejected this petition. From the perspective of the Chinese rulers, compared with the other countries that had only used the sea route for tribute trade missions, the land routes were sufficient for the Huế, since the Vietnamese had received approval to conduct tribute trade by land in areas such as in Qinzhou (钦州) in Guangdong and Shuikou (水口) Custom in Guangxi. The Qing court was worried that with the increase in entrance points, more suspicious people would

⁴⁴ Long wenbin. *ming hui yao*, Vol. 78, p. 1511.

⁴⁵ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 159, p. 21. In *qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao*, 1985, p. 296.

enter China and make trouble if the Nguyễn ruler was permitted to trade or pay tribute by sea instead of by land.⁴⁶

Besides openly requesting trade opportunities, Huế did not obey the regulation on extraditing and repatriating bandits and pirates, or that on rescuing shipwrecks by land. According to Chinese regulations, Vietnam should extradite all criminals to the nearest customs in China, such as Qinzhou, by land, even if they were pirates captured on the waters.⁴⁷ The Huế court did not violate this regulation during the Gia Long period. However, under Minh Mạng, Vietnam did not toe the line. In 1835, the Huế court arrested some Chinese pirates, Liang Kaifa (梁开发) and two others, and repatriated them by sea.⁴⁸ This ‘aberrance’ that appeared in the Minh Mạng period became conspicuous by the Thiệu Trị and Tự Đức periods. Nguyễn Vietnam again extradited pirates and bandits by sea several times, such as in 1843, 1844, and 1845. In 1845, the Huế court dispatched four officers to repatriate Chinese pirates by sea.⁴⁹ Apart from extraditing Chinese bandits arrested in the Sino-Vietnamese borderland by land, most Chinese pirates had been repatriated by sea since the Minh Mạng period. The motive behind this ‘aberrance’ was economic profit. This point is discussed in the extraditing and repatriating section.

⁴⁶ Liang Tingnan 梁廷楠, Yue hai guan zhi 粤海关志 [Discourse on the Canton maritime Custom]. Tai bei, Wen hai chu ban she 台北: 文海出版社, 1975, Vol. 24, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 272, pp. 5–6; Vol. 295, p. 13–14 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao. 1985, p. 314–315.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên III, Vol. 48, p. 5.

Criticism on the Opium War

In addition, there was Nguyễn Vietnam's veiled criticism on the attitude that the Qing court held when it settled the international affairs around the Opium War. In 1839, Trương Hào Hợp (张好合), Nguyễn Văn Công (阮文功) and Phan Hiễn Đạt (潘显达) were sent to China on official business.⁵⁰ At the end of this year, the officials came back and reported to Emperor Minh Mạng on the incident wherein the opium was destroyed by Commissioner Lin Zexu (林则徐) in Guangzhou. Also, the fight between the Qing and the Western powers lasted a long time, and neither side had won a decisive victory before the main force of the British troops arrived. On this point, Emperor Minh Mạng offered veiled criticism on the Chinese dejection and apathy during this event.⁵¹ In Emperor Minh Mạng's mind, he was mortified that the Qing, as a great power, had not defeated the British troops after around six or seven months of fighting. Therefore, the Nguyễn rulers viewed the Qing court with disdain. Furthermore, there was a hidden reason behind the Vietnamese scorn of the Qing court: the Sino-Vietnamese trade route by sea was obstructed by the Opium War, and trade was not running as smoothly as it had before. Many essential cargoes, such as medicine and tea, could not be transported to Vietnam.⁵² In addition, the criticism of the Opium War exposed the pervasive fear of

⁵⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 202, p. 24.

⁵¹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 208, p. 27.

⁵² Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 208, p. 32; Vol. 209, p. 6.

the Huế court that British intervention would cause the traditional international trade between Vietnam and China to come tumbling down.⁵³

Thiệu Trị (1841–1847) and Tự Đức periods (1847–1883)

China began to decline in many respects relating to the economy, commerce and diplomacy once the first Opium War broke out. The tributary system, which China established to settle relations with its neighbours, was increasingly giving way to the treaty system with the arrival of the Western powers after the first Opium War. Unquestionably, as one part of the Chinese tributary system, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship was also greatly influenced by the traditional diplomatic pattern of China. The Nguyễn court was at a complete loss about what to do when faced with China's decline, since the Nguyễn had used ideas similar to those of the Chinese to settle affairs between Vietnam and its neighbours. The only way that the country could manage was to continue to place great hopes in the recovery of the Chinese world order. It was possible that the Huế court did not want to give up the good choice of trade by paying tribute.

By the Thiệu Trị and Tự Đức periods, the Chinese emperor used the long distance between Beijing and Huế as a pretext to postpone the time that the Vietnamese paid tribute. However, Huế lost not only the opportunities to pay tribute, but also the choice

⁵³ Alexander Barton Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese model: a comparative study of Vietnamese and Chinese government in the first half of the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 280.

for trade. In 1842, Vietnam had intended to pay tribute. Unfortunately, the Chinese emperor postponed the tribute to the next time due to the Opium War.⁵⁴ The Nguyễn court had to look for another way to continue trade in China, since the opportunities of trading while paying tribute were lost. Vietnamese officials were thereby dispatched to China by taking Chinese ships to trade in Guangdong.⁵⁵ The following year, the Nguyễn court did this again.⁵⁶

During the Tự Đức period, the Taiping Rebellion made China an area of troubled waters, in particular in Guangdong and Guangxi. Liang Guang was the only possible route for the Vietnamese tribute envoys to Beijing. Besides, the Western powers' entry into China changed a vital aspect of diplomatic relations. The Sino-Southeast Asian relationship had given way to Sino-Western relations. Fear of the Western forces left the Qing with no time and energy to consider the Vietnamese tribute. Therefore, the Chinese emperor postponed the payment time of Vietnam in 1849, 1850, 1852, and 1861. Even in 1861, when Emperor Xian Feng (咸丰) died, the Chinese court still did not recondition tribute, due to complicated diplomatic relations with Western countries and domestic unrest, in particular rebellions in Southeast China at that time.⁵⁷ The Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations lapsed until Vietnam was brought into a treaty system with the first Saigon Treaty signed in 1862.

⁵⁴ ĐNLT, Chính Biên III, Vol. 18, p. 25.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 58, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 68, p. 25.

⁵⁷ Mu zong shi lu 穆宗实录, Vol. 82, p. 32–33 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 330.

In 1848, the Chinese emperor sent Lao Chongguang (劳崇光), the Surveillance Commissioner in Guangxi province, to present the imperial decree which conferred Nguyễn Phúc Thời with the title of the Vietnamese emperor Tự Đức.⁵⁸ The Chinese officials went to Hà Nội (Thăng Long was the old name of Hà Nội) principally to confer an imperial decree. Huế was always the Nguyễn imperial capital, but apparently the Qing chose to ignore this at this point in time. Thereafter, the Huế court should accept the imperial decree in Hà Nội. However, Emperor Tự Đức solicited the Chinese emperor to proceed to Huế.⁵⁹ This request was due to three considerations. On one hand, if the Chinese official went to Huế instead, the Qing court would have a clear idea that the Nguyễn was a completely separate dynasty from the previous one. On the other hand, accepting the Chinese imperial decree in Huế was a way to make the domestic situation stable, since Tự Đức had just succeeded to the throne. Ultimately, Tự Đức could save a great deal of money which was used to receive the Qing officials. The tributary state had an obligation to receive officials from the suzerain state in the proper manner. The decorations on houses along the roads cost the tributary state a lot of money. The reception also had to observe detailed rules, based on ritual regulations in Vietnamese history.⁶⁰ For the Nguyễn, the cost of receiving officials from China in Huế was cheaper than in Hanoi.⁶¹ The Chinese emperor approved. Emperor Tự Đức was extremely proud, because this was the first time that Chinese officials had gone to

⁵⁸ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 461, p. 4–5 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 325.

⁵⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên IV, Vol. 1, pp. 31–32.

⁶⁰ LHTLTC, Vol Bang Giao, Vol. 46, p. 150–195.

⁶¹ Sun Hongnian, qing dai zhong yue zong fan guan xi yan jiu, 2006, p. 151.

Vietnam personally to give an imperial decree on behalf of the Chinese emperor since the Nguyễn Dynasty had been established. This event indicates that Vietnam in the Nguyễn dynasty still emphasised its separate dynastic identity.

4. New characteristics in Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations

In general, tribute trade was a necessary part of the tributary system. Without exception, the Sino-Vietnamese tribute trade followed the normal Sino-Vietnamese tributary system in the nineteenth century. According to Mark Mancall, the tribute trade under China's world order was processed into three parts: 'gift trade', 'market trade' and 'administrated trade'. To some degree, the Sino-Vietnamese tribute trade also fit this pattern. Gift trade was a basic part of the Sino-Vietnamese tribute trade. The quantity and kinds of tribute goods were not fixed during the Song Dynasty.⁶² The Ming regulated tribute goods including silver and gold wares and the like.⁶³ There was no rigid or compulsory type of goods that Đại Việt had to present for tribute.⁶⁴ On some occasions, the vassals could obtain the exemption of duties. Apart from gift trade where Vietnam presented gifts to China and vice versa, the Vietnamese vassal also engaged in local deals in Beijing and frontier customs market trade. Ping'er and Shuikou as market

⁶² Xu song 徐松 song hui yao ji gao 宋会要辑稿 [Draft of documents pertaining to Song official matters]. Bei jing Zhong hua shu ju 北京中华书局, 1957, p. 7728–7730; LHTLC, Vol. 46, p. 77.

⁶³ Shen shixing 申时行. Ming hui dian 明会典 [Official compendium of institutions and usages of Ming]. Shang hai shang wu yin shu guan, 1936, Vol. 105, p. 2287.

⁶⁴ Kun Gang. qin ding da qing hui dian shi li, Vol. 503, p. 56.

trade customs were licensed by the Qing court in 1790.⁶⁵ From 1790 onwards, market trade with tribute was authorised in the local customs of Qinzhou in Guangdong and Shuikou Customs in Guangxi, as both were next to the frontier.⁶⁶

Besides these common aspects of tribute trade, the Sino-Vietnamese tributary also sprouted some new traits at that time. These traits could be important clues to understand the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations in the nineteenth century.

4.1 Purchase on the way to the capital Beijing.

Aside from market trade at frontier markets or in Beijing, Vietnam also purchased articles on the tribute route since Nguyễn Vietnam became a vassal paying tribute to China by land. Besides the gifts given by Chinese officials during welcoming and sending-off ceremonies, the Vietnamese envoys also gave some articles in return. Concurrently, they also purchased items on the way to Beijing. *Như Thanh Nhật Kí* (如清日记, the diary during the journey to China) provides us with a vivid picture of Vietnamese envoys to Beijing to pay tribute. This document recorded not only commercial but also daily activities. There were no documents to show the proportion of private trade and those of official Vietnamese trade during this journey. However, one example can give us some ideas about the private trade during tribute journey. Phan

⁶⁵ Li bu wei nei ge chao chu liang guang zong du fu kang an deng zou yi hui 礼部为内阁抄出两广总督福康安等奏移会 in Tai wan zhong yang yan jiu yuan li shi yu yan yan jiu suo 台湾中央研究院历史语言研究所. Ming qing shi liao 明清史料 (庚编) [The historical materials in Ming and Qing dynasty]. Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 1987.

⁶⁶ Liang Tingnan, yue hai guan zhi, Vol. 24, p. 33.

Huy Chú (潘輝注) was found guilty because he bought more private goods than official merchandise.⁶⁷

Some private deals also happened during gift trade. The Vietnamese envoys obtained *shang shu* (尚書, Confucian classics), sugar, elephant tusks, and other items from officials in Hubei province.⁶⁸ Vietnam also gave the local Chinese officials a variety of other goods, such as ivory fans.⁶⁹ This archive also affords us a picture of the trade activities of Vietnamese missions in inland China. In December 1868, Vietnamese envoys dispatched retinues to buy items in Hanyang (漢陽) in China.⁷⁰ In March and April of 1867, Vietnamese missions' retinues were appointed to purchase goods, which sometimes included the collecting of books.⁷¹ As far as goods are concerned, it was possible for Vietnamese missions to buy necessities such as herbs and many volumes of articles for the Nguyễn government.

From these accounts, we can see that Huế took a very pragmatic approach to trade en route. Apparently, 'trade on the way' could not be on a large scale either. On what kind of occasions did Vietnam obtain more trade opportunities under the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations and how did the Huế court enlarge the trade fields in the tribute system? How did Vietnam's endeavour to enlarge trade opportunities

⁶⁷ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 79, p. 17.

⁶⁸ *Như Thanh Nhật Ký* 如清日記 [The journal to Beijing]. Viện Hán Nôm. A102., p. 80.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 86.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 38.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 61–62.

appear under traditional Sino-Vietnamese relations? The other obligations they shouldered should offer clues to the answers to these questions.

4.2 Rescuing the Chinese shipwrecks

The obligation to rescue shipwrecked people was set up between China and its tributaries. Besides the gifts and goods returned by China during the payment of tribute, Huế's vessels had privileges on trade such as the exemption of either import or export tax when Nguyễn sent shipwrecked Chinese crews back. This method was usually a shortcut for the Huế court to undertake maritime trade, which had never been accepted under the tribute system.

Besides paying tribute, the rescuing of wrecked crews became a close connection between China and Vietnam in the nineteenth century. For China, the Chinese court rescued Vietnamese wrecked crews as a demonstration of its obedience. In contrast, for Vietnam, there was another hidden meaning. On one hand, it was in this way that the Nguyễn strengthened Sino-Vietnamese political contacts. On the other hand, the Huế court succeeded in conducting more deals than prescribed by the Sino-Vietnamese tribute system.

Đại Nam not only rescued the Chinese wrecks but also offered them many articles or necessities. In 1804, ten Chinese merchants drifted in Quảng Trị (廣治) and Bình Định (平定) in Vietnam due to a typhoon. Every one of them received five dou rice and

one string of copper.⁷² In 1810, Li Qianzong (李千总) and Xiao Yuanhou (萧元侯), the officials in Taiwan, and their nine Chinese followers were stranded in Vietnam on the way to China. The Nguyễn administration not only gave them 60 strings of copper, four rolls of thin silk and 19 rolls of cloth, but also dispatched official ships to take them to Huế. Thereafter, the Huế court awarded Xiao Yuanhou's family with extra items like various clothing and other articles for daily life, and sixty liang silver and one hundred string of copper.⁷³

The real reason why Nguyễn Vietnam did not cease to escort the Chinese shipwrecks back was because they strove for increased trade opportunities in China. Apparently, the transaction value of trade by sea exceeded that of tribute trade by land more than tenfold. In 1829, the Huế court dispatched official ships to escort the Cantonese back to China and asked for permission to trade. The Chinese court allowed them to sell their cargoes and purchase goods in Guangzhou without tax, as a reward for rescuing them.⁷⁴ Escorting the Chinese shipwrecks back was, in fact, the most effective way to trade in China for the Vietnamese, even though the Chinese court had directly refused the Vietnamese petition for trade in Guangzhou by sea. In 1831, the Vietnamese officials, Trần Văn Trung (陈文忠) and Cao Hữu Dực (高有翼), escorted Li Zhenqing (李振青), his family, and their entourage back home.⁷⁵ Li was an ex-official of Fujian

⁷² KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 9.

⁷³ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 10.

⁷⁴ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 156, p.39–41 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 295.

⁷⁵ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 197, p.14–17. xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 156, p. 39–41 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 298.

Province. Apart from the gifts bestowed by Emperor Dao Guang and 14 rolls of superior quality brocades, the ballast from Vietnamese ships was allowed to be sold at the local seaport.⁷⁶ This included cinnamon, birds' nest, eaglewood, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, yellow wax, white tin, ebony, sugar, dried small shrimps, dried fish, rabbit fur, and other items.⁷⁷

In the summer of 1833, a fleet of almost 70 official Chinese ships berthed in Vietnam's waters. Liang Guodong (梁国栋) was an official who had died in a shipwreck. The Vietnamese government had rescued the ship and smoothly arranged the funeral rites for the deceased official. The Chinese court awarded the Vietnamese various brocades and other items and allowed them to trade without tax in Guangdong.⁷⁸ In March 1834, Chen Zilong (陈子龙), an official in Guangdong province, and about 27 Chinese subordinates were caught in a hurricane at sea, and moored in Thanh Hóa (清化) in Vietnam. Chen and his subordinates were rescued by the Vietnamese government. Moreover, the Nguyễn court dispatched Lý Văn Phức (李文馥) to escort Chen back to China. The Vietnamese ships were authorised to sell the cargoes which they had loaded and buy goods in China without tax in Guangdong again.⁷⁹ Thereafter, the Nguyễn was vigilant and prompt about returning Chinese shipwrecks. It is certain that Vietnamese sea trade in local seaports without tax was

⁷⁶ Kun Gang, qin ding da qing hui dian shi li, Vol. 513, p. 167.

⁷⁷ Zhou Kai 周凯. Xia men zhi 厦门志 [The gazetteer of Xiamen]. Tai bei, Cheng wen chu ban she 台北: 成文出版社, 1967, Vol. 8, p. 19.

⁷⁸ xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 238, p.18–20. in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985. p. 305.

⁷⁹ Kun Gang. qin ding da qing hui dian shi li. Vol. 513, p. 168.

sanctioned, as can be seen by documents from 1844, 1845, 1851, 1855, and 1857. Obviously, the Vietnamese government attempted to improve Sino-Vietnamese maritime trade by rescuing and returning Chinese shipwrecks, as one important facet of Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations.

Nguyễn Vietnam did not give up on improving Sino-Vietnamese maritime trade, particularly since the petition for altering the schedule and regulation to pay tribute had been refused time after time by the Chinese court. The Huế court, to some degree, had achieved its aim in maritime trade in the way described above, as this could not be realised under the regular pattern of Sino-Vietnamese tributary trade. As for the quantity of goods, it seems that the carrying capacity of vessels was larger than that of their chests. In this way, the Huế court increased its contact with Qing and optimised Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations in the process.

4.3 Extradition and Repatriation

The Sino-Vietnamese borderlands were the popular places where bandits and pirates were active. Cooperation between China and Vietnam, such as extraditing and repatriating the bandits and pirates, was a regular affair under the Sino-Vietnamese tributary system. For China, extraditing and repatriating bandits and pirates were obligatory in Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations. For Vietnam, extraditing and repatriating bandits and pirates was not only the reflection of close relations with China,

but was also another way to improve Sino-Vietnamese trade relations in the name of the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship.

The frequent contact between the two countries through the extradition and repatriation of bandits and pirates can be attributed to two factors. In one respect, the maritime trade could easily be realised in this manner, since vessels for extraditing and repatriating had special tax-free trade privileges in China. Rescuing shipwrecks, and extraditing and repatriating pirates and bandits were also better ways to trade directly in China. In 1835, the Vietnamese moored with more goods for sale in Guangdong, when they repatriated Liang Kaifa and two other Chinese pirates. The Qing court eventually approved this trade, even though they did not believe it was a good way to do that.⁸⁰

However, this admonishment did not have much effect. In 1843, Trương Hào Hợp (张好合) and Nguyễn Cư Sĩ (阮居仕) repatriated eight Chinese pirates, Jin Erji (金二纪) and seven other followers. As a result of this effort, the Vietnamese official ships were rewarded with more goods, which included 30 ivory fans, 20 tortoise shells, five pairs of gold decorations and 15 pairs of silver decorations, 20 round-mouthed food vessels inlaid with tortoise shell, and including two or four loop handles, five liang of cerate with fragrance, twenty rolls of various voiles, ten rolls of various thin voiles, and ten rolls of pure white and fine silk, among other treasures.⁸¹

In 1845, the Chinese pirates, Huang Jinxiu (黄进秀), Xu Yasan (许亚三) and others were arrested when they landed in Vạn Ninh (万宁) in Vietnam after being pursued.

⁸⁰ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 272, p. 5–6 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 314.

⁸¹ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 16.

Four pirate ships were detained by the Vietnamese government.⁸² These Vietnamese official ships gained an opportunity for trade in Guangdong without any further tax, because they had respectfully and submissively extradited pirates.⁸³

It is noteworthy that the Huế court repatriated and extradited frequently during the Thiệu Trị period, in 1843, 1844, 1845, respectively. Two factors could explain this. On one hand, there were restrictions on some items such as tea, corruption in customs, the entry of Europeans into economic affairs, and the great increase in smuggling and pirate rampancy around 1840s in China, which in turn caused more such activity in Vietnamese waters.⁸⁴ Accordingly, the frequency and scale of extraditing and repatriating Chinese pirates also increased. The Vietnamese government extradited around 200 Chinese pirates after repatriating Chen Wan (陈晚), Cao Er (曹二), Peng Yafu (彭亚福) and six other Chinese pirates in 1842.⁸⁵ On the other hand, intensifying extradition and repatriation for the Nguyễn became an alternative way of trade in the face of reduced opportunities for tribute from 1839, when Qing court decreased the occasions that Vietnam paid tribute because the Western powers became the most emergent issues around the time of the Opium War.

⁸² Ibid. Vol. 131, pp. 20–21.

⁸³ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录 Vol. 421, p. 5 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 324; Kun Gang. Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li Vol. 513, p. 169.

⁸⁴ Chen xiyu 陈希育, Zhong guo fan chuan yu hai wai mao yi 中国帆船与海外贸易. Xia men [The Chinese junks and overseas trade], Xia men da xue chu ban she 厦门: 厦门大学出版社, 1991, p. 228.

⁸⁵ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, pp. 20–21.

5. *Như Đông Công Vụ*: Going directly to Guangdong for official business

It is noteworthy that *Như Đông Công Vụ* (如东公务, going directly to Guangdong for official business) under the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship occurred frequently during the nineteenth century. As far as researching Sino-Vietnamese relations is concerned, *Như Đông Công Vụ* was either neglected or was regarded as just one facet of tributary relations. Nonetheless, during the Nguyễn Dynasty, different dimensions of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship are revealed after taking *Như Đông Công Vụ* into account.

Như Đông Công Vụ was not explicitly mentioned in the main history records in Vietnam before the Nguyễn Dynasty was established. It was recorded frequently in the actual records of the Nguyễn Dynasty, but the purpose or activities of *Như Đông Công Vụ* were not detailed in these records. Based on the official documents of Nguyễn, it can be generally inferred that *Như Đông Công Vụ* included some official commercial activities and other obligations and issues under Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations. *Như Đông Công Vụ* can be regarded as one part of Sino-Vietnamese relations. On most occasions, *Như Đông Công Vụ* was both the official title and reason in their country that Huế invented to go to Guangdong so that they could trade. The purpose of this label of *Như Đông Công Vụ* was to disguise their trade in Qing since the latter never approved of Vietnam paying tribute to China by sea and paid tribute trade.

Normal tributary trade, gift trade, and market trade at the frontier or in Beijing could not accomplish trade on a large scale. Rescuing Chinese wrecked crews and repatriating and extraditing bandits and pirates to some extent fulfilled the goal of ‘a big deal’ for

the Nguyễn within the framework of Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations, but rescues or repatriations were, by nature, haphazard opportunities that could not be carried out on a regular basis. As such, trade was still limited. Since the Gia Long period, *Như Đông Công Vụ* increasingly became a way for the Vietnamese government to directly engage in maritime trade.

Trading under the name of *Như Đông Công Vụ* had some striking merits during the Nguyễn Dynasty. Firstly, *Như Đông Công Vụ* became a regulation during the Nguyễn Dynasty. The Nguyễn proceeded to undertake *Như Đông Công Vụ* 19 times from 1802 to 1864, six times in the Gia Long period, eight times in the Minh Mạng, three times under Thiệu Trị, and twice in the Tự Đức period, even though the precedent on *Như Đông Công Vụ* had been openly rescinded in Vietnam before 1863.

Secondly, trade on a larger scale at the governmental level occurred alongside *Như Đông Công Vụ*. The amount of money that officers carried illustrated, in a sense, that the transaction amounts of *Như Đông Công Vụ* by sea exceeded that of market trade under Sino-Vietnamese tributary trade. In 1806, Lương Chân Quan (梁真观) and Trương Bảo Thiện (张宝善), who both carried 30,000 strings of copper, were appointed as the officials to be sent to China to purchase cargo.⁸⁶ Four years later, in 1810, Trương Bảo Thiện (张宝善) and Lữ Hữu Định (吕有定), who were in *Minh Hương* in Gia Định, took 20,000 liang of silver to Guangdong to purchase goods.⁸⁷ In 1814, Tạ Bằng Chu (谢鹏周) and Chu Tứ Kí (周泗记), who were both Chinese *Thanh Nhân* (清

⁸⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 28, p. 11.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 40, p. 14.

人), were commissioned by the Vietnamese government of Bắc Thành (北城) to take 10,000 liang of silver to Guangdong to purchase goods.⁸⁸

Finally, the Chinese were an essential part of trade for the Nguyễn government. As Anthony Reid points out, Siam and Vietnam had always commissioned pure Chinese merchants to make deals with China since the seventeenth century. This factor dramatically accelerated the control of commerce by the Chinese, as a crucial part of the Southeast Asian world in the latter part of the eighteenth century.⁸⁹ This pattern was still practised in Vietnam in the Nguyễn period. Here, the Chinese were either *Minh Hương* or common Chinese merchants, who were travelling merchants or sojourned in Vietnam for deals.

Of the four times that *Như Đông Công Vụ* occurred during the Gia Long period, the Nguyễn court commissioned the Chinese to Guangdong for the purchase of goods three times. Most of the officials sent to Guangdong were Chinese or *Minh Hương*. Trương Bảo Thiện was *Minh Hương*, while Tạ Bằng Chu and Chu Tứ Kí were Chinese merchants in China. Nguyễn dispatched officials to Guangdong in 1820 twice, 1822, 1823, and 1827. After 1829, Nguyễn Vietnam appointed officials to Guangdong only three times, in 1832, 1837, and 1839. Prior to the Gia Long period, Vietnam dispatched officials to China to purchase goods named *Thải Mãi Hóa Hạng* (采买货项). Moreover, by the Minh Mạng period, *Thải Mãi Hóa Hạng* as the reason for going to Guangdong,

⁸⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 48, pp. 19–20.

⁸⁹ Anthony Reid, “A New Phase of Commercial Expansion in Southeast Asia, 1760–1850” in Anthony Reid, ed. *The last stand of Asian autonomies: responses to modernity in the diverse states of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750–1900* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 68–68.

was changed to *Như Đông Công Vụ* by virtue of the failure of the petition for open trade in Guangdong in 1829.⁹⁰

This feature became conspicuous during the Thiệu Trị and Tự Đức periods, with the opportunities for tribute lessening in 1839.⁹¹ The Huế court did not halt commissions to conduct trade, even though the Chinese government severely restricted trade by its tributaries in Guangdong. The Chinese government reiterated this point after the Chinese Jin Xieshun Enterprise (金协顺) and Chen Chengfa Enterprise (陈澄发) had gone to Guangzhou to trade with Siamese royalty in 1807.⁹² Obviously, admonishment did not influence the Sino-Siamese trade, which was characterised by the ‘acquiescence of Chinese authorities in the Siamese practice of employing Chinese for official and semi-official trade,’ and the ‘Chinese merchants’ supremacy and undisputed role in the Sino-Siamese trade.’⁹³ As in Siam, the Chinese merchants engaged in the official trade of the Nguyễn government with Qing. Furthermore, the Chinese merchants played an undisputed role in the official trade for the Nguyễn when the normal Sino-Vietnamese tributary trade started to decline.

In 1846, Ngô Kim Thanh (吴金声) and five other officials went to Guangdong to purchase goods through Chinese commercial ships.⁹⁴ In 1847, the Nguyễn Court commissioned Li Tailu (李泰陆), a Chinese merchant in Quang Nam in Vietnam, to go

⁹⁰ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 156, p. 39–41 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 295.

⁹¹ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 320 p. 37 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 317.

⁹² Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录. Vol. 185, p. 6–10 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 913.

⁹³ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and profit: Sino-Siamese trade, 1652–1853*, 1977, pp. 160–161.

⁹⁴ ĐNTL, Chính Biên III, Vol. 58, p. 1.

to Guangdong to purchase goods for the Huế court.⁹⁵ In the same year, Đỗ Văn Hải (杜文海) and Hồ Đức Tuyên (胡得宣) were appointed to purchase goods in Guangdong.⁹⁶ Apart from Li Tailu, all of the officers who were appointed to Guangdong sailed on Chinese merchant vessels.

In the first year of Emperor Tự Đức's reign, the Nguyễn court accepted the official memorial by Nguyễn Văn Chân (阮文振) to abrogate *Như Đông Công Vụ* for two reasons. Firstly, it was not consistent with frugality, because goods purchased during *Như Đông Công Vụ* included some valuable antiques and jade ware. Another concern was that it would be inappropriate to ship back too many luxury items by *Như Đông Công Vụ* in the mourning period after Thiệu Trị's demise.⁹⁷ However, the Huế court started this again in 1863, after the Chinese court paused the Vietnamese payment of tribute in 1860.⁹⁸ The Nguyễn court deployed Trần Như Sơn (陈如山) to Guangdong again by Chinese merchant vessels for purchasing goods in 1863.⁹⁹ It is possible that the Nguyễn court needed this kind of trade to meet their demands for luxury items from China. Therefore, they had to restart *Như Đông Công Vụ*.

Besides *Như Đông Công Vụ* as a pattern of trade, the Vietnamese court also commissioned Chinese merchants or vessels to China to purchase official goods. Chen Chingho has pointed out that the Nguyễn used Chinese merchants to sell certain special

⁹⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 64, p. 12.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 68, p. 25.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 1, p. 32.

⁹⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 25, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 28, p. 33.

articles such as pepper, high quality eaglewood, bird's nests, and other items.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, he also pointed out that some influential Chinese merchants monopolised all the cargoes for royalty and the Vietnamese government under the Nguyễn.¹⁰¹ The cargoes were usually both Chinese and Western goods. Most of them were for the government and for royalty. The Nguyễn court gave every Chinese ship that moored in different ports of Vietnam some money, ranging from 3,000 or 5,000 to 10,000 or 20,000 strings of copper for purchasing goods in China. The Chinese merchants handed in these goods to the Vietnamese government when they returned to Vietnam in the following year. The Board of Revenue passed a commodities list drawn up by the Armoury section of the Imperial Household Department to the Chinese merchants. They would not be subject to tax when they returned with the official goods.

The Chinese merchants had this prerogative to be exempted from tax. The value of the articles they carried back determined the extent of their tax exemption. These ships were free of duty if the value they shipped back was beyond 6,000 strings of coppers.¹⁰² In 1856, the Nguyễn court commissioned some Chinese commercial vessels to bring back Chinese and Western goods.¹⁰³ Furthermore, many princesses in the Huế court also bought exotic things from the Chinese commercial ships that came to Vietnam.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Chen Chingho 陈荆和. Cheng tian ming xiang she he qing he fu 承天明香社和清河甫 [Ming Huong Xã and Thanh Hà village in Thua Thien]. Xin ya xue bao 新亚学报 Vol. 4, p. 314.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 324.

¹⁰² KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol 36, p. 17.

¹⁰³ ĐNLT, Chính Biên IV, Vol. 14, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 23, p. 27.

In addition, the Nguyễn court purchased goods directly from Chinese border provinces such as Yunnan. In 1805, Bắc Thành presented marble from Yunnan to the Nguyễn court.¹⁰⁵ In 1806, the Nguyễn court sent La Sĩ Đông (罗士东) to China to buy goods. La Sĩ Đông took 300 hu of silver to China to purchase silk, damask, and other cargo by the land route.¹⁰⁶ In 1831, the Nguyễn government appointed officials in Bắc Thành to buy good horses and gems in Yunnan via the land route.¹⁰⁷

From these examples, *Như Đông Công Vụ* was an attempt to build a more frequent and regular trade between the Nguyễn government and China. The Chinese were indispensable in the Nguyễn Vietnamese practice of the official trade under *Như Đông Công Vụ*. In addition, regular commercial relations between the Vietnamese government and the Chinese world, and even the outside world became the exclusive domain of the Chinese. ‘In Vietnam, this pattern of indirect trade with China influenced the Sino-Vietnamese conduct of international relations. It ensured that the Nguyễn court’s whole view of foreign trade would be dominated by the idea of employing bureaucratically controlled Chinese middlemen.’¹⁰⁸

6. Conclusion

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 27, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Châu Bản [Vermillion Books of the Nguyễn dynasty], microfilm in Australia National University libraries’ collection, Reel 2.

¹⁰⁷ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 73, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese model*, p. 277.

China's tributary system, in place since the Han dynasty, was stable but started to decline by the Qing dynasty, especially after the Opium War. From the Opium War onwards, the tributary system began to evolve into the treaty system. Concurrently, tribute trade also transformed with the evolution of the tributary system. This transformation exerted an influence on Sino-Vietnamese relations. During this period, the Qing did not concentrate on territorial aggression or defence, but were content with the ritual of receiving tribute as a suzerain which in turn bestowed commercial benefits to its vassals. That China placed more emphasis on ritual rather than aggression in the tributary system created many opportunities or grey areas for Vietnam and even other kingdoms in Southeast Asia to profit. However, the trade opportunities tributary system created were limited. Furthermore, by the nineteenth century, the tributary system as a normative pattern to handle international affairs became ineffective in the increasingly complicated relations between China and other countries.

Conversely, as one aspect of China's world order, Vietnam also made indispensable contributions to China's tributary system. The demand for commerce spurred Nguyễn to intensify political contact with China by the tributary system, and Sino-Vietnamese diplomatic and political relations appeared stable. The flexibility of China's tributary system offered Vietnam chances to strengthen its status as a separate state or a dynastic identity recognised by China. Both smooth diplomatic relations and status were very significant for Nguyễn to survive in the shadow of its giant northern neighbour. Concurrently, Vietnam enlarged the trade fields through irregular practices in the

tributary system such as repatriation and dispatching Chinese to trade in Guangdong and the like. The tribute trade could no longer be confined to the few ways regulated by China. This paved the way for the transformation from tribute trade to maritime and even open foreign trade, and from the tributary system to equal state-to-state relations with the outside world.

Apart from the improvement of Sino-Vietnamese relations by some special ways in the tribute system, the domestic trade activities with the Chinese, in a sense, also influenced Sino-Vietnamese relations such as authorised trade contacts. This point will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Sino-Vietnamese private trade and the trade system in northern Vietnam

1. Introduction

The Sino-Vietnamese tribute trade played a crucial role in Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations. Tribute trade created the contacts necessary to complete merchandise exchanges at the governmental level, even though fewer Chinese merchants under the service of the Nguyễn government participated in tribute trade. However, tribute trade did not dominate Sino-Vietnamese trade communications. Officially sanctioned trade in northern Vietnam created more trade opportunities for the Chinese merchants. The private traders enlarged the Sino-Vietnamese trade contacts. Among these merchants, some merchants iterated southern China and northern Vietnam to make deals while others plied the South China Sea and the Tonkin Gulf to make their fortunes. These travelling merchants either resided in Vietnam or travelled back and forth.

It is well known that Chinese merchants played an important role in the junk trade between China and regions in Southeast Asia, especially in the early modern period. Historians documenting China's maritime trade have produced a number of excellent research works focusing on the maritime trade between Chinese merchants and the Vietnamese, particularly in the Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam.¹ However, in the

¹ On this point, see Nola Cooke and Li Tana, ed., *Water frontier: commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004); Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong, ed., *Maritime China in transition 1750–1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004); Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998).

nineteenth century, Chinese merchants still contributed to Sino-Vietnamese commercial communications by both sea and land.

What kind of role did Chinese merchants play in Sino-Vietnamese trade communications? How did trade contacts between southern China and northern Vietnam, cross-border and maritime trade, northern and other parts of Vietnam work? With the aim of answering these questions, this chapter explores the internal mechanism that effectively turned these regions into a single economic unit, and discusses the roles played by cross-border and maritime trade in Vietnam.

2. Overland and maritime trade in northern Vietnam

To the central government of China, Yunnan and Liangguang (两广) were southern frontiers. The frontier became one part of northern Vietnam when Nguyễn Phúc Ánh declared the capital to be Huế in 1802. Northern Vietnam's borderlands were adjacent to the border provinces in Qing China, namely Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong. In the eighteenth century, Sino-Vietnamese cross-border trade flourished with the development of mining in border provinces in southern China as well as northern Vietnam, and local trade along the tribute route from Hà Nội to the Southern Pass in Guangxi. Furthermore, Vietnamese waters in the north were also connected with southern Chinese waters. The Tonkin Gulf was a huge arena for traders. In addition, the ocean in northern Vietnam, which was adjacent to Qinzhou and Lianzhou (廉州) in China, had many islands further out to sea. The commercial connections among these

islands always figured in the maritime trade network. The maritime trade network, which was characterised by short –travel –routes among these islands, was a variation of coastal trade. Maritime, coastal, and cross-border overland trade in northern Vietnam were united into multi-faceted internal and external trading networks, rather than a simple, one-way commercial model.

Cross-border and maritime trade constituted one huge trade network in northern Vietnam and southern China, connecting border provinces on both sides of China and Vietnam, and running from the mountainous regions to the sea internally and externally. Due to the geographical proximity of southern China and northern Vietnam, the growth in commerce on one side of the border could generate important developments on the other side. A remarkable growth in commerce in southern China, such as in Yunnan, created change in northern Vietnam, as Giersch noted: ‘The growth of local commerce that drew frontier people into large commercial regions and the integration of the Sino-Southeast Asian borderlands into a more elaborate long-distance trade network.’² Furthermore, an effective transportation system via the Red River supported cross-border and maritime trade networks, stimulating Sino-Vietnamese commerce during the Nguyễn dynasty. In the seventeenth century, Europe had taken note of the excellent transportation system along the Red River that linked Yunnan directly to northern Vietnam. By the early nineteenth century, Crawford also described it thus:

² Patterson Giersch, *Asian borderlands: the transformation of Qing China's Yunnan frontier* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 184.

The capital of Tonquin is situated upon this stream at a distance of about 120 miles from the river mouth. This river, which fertilises a large area, is the principal source of the productivity of Tonquin, and, having its origin in the centre of the great Chinese province of Yun-nan and extending throughout the whole of Tonguin, it would appear to provide a very extensive and useful internal navigation channel.³

Furthermore, they also noticed that the Red River was connected to the border provinces of Southern China and could form a huge, effective commercial network:

Besides this channel of employment for our capital via the maritime river ports of China, a new and mostly untried channel is given to us for disseminating our products among the Chinese; the connection between the northern portions of Cochin China and the provinces of China which immediately border upon it, particularly the extensive province of Yunnan. An international trade in bricks is at present conducted between these countries, as well as our opium and some of our European manufactures, which find their way from Canton to the Western provinces through the route of Tonquin.⁴

2.1. Dimensions of the trade route connecting northern Vietnam and southern

China

³ “Crawfurd’s report on the state of the Annamese Empire” in Alastair Lamb, *The mandarin road to old Hué: narratives of Anglo-Vietnamese diplomacy from the 17th century to the eve of the French conquest* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), p. 258.

⁴ “Narrative of the Crawfurd mission to Hué, 1822” in Alastair Lamb, *The mandarin road to old Hué*, p. 250.

The major routes connecting the different parts of the regions around the Gulf of Tonkin and the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands were shaped by Chinese military conquests in northern Vietnam, Vietnam paying tribute to China by land and local cross-border caravan trades.

Commercial communications existed among the local people, both Vietnamese and Chinese, in the borderlands and waterways of northern Vietnam and southern China. The roads from Yunnan, Guangdong, and Guangxi to northern Vietnam constituted a network and provided communications to China, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia. The documentation regarding these roads gives us a clearer understanding of the context of regional trade along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands and waterways.

The maritime channel from Vietnam to China was via Guangdong. Based on Chinese records, the route from Guangdong was the earliest one used by China's government.

Departing from Danzhou (儋州, now Hainan) in the Guangdong province, it was around two days' voyage west to Vạn Ninh, followed by a three-day voyage to Vân Đồn (云屯). From Yazhou (崖州, now Haikou海口) in the Hainan province, it was a two-day southward voyage to Champa.⁵ If one departed from Guangzhou at the end of autumn, it would be a three-day southward voyage to Dapeng (大鹏), Xiangshan (香山), Yashan (崖山), Gaozhou (高州), Leizhou (雷州), and Qiongya (琼崖), after which

⁵ Zhang Yuesong 张岳崧, *Qiong zhou fu zhi* 琼州府志 [The gazetteer of Qiong Prefecture].影印本. 1841, Vol. 3, p. 55.

travellers could easily sail south to Champa and Siam.⁶ If one departed from Wu Leishan (乌雷山) in Lianzhou of the Guangdong province, it only took one or two days to sail northward to the Hải Đông (海东) prefecture in Vietnam, but it took around six or seven days to sail along the coast to the Hải Đông prefecture in Vietnam if one departed from Wu Leishan. It would then take three or four days to continue sailing southward along the coast to Vietnam's sea river ports, where one could enter Vietnam via the Bạch Đằng (白藤), Yên Đông (安东), and Đồ Sơn (山) river ports.⁷

Many islands were scattered along the coast and in the Gulf of Tonkin. Important river ports such as Vân Đồn and Trảng Sơn (撞山) emerged thanks to the flourishing trade among these islands off the coast in the Gulf of Tonkin.

As recorded in *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí*, Vietnam established the Vân Đồn District, also known as the Vân Đồn prefecture, many centuries before the Nguyễn period. It is located in the area bordering the islands adjoining the sea of China, and it contains only two settlements. In 1835, the throne first announced the names of local officials who reported to the governor of the sub-prefecture of Vạn Ninh (万宁知州). In 1843, the name of Vân Đồn Châu (云屯州) was abolished, and the area became the Canton of Vân Hải (Vân Hải Tổng, 云海总). The use of officials was discontinued while the

⁶ Lan Dingyuan 蓝鼎元, "Chao zhou hai fang tu shuo 潮州海防图说" [The delineating by maps on coast defense in Chaozhou] in He Changling 贺长龄, *huang chao jing shi wen bian 皇朝经世文编* [Statecraft writing of Qing period]. Tai bei, Guo feng chu ban she 台北, 国风出版社 1963, Vol. 83, p. 2112.

⁷ Gu zu yu 顾祖禹, *Du shi fang yu ji yao 读史方輿纪要* [The notes on geography while reading history]. Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局, 2005, p. 4991.

position of district chief was created. He would fall under the jurisdiction of the Nghiêu Phong (堯封) district.

Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư refers to the commercial contact between the Vietnamese river port of Vân Đồn on the edge of the Red River delta, ships from Java, the islands, and the areas around the Gulf of Siam during different eras.⁸ Vân Đồn was consistently involved in foreign trade via river ports in the frontier and independent periods as well as the Chinese colonial era. An independent official was established there to deal with the frequent commercial contact via the South China Sea with the rest of Southeast Asia.⁹

Most of the local people in Vân Đồn were fishermen. Many foreign merchants gathered here. Cai Tinlan (蔡廷兰), who was Chinese, floated to Vietnam after being shipwrecked and proceeded to travel around northern Vietnam, later describing the prosperity in Vân Đồn.¹⁰ Trảng Sơn was in Quảng Yên (广安), an eight-hour voyage from Vân Đồn. Many maritime vessels moored here.¹¹ Chinese merchant vessels could

⁸ Ngô Sĩ Liên 吴士连. *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* 大越史记全书 [The complete history of Imperial Vietnam], ed., Chen Jinghe 陈荆和编校 (Tokyo: 东京大学东洋文化研究所, 1985). Hereafter ĐVSKTT. Vol. 281, p. 295.

⁹ Yamamoto, Tatsuro: “Van Don, A Trade River port in Vietnam” in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 39, Tokyo, 1981, pp. 1–33.

¹⁰ Gao Qijin 高启进, Kai peng jin shi cai ting lan yu ‘hai nan za zhu’ 开澎进士蔡廷兰与《海南杂著》 [Cai Tinglan and *hai nan za zhu*]. Peng hu xian ma gong shi, peng hu xian wen hua ju 澎湖县马公市, 澎湖县文化局, 2005, p. 158.

¹¹ *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 大南一统志 [Gazetteer of Imperial Vietnam]. Tokyo, 1941. Hereafter ĐNNTC. Vol. Quảng Yên, pp. 17–18.

be found mooring as far as hundreds of li away from Trảng Sơn.¹² Besides Trảng Sơn, Cát Bà (葛婆) and Thác Mang (砵) were also famous areas in northern Vietnam. Cát Bà was located in the Chân Châu (真珠) village in the Nghiêu Phong (堯封) District in Quảng Yên, and many Chinese vessels berthed there. Many Chinese markets were located on the banks of Cát Bà.¹³ Thác Mang, which had many shops such as Yên Lương (安良), Yên Lạc (安乐), Na Tiên (那前), Mã Tê (马嘶), Đại Hoàng (大黃) and so on, was a booming area in the Vạn Ninh prefecture. 'Many Chinese merchants came together and it became a township; row upon the row of shops lined here; it was prosperous indeed.'¹⁴

Many islands were situated further seawards and were far away from the coastline of northern Vietnam. Some were located in the internal Gulf of Tonkin, nearer to the coast, and others were vital stops along the coast in Vietnam. Some islands were popular gathering places for pirates and smugglers. These islands became vital river ports for the central government of Nguyễn in terms of coastal defence and commerce. Bai Longwei (白龙尾, Bạch Long Vĩ) in the Yên Lương village in Quảng Yên lay adjacent to Fang Cheng (防城) in Qinzhou, China. During the Ming dynasty, China had established a police office and sea river port here. The locals carried out Vietnamese customs.¹⁵ Some islands were located along the main official route from northern

¹² Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu, 明命政要 [Essentials of government in Minh Menh period], Viện Hán Nôm. A57/10, Vol. 23, p. 41.

¹³ ĐNNTC, Vol. Quảng Yên, p. 28.

¹⁴ Ibid. Vol. Quảng Yên, p. 38.

¹⁵ Ibid. Vol. Quảng Yên, pp. 20–21.

Vietnam to China. Châu Sơn, which was adjacent to Qing China, was an example of such islands. The official diplomatic communications between China and Vietnam were delivered by sailing from Châu Sơn to Zhushan (竹山) town in China. One road in Châu Sơn (硃山) connected with Si Le Dong (思勒洞) in China.¹⁶

The second route departing from Guangxi was utilised as a tribute route. Many flourishing townships along this route appeared along with the beginning of the payment of tribute. This second route also had sub-routes, one of which departed from Ping Xiang (凭祥) in the Guangxi. It ran via Nan Quan (南关隘) to Văn Uyên (文渊) in Lạng Sơn (谅山), Thoát Lãng (脱朗) in Lạng Sơn, Uẩn Châu (温州) in Lạng Sơn, and the Bảo Lộc (宝禄) and Yên Việt (安越) districts of Bắc Ninh. The second sub-route started at Long Zhou (龙州) in the Guangxi. From Long Zhou, it crossed the Ping'er (平而) port and ended in the Yên Việt (安越) District. This route passed through the Văn Lan Bình Gia Xã (文兰平茄社) and Thất Uyên Districts (七渊县), Quỷ Môn Quan (鬼门关), and Ti Nông District (司农县).¹⁷ Both of these sub-routes converged in the Yên Việt District (安越县) and over the Phúc Lăng Giang (富浪江, now the Red River) to Vietnam.

This route was a regularly used commercial road since Emperor Qian Long approved the launch of the Ping'er and Shuikou ports for trade between the Vietnamese and Chinese after Quang Trung asked the Chinese emperor to re-open Sino-Vietnamese

¹⁶ Ibid. Vol. Quảng Yên, p. 15.

¹⁷ Da qing yi tong zhi 大清一统志 [Gazetteer of Imperial Qing China]. Shang hai shu dian 上海书店, 1984, Vol. Vietnam, p. 12.

commercial markets in 1793. This route became the Sino-Vietnamese commercial route along Zhen Nanguan (镇南关) and Long Zhou in Guangxi, as many small lanes led to Zhen Nanguan from Guangxi.¹⁸ Some towns in Vietnam developed in tandem with Sino-Vietnamese commercial development along this route. Mục Mã (牧马) in Cao Bằng and Khu Lư (駟驢) in Lạng Sơn were the main areas where markets were established because many merchants were from Ping'er, Shuikou, and You Ai'cun (油隘村) in the Guangxi province in China.¹⁹ During the Nguyễn dynasty, Khu Lư was an important riverside market town along the road to Guangxi. It was a vital river port as well as a booming metropolis in the borderlands upriver of Bắc Kỳ.²⁰ Cai Tinglan mentioned Khu Lư when he journeyed through Vietnam during the Minh Mạng period.²¹ Vietnam also established markets in the Hoa Sơn (花山) area in Lạng Sơn in order to cater to the merchants from Ping'er, as Hoa Sơn was the first stop after entering Vietnam, which the merchants had to access by crossing the water first. Furthermore,

¹⁸ Zhao Erxun 赵尔巽, *qing shi gao* 清史稿 [The Draft History of Qing]. Chang chun, ji lin ren min chu ban she 长春: 吉林人民出版社, 1995. bin zhi 兵制 Vol .8, Bian fang 边防, p. 545.

¹⁹ li bu wei nei ge chao chu liang guang zong du fu kang an deng zou yi hui 礼部为内阁抄出两广总督福康安等奏移会 ingu dai zhong yue guan xi shi zi liao hui bian 古代中越关系史资料汇编. 1982, p. 599.

²⁰ Các Tỉnh Chí 各省志, [The gazetteers of provinces]. Viện Hán Nôm.Vhv.1716, Vol. Lạng Sơn. As for Bắc Kỳ and Nam Kỳ, during the Gia Long period, Vietnam set four military camps (*dinh*) near the capital Huế and eight local military provinces (*trấn*), two cities (*Thành*) (Bắc Thành and Gia Định Thành) and 23 local provinces (*trấn*). Minh Mạng set 30 provinces (*tinh*), 80 prefectures (*phủ*), 283 districts (*huyện*) and 39 departments (Châu) as well. Bắc Kỳ included 13 provinces, Ninh Bình, Hà Nội, Nam Định, Hưng Yên, Hải Dương, Quảng Yên, Sơn Tây, Hưng Hóa, Tuyên Quang, Bắc Ninh, Thái Nguyên, Lạng Sơn, Cao Bằng. Nam Kỳ included six provinces, Biên hòa, Gia Định, Vĩnh Long, An Qiang, Định Tường, Hà Tiên. *Đại Việt Cổ Kim Duyệt Cách Địa Chí Khảo*. A.77, pp. 42–48.

²¹ Gao qi jin, Kai peng jin shi cai ting lan yu 'hai nan za zhu'. 2005, p. 161.

rows and rows of villages were lined up in the Hoa Son area, making it very convenient for the merchants to establish markets there.

The final route was from Yunnan to Vietnam. This route also had two sub-routes. One began in the Mengzi County (蒙自) in Yunnan province and passed through Lian Huatan (莲花滩), now located in the middle of the Red River and He Kou County (河口) in China, to Vietnam. It crossed the Trình Lan Đòng (程澜峒), Thủy Vĩ (水尾), Văn Bàn (文盘), Trấn Yên (镇安), Hà Hóa (夏华), and Thanh Bô (清波) districts along the right bank of Thao River (洮江) on the way to Bạch Hạc and would then pass by the Phúc Lăng River. The other sub-route began from the He Yang (河阳) river port, and ran along the left bank of the Thao River and through Bình Nguyên (平源), Phúc Yên (福安), Tuyên Giang (宣江), and Đoan Hùng (端雄), lastly passing by the Phúc Lăng River. The first sub-route was used more regularly as the second one was fraught with hardships and dangers.²²

Many markets along this route from Yunnan to Vietnam opened along with the establishment of the river ports in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. The Bai Ma River port was vital, and Meng Zi was a significant river port where merchants itinerated between China and Vietnam along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands.²³ Customs departments around Lian Huatan were set up to collect taxes during the Guang Xu

²² Qing chao wen xian tong kao 清朝文献通考 [Encyclopedia of history and biography in Qing dynasty]. Hang zhou, zhe jiang gu ji chu ban she 杭州: 浙江古籍出版社, 2000. Vol. 296, p. 1747.

²³ Zhao Erxuan, qing shi gao. Bin zhi Vol.8, Bian fang, p. 545.

period in Qing China.²⁴ Vietnam also had some flourishing markets and townships appearing with the development of local commerce along the Sino-Vietnamese land frontier. Bảo Thắng (宝胜) in the Hưng Hóa area in Vietnam was adjacent to He Kou in Qing China. It was a flourishing township due to the Sino-Vietnamese cross-border trade.²⁵ Liu Yongfu (刘永福) conquered this area and established a customs office to collect taxes in the 1870s.²⁶ Hiến Nam Cố Dinh (宪南故营), in the Hưng Yên area in

²⁴ You Zhong 尤中, *Yun nan di fang yan ge shi* 云南地方沿革史 [The historical geography of Yunnan]. Kun ming, yun nan ren min chu ban she 云南人民出版社. 1990, p. 445.

²⁵ Các Tỉnh Chí 各省志 [The gazetteers of provinces]. Viện Hán Nôm.Vhv.1716, Vol. Hưng Hóa.

²⁶ Liu Yongfu was the principal subordinate of Wu Lingyun (吴凌云) and his son, Wu Yazhong (吴亚忠), who were rebels from the Heaven and Earth Society (天地会), and then took part in the uprising in Guangxi, China while the Taiping rebellion threatened southern China. In 1865, Liu Yongfu established Black Flag (黑旗军) in Guangxi as the Taiping Rebellion subsided and rebellions in Guangxi were also being exterminated by the Qing authorities. Liu Yongfu wanted to withdraw to northern Vietnam to escape a Qing expedition. He finally settled his militia forces among upland villages in Bao Thang district near modern-day Lão Cai (老街). Shortly thereafter, they recruited other so-called 'bandits' who were viewed in a similarly negative manner by officials along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. Liu was conferred official titles by the Nguyễn court shortly after he eradicated the local tyrants. Branches of rebellions by Wu Yazhong retreated to northern Vietnam in the struggle for survival while the Qing annihilated rebellions. The rebels with Wu Yazhong were from different areas and fought each other for bases in northern Vietnam after Wu died. One of them was Yellow Flag (黄旗军), occupied by Huang Chongying (黄崇英), who was an important subordinate of Wu Yazhong. On this occasion, the majority of Wu's rebels, led by Huang Chongying, occupied Hà Dương (河阳) and other provinces as these bases interfered with the expansion of Liu Yongfu's Black Flag. Nonetheless, they did not defeat and compound any single group. Soon afterwards, Huang Chongying colluded with the French, who intended to explore the Red River and enter Yunnan from northern Vietnam. At the request of the Nguyễn Court,

Vietnam, was full of foreign merchants. It was second only to Hà Nội and became a booming emporium in Bắc Kỳ.²⁷ Bình Di Phủ (平夷甫) was a booming township in the borderlands in Tuyên Quang from the time when it was founded by a local headman under the local headman system (Tusi, 土司). However, it was not as prosperous as it had been before the Nông Văn Vân Revolt.²⁸ Ngọc Bi Phủ (玉否甫) was also a flourishing township in Tuyên Quang.²⁹ By the end of the nineteenth century, Hải Phòng (海防) became a flourishing township with the development of local commerce along the coast. ‘Row upon of row of westerners’ houses, emplacements, dockyards, and ironworks lined up in Hải Phòng for nearly five or six li.’³⁰

Black Flag marched southward and conquered Yellow Flag, thus defeating the French in Hanoi. Thereafter, the Huế Court bestowed a higher official title upon Liu Yongfu, together with an official seal that confirmed his legitimacy in northern Vietnam. Based on Luo xiang lin edit 罗香林编, Liu yong fu li shi cao 刘永福历史草 [The draft history of Liu Yongfu]. Shang hai zhengzhong shu ju 上海, 正中书局, 1947; Tang jing song 唐景崧, Qing ying ri ji 请纓日記 [The diary on volunteering for Sino-French war]. Shang hai gu ji chu ban she 上海古籍出版社, 1995; Guang xi zhuang zu zi zhi qu tong zhi guan 广西壮族自治区通志馆, zhong fa zhan zheng diao cha shi lu 中法战争调查实录 [The documents on Sino-French War], , guang xi ren min chu ban she 广西人民出版社, 1982; Zhong fa zhan zheng zi liao 中法战争资料 [The documents on Sino-French War]. Tai bei wen hai chu ban she 台北, 文海出版社, 1967.

²⁷ ĐNNTC, Vol. Hung An, p. 16.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol .Tuyên Quang, p. 31.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Fu jian shi fan da xue li shi xi 福建师范大学历史系. Yue nan you ji 越南游记 [The journal to Vietnam]. Wan qing hai wai bi ji xuan, 晚清海外笔记选 [The selection of overseas journals in the late of Qing dynasty] (Beijing, hai yang chu ban she 北京: 海洋出版社, 1983), p. 47.

The routes, from Guangxi or Yunnan, connected with the transport system of the Phúc Lăng River (Red River) and then ran to the middle of northern Vietnam. Therefore, the Red River transport system was vital. Some market towns located along the bank of Red River in Bắc Ninh were Đan Lương market (丹梁市), Đồng Tỉnh market (桐井市), and Xuân Thụ market (春棊市). The Bát Tràng market (钵场市) was located in the Gia Lâm (嘉林县) District, which was near the northern bank of the Red River in Thăng Long. Merchants vessels gathered in this prosperous area; many markets and shops were located on the bank.³¹

2.2. Maritime trade

In Sino-Vietnamese trade history, the trade by sea between China and Vietnam was easier than that by land. Northern Vietnam was peppered with jungles, mountains, rivers and inlets. It was not easy for tradesmen to cross the jungles and mountains to conduct their trading deals. In contrast, it only took caravan traders three days if they sailed with favourable winds from Guangdong to Vietnam.

Some parts of northern Vietnam, which were adjacent to the Gulf of Tonkin, were rich in excellent sea ports as well as remote islands off the coast. These islands and sea ports became popular places for maritime vessels at which to stay or transfer. The total number of sea ports in Bắc Kỳ was 42, if the nine sea ports in Nghệ An were also taken into account.³² Furthermore, these sea ports were linked to the estuarine river ports

³¹ ĐNNTC, Vol. Bắc Ninh, p. 40.

³² Thông Quốc Duyệt Hải Chư 通国沿海诸 [The seaports in Imperial Vietnam]. Viện Hán Nôm . A.79.

downriver of the Red River. Sea ports such as Liêu (辽), Lịch (栎), Hà Lạn (霞烂), Ba Lạt (巴辣), and Kì (麒) in the Sơn Nam (山南) District were directly connected to the Red River. Others, such as the Chính Đại (正大), Hãn (瀚汛), and Dạng (蚌汛) sea ports in Thanh Hóa were linked to river tributaries in northern Vietnam.³³

The central government of Nguyễn also imposed taxes on the Chinese merchants' ships. The customs tax, which was 80 per cent of that in Gia Định Thành (嘉定城),³⁴ was the same in Bắc Thành, Quảng Nam, Bình Định (平定), Phú Yên (富安), Bình Hòa (平和), and Bình Thuận (平顺) in 1803. The vessels were levied taxes based on their places of origin and the volume of the vessels.³⁵ These foreign vessels usually also needed to pay Lễ Lệ Tiền (礼例钱)³⁶ and tax. These maritime vessels were usually

³³ Thông Quốc Duyệt Hải Chư, A.79; Đại Nam Nhất Thống Toàn Đồ 大南一统全图 in 1834

³⁴ For the rule of the newly unified territory, Gia Long set four military camps (*dinh*) near the capital Huế and eight local military provinces (*trấn*), located the areas stretching from Ninh Bình to Bình Thuận. Furthermore, he also set two cities (*Thành*) (Bắc Thành and Gia Định Thành) and 23 local provinces (*trấn*). Eleven military provinces in northern Vietnam which were called Bắc Thành and five military provinces in southern Vietnam which were called Gia Định Thành were also set.

³⁵ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol 48, pp. 13–34; ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 39, p. 5, II, Vol. 6, p. 5.

³⁶ All money and goods collected from junks were called tariff. Lễ Lệ Tiền (礼例钱) was a part of tariff. As far as commercial junks is concerned, junks from different places paid different taxes. Furthermore, the import tax was different from export tax. All junks had to pay Lễ Lệ Tiền besides import or export tax. Generally, Lễ Lệ Tiền as a kind of gift to Vietnamese officials in seaport customs or local government and so on was not actually metal currency but silk or other goods. During the Nguyễn Lord period, all the taxes on foreign junks were divided into two parts: 60 per cent belonged to central revenue; 40 per cent was awarded to soldiers, officials; and so on. By the Minh Mạng period, the taxes were also separated into two parts; one was tariff, the other was Lễ Lệ (礼例). However, the percentage of Lễ Lệ was only 12 per cent. As for Lễ Lệ Tiền, refer to [越]朱海 Chu Hải ; 李娜译, Li Na Translated. 十九世纪越南阮朝的华人政策, shi jiu shi ji yue nan ruan chao de hua ren zheng ce. [The policy on the Chinese in Nguyễn Dynasty of Vietnam in the nineteenth century]. 东南亚纵横, Around Southeast Asia. 广西. Guangxi, 3. 2003, p. 56. ĐNTL, Tiền Biên, Vol. 10, p. 26; ĐNTL, Chính Biên, II, Vol. 6, p. 6.

from parts of southern China including Guangdong, Fujian (福建), Zhejiang (浙江), Hainan (海南), Shanghai (上海), Macao, Chaozhou (Tieochow), and regions in Southeast Asia such as Malacca, Java, Hà Châu (下洲, regions near Batavia), and so on. The ships from Guangzhou came from Zhaozhou (昭州), Nanxiong (南祥), Huizhou (惠州), and the Zhaoqing (肇庆) prefectures. Chinese vessels also came from the Leizhou (雷州), Lianzhou (廉州), Gaozhou (高州), and Qiongzhou (琼州, now Hainan province) prefectures. Nguyễn Vietnam levied taxes on the Chinese vessels in some vital areas along the coast such as Quảng Yên, as the maritime trade developed in northern Vietnam. In 1811, the government imposed taxes on the Chinese vessels in the Vạn Ninh prefecture in Quảng Yên, which were 50 per cent of the customs tax in Gia Định Thành. In 1820, Quảng Ngãi was levied exactly the same amount of tax.³⁷

The zone of the most active trade involving northern Vietnam and Chinese merchants from southern China, particularly from Guangdong, stretched from the Red River to the Gulf of Tonkin. Cai Tinglan described the prosperity of the markets:

All kinds of commodities, food and other wares were displayed on the floor. It is called “Pai Hang Zhan” (排行棧), with a morning market and an evening market in one day. Various commodities were for sale in markets. Among them, tea, herbs, porcelain, and clothing were from China, which were shipped back by the Chinese merchant...³⁸

³⁷ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 48, pp. 10, 14, 19.

³⁸ Gao qi jin. Kai peng jin shi cai ting lan yu ‘hai nan za zhu’. 2005, p. 171.

The backbone of the maritime trade network in northern Vietnam was small junks, rather than larger ones. This suggests a strong local or regional, rather than long-distance, trade. In the nineteenth century, small boats formed what may have been the most numerous and dynamic commercial networks, legally and illegally, in the Gulf of Tonkin. Hải Dương (海阳), Kinh Môn (荆门), Thượng Hồng (上洪), Hà Hồng (下洪), Nam Sách (南策), Thuận Yên (顺安), and Hoài Châu (怀州) were located in the eastern parts of Jiaozhou in northern Vietnam, and were not far from the sea. Many sea ports and sub-sea ports were located here and stretched hundreds and thousands of miles. Therefore, the people from northern Vietnam regularly shipped commodities in flat-bottomed and smaller vessels because larger ones could not enter the ports readily.³⁹ The junks here were mostly smaller ones than those in Hà Nội, Bình Thuận (平顺) and other provinces. The commodities from Guangdong in China were dominant here. The smaller junks were called ‘Ya Zai Chuan’ (牙仔船). The bilge was plaited with rattan. The outside was coated with coconut oil. The deck was made of wood. Other junks were the same. The bilges of some junks were made of wood and rattan that had been over-sewed.⁴⁰ In 1820, two vessels from Guangdong, captained by Li Yongfa, berthed with commodities in the Lịch sea port in the Sơn Nam District of northern Vietnam. The width of one vessel was 11 chi and nine cun.⁴¹ While that of the other was 12 chi, six cun, and eight fen. In the same year, two ships from China loaded

³⁹ Gu zu yu, *Du shi fang yu ji yao*. 2005, p. 4992.

⁴⁰ Gao qi jin. *Kai peng jin shi cai ting lan yu ‘hai nan za zhu’*. 2005, p. 173.

⁴¹ Châu Bản, Reel 6. Libraries of Australia National University.

cargos at the Hội (会) Sea Port in Nghệ An. One was captained by Yang Lishun (杨李顺), from Huizhou; the other, whose captain was Chen Xishun (陈喜顺), was from the Guangzhou prefecture in Guangdong province. The width of Chen Xishun's junk was nine chi and four cun. Yang Lishun's vessel was 12 chi and two cun wide. It was obvious that both of them were not among the larger vessels if they were measured by the width that was the standard of the Nguyễn court in levying river port duty. The width of the largest vessel was above 35 chi.⁴²

Not all the vessels that plied between southern China and northern Vietnam were small. There were larger vessels that navigated southern China and northern Vietnam according to the annual monsoons. Crawford reported the character and volume of Chinese trade in Ka Cho (Hanoi) as being around 1,822, including 18 Chinese junks from Hainan. Each one had 2,000 piculs of cargo. Eleven Cantonese and seven Fujian junks each had 2,250 piculs of cargo; seven Jiangnan and Zhejiang junks each had 2,500 piculs of cargo.⁴³

Northern and central Vietnam were integrated by the regional and the long distance, deep and shallow, internal and external trade activities. It also connected trade networks if we look further southwards to Quảng Nam. The regional network in northern Vietnam that was connected to that of middle Vietnam was an indispensable factor affiliated with the maritime Silk Road from China to Southeast Asia. Compared with

⁴² On the standard of the Nguyễn court, please refer to KĐĐNHĐSL Vol. 48, pp. 1–23; and ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 39, II, Vol. 6, pp. 16, 109, 199.

⁴³ “Crawford's Report on the state of the Annamese Empire” in Alastair Lamb, *The mandarin road to old Hué*, p. 264.

the types of ships in the Gulf of Tonkin mentioned above, the junks had a much deeper draught when moored, which was a convenient design for long-distance ocean travel. The following example highlights the type of vessels in Quảng Nam during the Nguyễn dynasty. In 1805, a ship in Quảng Nam originally from Fujian, with the name Chen Lutai (陈陆泰), was loaded with the following cargo: 1,800 piculs of betel nuts, 15 piculs of villous amomum shells, nine piculs of villous amomum, 10 piculs of cinnamon, and five piculs of shark's fin.⁴⁴ From the example above, it is reasonable to assume that the junks berthed in middle Vietnam were larger ones rather than the smaller junks, since both the sea route and the sea river ports were well-suited to long-distance ocean travelling vessels. In 1820, a vessel from Qiongsan (琼山) County in Qiongzhou prefecture of the Guangdong province returned to China on time. The total number of crew in this ship was 85. Obviously, compared with Ya Zai Chuan, this type of junk had a much deeper draught when loaded. In 1823, a ship from Yongning (永宁) in Guangdong was loaded mainly with various grades of cinnamon and villous amomum. The total amount of these goods was 141 xie, four yan, and five jin. Based on the weights and measures of Nguyễn Vietnam, one xie was equal to around 100 jin. Accordingly, the volume of this ship was above 14,100 jin, namely above 141 piculs.⁴⁵

Maritime trade was definitely not one way either. The rice trade between China and Vietnam was a good example of this. Vietnam was rich in rice and without doubt, rice was a vital item which was exported to China, in particular, during the period of

⁴⁴ Châu Bản, Reel 1, libraries of Australia National University

⁴⁵ Thương Tàu Thuế Lệ 商船税例 [The regulations on commercial junks]. Viện Hán Nôm. A3105

overpopulation in the era of the Qing dynasty. The booming population in China at the turn of the seventeenth century generated tremendous social pressure on the Qing. Shortages of food grain ensued with a growing population, made worse by a series of bad harvests during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A dearth of rice forced the Qing court to turn to commercial activities to solve this problem. Rice shortages were a main concern when rescinding the maritime ban and partially revitalising trade with Southeast Asia in 1717. Demand for rice spurred the rice trade with Southeast Asia and the emergence of important seaports such as Amoy along the southeast coast of China.⁴⁶ Furthermore, all the rice-bearing ships from Siam, which were associated with the King's name and sanctioned by royalty, not only provided the bulk of China's rice, but also benefited the Siamese kingdom. The rice trade with China was indispensable to the rise of Bangkok's power in the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Vietnam also became a part of the rice trade during the development of the rice trade between China and other regions in Southeast Asia. Saigon was the eventual regional hub for the rice trade in southern Vietnam. Concurrently, the inter-regional trade network between southern Vietnam and other regions in Southeast Asia, particularly Singapore, ensured that the rice trade in southern Vietnam flourished.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ng Chin Keong, *Trade and Society, the Amoy Network on the China Coast 1683–1735*, Singapore University Press, 1983. pp. 95–137.

⁴⁷ Sarasin Virapjool, *Tribute and trade*, 1977.

⁴⁸ Li Tana, "Rice from Saigon: The Singapore Chinese and the Saigon Trade of the Nineteenth Century" in Wang and Ng, *Maritime China in transition*.

The rice trade with China in northern Vietnam cannot be ignored. By virtue of the geographical proximity between southern China and northern Vietnam by sea, the maritime route became a gateway for Vietnamese merchants who entered China and vice versa. During the famine in Nguyễn Vietnam, rice was also imported from China since Vạn Ninh, Vân Đồn, Hải Phòng, and other areas in northern Vietnam were adjacent to parts of southern China, such as Hong Kong. It was not surprising that the rice trade was regularly made via seaborne junks plying southern China and areas along the coast, even littoral islands, in northern Vietnam. In 1823, people suffered a massive famine due to a great flood in Guangdong. The Qing government encouraged rice imports by providing favourable conditions for trade.⁴⁹ The price of rice per picul in Guangdong was around five liang silver. Many merchants in Vietnam flocked to ship rice to Qinzhou and Lianzhou in Guangdong by sea. This event received the most attention from the Nguyễn court, since the volume of rice for trade was limited by the Huế Court during the Nguyễn dynasty.⁵⁰ It is also worth noting that Hải Phòng was a popular city for the rice trade:

Hải Phòng was located on the Cua Cam River, with access both to the sea and connections to Hà Nội and other river ports on the Red River, which made it geographically suit[ed] to the needs of international

⁴⁹ Liang Tingnan, *yue hai guan zhi*. 1975, Vol. 8, p. 618.

⁵⁰ Minh Mệnh Ngũ Trị Văn 明命御制文 [The papers and documents by Minh Mệnh], Viện Hán Nôm. A.118/1 Vol. 6, p. 15.

shipping during the late nineteenth century, when it was declared a French concession.⁵¹

Martinez argued that Chinese rice trade and shipping from Hải Phòng and the independence of Chinese business in trade could be seen from the nineteenth century to the 1930s. By the end of the nineteenth century, Vietnam also imported rice to ameliorate local famines. In 1886, the Nguyễn court imported rice from Hong Kong by waiving river port duties.⁵²

The maritime trade was one part of Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts during the nineteenth century. Where geographical conditions were concerned, to assorted tradesmen, trade by sea was more expedient than by land. However, the maritime trade did not make up the backbone of commerce in northern Vietnam. It has already been mentioned that small junks were the regular vessels that engaged in the Sino-Vietnamese trade in northern Vietnam even though bigger junks were also involved in the maritime trade. Furthermore, as for maritime trade tariffs, the Nguyễn dynasty could only levy five per cent or less tax from maritime customs along the coast Cochin China in the early period of the nineteenth century.⁵³ The incoming fiscal duties

⁵¹ Julia Martinez, “Chinese Rice Trade and Shipping from the North Vietnamese River port of Haiphong,” in *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, Vol. 1, 2007, p. 83.

⁵² Lại Bộ 吏部 [The Ministry of Personal]. Viện Hán Nôm. A.917, p. 10.

⁵³ Li Tana, “The eighteenth-century Mekong Delta and its world of water frontier” in Anthony Reid and Nhung Tuyet Tran, ed., *Viet Nam Borderless Histories* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p. 155.

from maritime trade did not occupy a large share of national revenue. Even then, maritime trade activities contributed to Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts.

2.3. Cross-border trade

The payment of Vietnamese tribute to China was processed by land instead of by sea.

The route for the payment of tribute to Beijing was stipulated to be from northern Vietnam via Lạng Sơn, crossing the Sino-Vietnamese borderlines and into China. The Sino-Vietnamese trade was conducted in frontier markets with the payment of tribute.

In addition, official journeys to China could improve the growth of markets that supplied provisions along the way. Furthermore, the cross-national trade and inter-ethnic commercial contacts along the Sino-Vietnamese borders were a kind of driving force for trade in northern Vietnam as a whole. The Chinese made great contributions towards trade contacts in ferries, river ports and market towns in northern Vietnam.

Apart from the seafaring route from Vietnam to China, there were two roads by land. One was from Yunnan, and the other one was from Guangxi. The route from Guangxi had been used since the Song dynasty, while the route from Yunnan had been used from the Yuan and Ming dynasties onwards.

In the 1870s, the Sino-Vietnamese cross-border trade was still flourishing even though people in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands suffered rebellions and revolts on both sides. 'Yunnan was located on the northwest of Vietnam. Commodity circulation

here was speed[y] and great.’⁵⁴ As recorded in *Qing Chao Xu Wen Xian Tong Kao*, in 1895, the sum of commercial transactions between China and Vietnam amounted to 310,000 liang silver dollars. The total value of transactions was second only to those of Japan and Macao.⁵⁵

Cross-border trade by the Red River waterway was linked to maritime trade in northern Vietnam, and had been an important part of the extensive network of the Southwest Silk Road from Yunnan. This extensive network was also connected to the maritime Silk Road.⁵⁶ It was not new that trade between China and Vietnam occurred along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. Bilateral trade could be traced back to the Han dynasty in China, when Vietnam imported ironware from China. The horse trade was also a good example of the bilateral trade between China and Vietnam. Bin Yang points out: ‘During the Sun and Wu period, the control of Jiaozhou (northern Vietnam) was extraordinarily crucial to the Wu kingdom, because it would not only give them access to the profitable overseas trade, but also allow them to gain access to horses from Nanzhong (Yunnan) through the Yunnan-Vietnam connection.’⁵⁷ The trade did not cease during the Nguyễn dynasty; the Nguyễn government also directly imported horses from Yunnan.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Luo Xianglin, ed., *Liu yong fu li shi cao*, 1947, p. 76.

⁵⁵ Liu Jinzao 刘锦藻, *Qing chao xu wen xian tong kao 清朝续文献通考* [Encyclopedia of history and biography in Qing dynasty]. Shanghai, Shang wu yin shu guan 上海: 商务印书馆, 1936, p. 11399.

⁵⁶ on this point, see Bin Yang, ‘Horse, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2004, pp. 287–289.

⁵⁷ Bin Yang: ‘Horse, Silver, and Cowries’, p. 296.

⁵⁸ ĐNLT, *Chính Biên II*, Vol. 73, p. 5.

During the Emperor Yong Zheng's reign in China, the bulk of mineral commodities were imported by China via Sino-Vietnamese cross-border trade. Sino-Vietnamese trade along the borderlands became bustling, with the markets which were closed or ruined by war or turbulence in frontiers being reopened along the borderlands during the end of the Qian Long period. Vietnam established markets along the borderlands when border markets such as the Mực Mã market town in Cao Bằng and Khu Lư in Lạng Sơn developed. Merchants departing from the Ping'er and Shuikou river ports had to get certifications of approval from officials in Long Zhou, in the Guangxi province of China. Merchants from You Ai village had to get their certification from the Ning Ming (宁明) prefecture.⁵⁹ By the end of the eighteenth century, cross-border trade prospered with the re-opening of border markets in China and Vietnam. The volume of commodities exported from China to Vietnam always exceeded that of imports. Many Chinese smuggled commodities to Vietnam to obtain huge profits. The commodities exported from China were usually damask, fabric, shoes and socks, paper, tea, sugar, candy and herbs.⁶⁰

Cross-border trade did not cease during the Nguyễn dynasty; it was still a major part of Sino-Vietnamese trade relations. As far as cross-border trade was concerned, Li Tana compared the prices of over 300 commodities in the Inner Five provinces (Sơn Nam Thượng, Sơn Nam Hà, Sơn Tây, Kinh Bắc, and Hải Dương) in the Red River Delta and the mountainous Outer Six provinces (Hung Hóa, Tuyên Quang, Thái Nguyên, Lạng

⁵⁹ Zhong yue gu dai guan xi shi zi liao xuan bian, 1982, pp. 599–601.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 591, 603,

Sơn, Cao Bằng, Quảng Yên) together with other sources and pointed out that cross-border trade along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlines was more dynamic than trade in inland northern Vietnam.⁶¹

The Chinese merchants who itinerated between China and northern Vietnam for trade came mainly from Guangxi, Yunnan, Guangdong and Chaozhou (潮州). Compared with maritime transport, it was easier to itinerate between China and northern Vietnam by land. Generally, they returned the following year if the merchants arrived by sea in a certain year. However, if one travelled by land, merchants usually itinerated between China and Vietnam twice or more annually. The shortest travelling period was three months. Growing numbers of Chinese merchants who went to Lạng Sơn and other border provinces for trade attracted the increasing attention of the Nguyễn rulers, who levied taxes on these Chinese merchants.⁶² The Chinese merchants captured during the suppression of the Nông Văn Vân rebellion in northern Vietnam during the 1830s shed some light on the nature of the Chinese merchants who travelled between China and Vietnam. In 1833, Nguyễn Vietnam captured four Chinese merchants who traded in Tuyên Quang in Vietnam.⁶³ Nguyễn Vietnam arrested a Chinese merchant who was

⁶¹ Li Tana, “National” and “overseas” markets in the early 19th century Vietnam: a view from the mountains and the sea. For the workshop “Dynamic Rimlands and Open Heartlands: Maritime Asia as a Site of Interactions”, Nagasaki, 27–28 Oct. 2006.

⁶² KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 44, p. 65.

⁶³ Khâm Định Tiểu Bình Bắc Kỳ Nghịch Phỉ Chính Biên 钦定剿平北圻逆匪正编 [The documents on exterminating bandits in northern Vietnam], Viện Hán Nôm. Vh.v.2701/6, Vol. 22, p. 20. Hereafter KĐTBKNPCB.

from the Nan'ning (南宁) prefecture in Guangxi. He itinerated between the Thượng Lang (上琅) District in Cao Bằng and the Zhen'an prefecture in Guangxi for trade.⁶⁴

Li Tana points out that the merchants from Chaozhou were a dominant part of Sino-Vietnamese commerce in northern Vietnam.⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that the Chinese from Chaozhou, namely Teochiu, comprised a significant part of the Nông Văn Vân rebellions. They formed the main part of the remainder of the rebellion when Nông Văn Vân and his followers were pursued and defeated by the Nguyễn government.⁶⁶ It was likely that some of them were merchants in northern Vietnam. In 1828, Zhang Zeng reported to Emperor Dao Guang of the Qing dynasty that foreign metal currency had been circulated in Guangdong province. This currency included the Quang Trung Thông Bảo (issued by Quang Trung), Cảnh Hưng Thông Bảo (issued by Cảnh Hưng), Cảnh Hưng Cự Bảo, Cảnh Hưng Đại Bảo (issued by Cảnh Hưng when they retreated to Bac Ha around the 1790s), and Gia Long Thông Bảo (issued by Gia Long). The 'barbarian metal currency' was mostly circulated in Chaozhou. The metal currency of the Qing was being completely replaced by 'barbarian metal currency' in some areas.⁶⁷

Regarding this point, Li Tana noted: 'The Teochiu network thus stands out as very likely being one of the most important trading networks of northern Vietnam in the

⁶⁴ KĐTBBKNPCB.Vhv.2701/17, Vol. 63, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Li Tana, "National" and "overseas" markets.

⁶⁶ KĐTBBKNPCB.Vhv.2701/10, Vol. 35, pp. 12–15.

⁶⁷ Zhong yue gu dai guan xi shi zi liao xuan bian, 1982, p. 611.

early 19th century ... Teochiu connections may well have played a dominant role in northern Vietnam's commerce.'⁶⁸

The trade between Yunnan and northern Vietnam depended on the Red River's transportation system. Hà Nội, located on the banks of the Red River, had become an important city in trading commodities from Yunnan by the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ Besides Hà Nội, there were also some important market towns in northern Vietnam. Here, Bảo Thắng serves as a good example to explain the extensive cross-border trade occurring along the Red River in northern Vietnam—this was a vital road connecting Yunnan to northern Vietnam.

Generally, Chinese merchants who were going to Yunnan to trade had to go by the waterway in Hung Hóa and cross Thủy Vĩ to enter Yunnan, and vice versa.⁷⁰ Bảo Thắng, located in Hung Hóa, held the most important custom office, which was located in the estuarine river port upriver of the Red River. The taxes from Bảo Thắng and other subsidiary custom offices comprised an essential part of the central revenue of Nguyễn Vietnam. The tax in Bảo Thắng was 43,000 strings of copper in the eighteenth year of Emperor Gia Long's rule. After the first Opium War, the amount of taxes shrank because of revolts along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. The tax in 1844 was 30,000 strings of copper, and 7,500 string of copper in 1848.⁷¹ Liu Yongfu conquered Bảo

⁶⁸ Li Tana, *"National" and "overseas" markets*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ Fu jian shi fan da xue, Ed. yue nan you li ji, 1983, p. 61.

⁷⁰ Tuyên Quang Tấu Tư Tập Lục. 宣光奏咨杂录 [Miscellaneous notes on memorials in Tuyên Quang]. Viện Hán Nôm. A1139.

⁷¹ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 49, p. 12.; Hưng Hóa Tỉnh Công Văn 兴化省公文[The official documents in Hưng

Thắng by the end of nineteenth century and re-imposed the tax, leading Nguyễn Vietnam to complain about Liu Yongfu's control of Bảo Thắng: 'Liu Yongfu levied heavy taxes so that fewer merchants arrived. The tax in the whole of northern Vietnam was around 300,000 strings of copper.'⁷² Thus, tax from the border trade was an important part of the central revenue of Nguyễn Vietnam. Furthermore, metal in Yunnan was regularly transported through northern Vietnam, and Nguyễn Vietnam also benefited from it. However, Liu Yongfu obstructed the route, so merchants had to change routes and avoid the previous route. In the end, the profits of Nguyễn Vietnam were diminished.⁷³

Chinese merchants in Bảo Thắng also transferred Western commodities to Yunnan. There were around 140–150 Chinese shops in Bảo Thắng.⁷⁴ Herbs and tea were the bulk of the commodities in the Sino-Vietnamese trade in northern Vietnam before Tonkin (northern Vietnam) completely became a French colony. Around 100,000 picul of herbs per annum were imported from China to northern Vietnam at a price of around 1,000,000 yuan.⁷⁵ If we consider the abovementioned trade, it strongly suggests that the huge commerce networks still existed or had never shrunk, even though it had suffered setbacks before northern Vietnam became a French colony.

Hóa]. Viện Hán Nôm. A.2293/a

⁷² Tấu Nghị Tiền Tập 奏议前集 [Memorials and public papers]. Viện Hán Nôm. Vht.43/1, Vol. 1, pp. 28–31.

⁷³, Ibid. , pp. 28–31.

⁷⁴ Fu jian shi fan da xue, yue nan you li ji. 1983, p. 62.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

3. Conclusion

Besides tribute trade, authorised cross-border and maritime trade with the Chinese were significant parts of Sino-Vietnamese commercial relations during the Nguyễn dynasty. Tribute trade was, in a sense, political trade which met the royal, court, government and even the Nguyễn emperor's demands. However, Chinese merchants were the active force that spurred commercial development in northern Vietnam and enhanced Sino-Vietnamese trade relations. Accordingly, the Chinese became an indispensable part of northern Vietnam's economy.

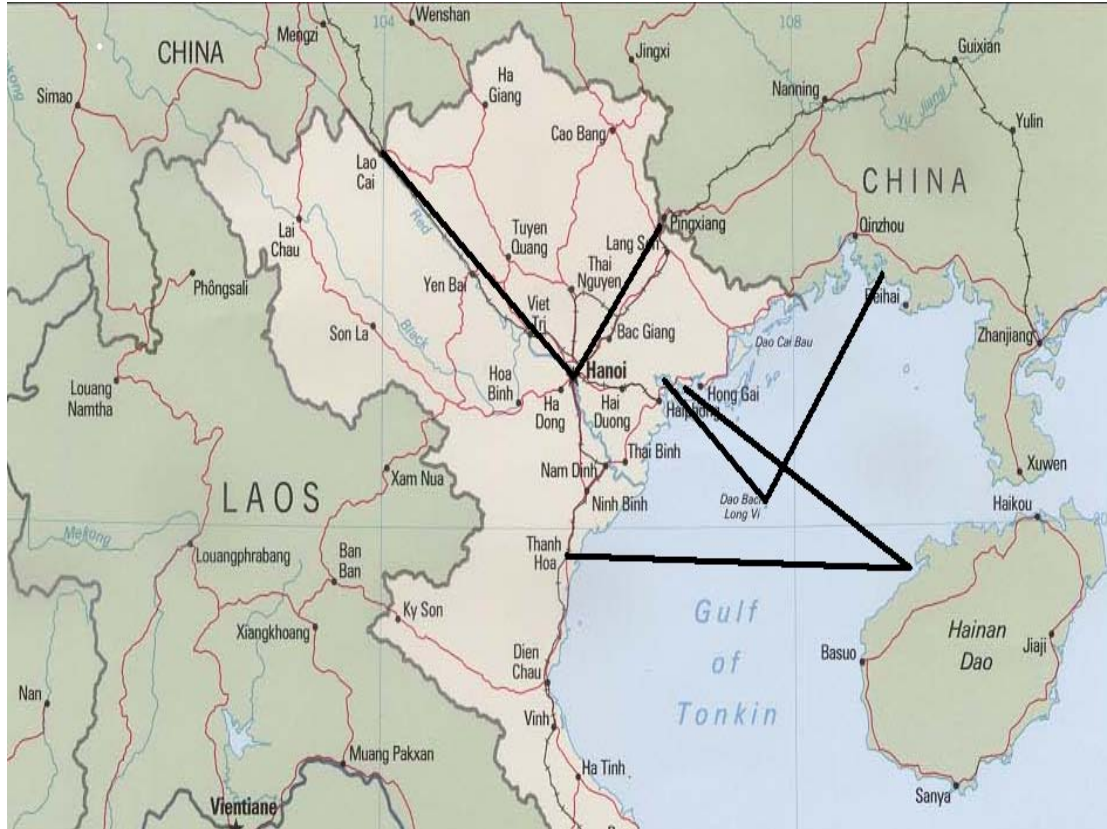
Lying at the crossroads of different trade currents, the areas ranging from the mountainous to the maritime regions in northern Vietnam formed a crucial link in an active trading network that connected southern China with other regions in Southeast Asia. What the above shows us is a well-used series of trade routes and some crucial market towns dotting the Gulf of Tonkin and in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, which connected southern China with northern Vietnam. Sino-Vietnamese cross-border and maritime trade played a dominant role in bridging the two trading systems of southern China and northern Vietnam. It also acted as an external component of the integrated trade system between northern, middle, and even southern Vietnam.

The authorised trade that private merchants engaged in was one part of Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts during the nineteenth century. There was yet another group, namely the smugglers, who were also involved in Sino-Vietnamese

commercial activities along the Sino-Vietnamese borders. These smugglers and unsanctioned trade activities are the chief topics of discussion in the next two chapters.

Figure 1:

Map: Main three commercial routine from southern China to northern Vietnam.



Chapter 4: Fraudulent and illicit trading activities

1. Introduction

Sojourned and travelling Chinese merchants from southern China conducted frequent commercial activities in northern Vietnam. The Chinese merchants made great contributions to the Sino-Vietnamese overland trade in northern Vietnam since the Huế court did not collect a great deal of revenue from Sino-Vietnamese maritime trade in the same area. Some significant commercial markets and towns, such as Phủ Hiến and Hoa Sơn, flourished in northern Vietnam with the growth of Sino-Vietnamese trade. Apart from government-authorised trade in northern Vietnam, assorted smuggling rings were active in northern Vietnam which influenced Sino-Vietnamese commercial, diplomatic, and political relations in different aspects. Mountains peppered with jungles and woods, tiny inlets and meandering waterways along the coast, and remote islands in the sea comprised a huge arena for smuggling groups of all kinds, and a broad spectrum of actors was involved, each participating for their own reasons.

Some vital questions about clandestine trade are explored in this chapter. Why did illicit trade occur frequently during this period? Who engaged in ‘trade on the sly’? What was the mechanism of ‘stealthy transport’? And how do we define terminology such as ‘bandits’ or ‘pirates’ in a historical context? This chapter will delve into these questions, explore the Nguyễn dynasty’s policies on security behind these illicit

economic activities, and provide an alternative perspective on the Sino-Vietnamese relations.

2. Climate and political geography

Certain historical phenomena have originated from many complex factors such as climate, sociology, and human activities. Soil, climate, original vegetative cover, and similar factors can influence population densities. A prolonged drought or flood can destroy harvests and push up food prices.¹

As far as the Guangdong and Yunnan provinces are concerned, the climate worsened during the nineteenth century. Based on local Chinese gazettes, floods, earthquakes, and storms occurred nearly every year since the Jia Qing period.²

¹ Peter Boomgaard, Freek Colombijn and David Henley, ed. *Paper landscapes: explorations in the environmental history of Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), pp. 3–4.

² See table 3.2 and local gazetteers: Li Yulan 李毓兰, *Yun nan sheng zhen nan zhou zhi lue* 云南省镇南州志略 [The concise gazetteer of Zhennan Prefecture in Yunnan Province]. Tai bei cheng wen chu ban she 台北, 成文出版社, 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 263–264; Ming Yi 明谊, *Guang dong sheng qiong zhou fu zhi* 广东省琼州府志 [The gazetteer of Qiong Prefecture in Guangdong Province]. Tai bei cheng wen chu ban she 成文出版社, 1967, Vol. 24; Zhang Yuesong 张岳崧, *Qiong zhou fu zhi* 琼州府志 [The gazetteer of Qiong zhou]. 1841, Vol. 44, p. 862; Liang Dingfen 梁鼎芬, *pan yu xian xu zhi* 番禺县续志 [The continuation of gazetteer of Panyu]. Taibei xue sheng shu ju 学生书局. 1968. Chen BoTao 陈伯陶, *dong guan xian zhi* 东莞县志 [The gazetteer of Dongguan]. 1921, Vol. 34–35, pp. 1249–1300; He Fuhai 何福海, *Xin ning xian zhi* 新宁县志 [The gazetteer of Xinning]. Tai bei xue sheng shu ju 台北学生书局. 1968, Vol. 14, pp. 601–648; Hou Kunyuan 侯坤元, *Chang le xian zhi* 长乐县志 [The gazetteer of Changle]. Tai bei xue sheng shu ju 台北学生书局. 1968, Vol. 7; Zhou hengchong 周恒重, *Guang dong sheng chao yang xian zhi* 广东省潮阳县志 [The gazetteer of Chaoyang County in Guangdong Province]. Tai bei cheng wen chu ban she 台北, 成文出版社, 1966, Vol. 13, pp. 186–188; Wang Dalu 王大鲁, *Guang dong sheng chi xi xian zhi* 广东省赤溪县志 [The gazetteer of Chixi County

The population growth in southern China is integral to understanding the political and intellectual crises that wracked China during the nineteenth century.³

Social disorder and revolts ensued with the worsening climate in south-eastern China. Secret societies, rebellions, and unorthodox organisations of all kinds, which were initiating pattern as potential pirates, bandits, and other types of smugglers, were frequent by the middle of the nineteenth century. Northern Vietnam and southeast China also suffered from worsening climates during the nineteenth century. From the 1850s onwards, floods and storms occurred frequently in Nguyễn Vietnam.⁴ These led to disastrous consequences such as famine, plague, and so on, which catalysed rebellions and social turmoil. People engaged in robbery, depredation, and other criminal activities and formed ‘illicit’ groups of bandits and pirates.

The geographical proximity of south-eastern China and northern Vietnam explains the similarities between them in terms of climate. Malaria, dengue, and other tropical fevers are good examples of common diseases in both areas. Malaria and other tropical fevers were called *zhang* (瘴) in Chinese records. During the Ming and Qing periods, *zhang* was rampant in Yunnan and other south-western areas of China, due to frequent interactions of all kinds including military and commercial interactions. *Zhang* also

in Guangdong Province]. Tai bei cheng wen chu ban she 台北 成文出版社, 1967, Vol. 7, pp. 152–153; Yang Yang 阳仰, Yun nan sheng lu feng xian zhi tiao mu 云南省禄丰县志条目 [The list of the gazetteer of Lufeng County in Yunnan Province]. Tai bei cheng wen chu ban she 台北. 成文出版社, 1975, p. 22.

³ Robert B. Marks, *Tiger, rice, silk, and silt: environment and economy in late imperial South China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 333–337.

⁴ See the appendix: Natural disaster in Bắc Kỳ .

hindered military operations which the Chinese central government organised on the south-western frontier of China.⁵ *Zhang* was also a widespread problem in northern Vietnam, particularly in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. *Zhang* was referred to as Lam Truong (嵐瘴) or Lê (疹) in Nguyễn documents, and was a common infectious disease in northern Vietnam during the Nguyễn dynasty, especially in the Lạng Sơn and Điện Biên Phủ areas.⁶ Floods, droughts, storms, typhoons, and earthquakes, along with widespread climate-caused diseases such as *zhang*, led to plagues and later to unrest and social turmoil in northern Vietnam and south-eastern China.

History, affected by man's environment, keeps changing, and is also influenced by human actions.⁷ The pattern of human actions that were shaped by similar ecological elements could be influenced and altered by different powers in different geopolitical units. Strife emerged in areas that had similar climates and different geopolitical characteristics. From a historical perspective, the political and social practices in northern Vietnam and China possessed similarities as they were in the same climatic and geographical sphere. This included the densely populated Red River Delta in northern Vietnam.⁸

⁵ Bin Yang, *Zhang (瘴) On the Southern Frontiers: Image, Diseases, Environment, and Chinese Imperial Colonialism*. Manuscript. 2007, p. 22.

⁶ ĐNTL, *Chính Biên IV*, Vol. 4, p. 43, p.6, p.20, p. 19 p. 22.

⁷ *Environment and history* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University, 2003), p. 42.

⁸ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce, 1450-1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988-1993), Vol. 1, p. 8.

Northern Vietnam and southeast China were interconnected and interdependent; any ecological and socioeconomic change in southeast China affected northern Vietnam and vice versa. By the nineteenth century, Chinese society had suffered from the huge population boom at the end of the eighteenth century. At this time, Chinese commoners felt that commercial growth did not necessarily mean more prosperity or security, but a thinner margin of survival in a crowded and competitive society.⁹ Increasing numbers of Chinese either tried their luck in the seafaring world, or became bandits in order to survive harvest failures. Increasing numbers of impoverished fishermen, as well as occasional and professional pirates viewed piracy along the coast of southeast China and the Gulf of Tonkin as a temporary survival strategy. This viewpoint persisted for a few centuries.

3. The boom in maritime and overland smuggling

Booming maritime and overland trade encouraged smuggling, as smugglers profited more from illicit trade compared to their honest counterparts. Piracy and plundering were the regular activities of bandits and pirates, who lurked along busy seafaring and overland trade routes.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Qing designated Canton as the sole open port for foreign trade, especially for Westerners. Other vital sea ports, such as the Amoy sea port, started to decline due to bans on essential commodities such as tea, as well as

⁹ Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: the Chinese sorcery scare of 1768* (Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 16.

the change in policy on rice imports. By the Jia Qing and Dao Guang periods, more and more merchants resorted to smuggling due to corruption in the customs offices and losses from pirate raids at sea.¹⁰ The corruption in customs offices accelerated the dwindling of legal trade and the subsequent boom in illicit trade. The customs tariffs were so high that, rather than paying exorbitant fees to the customs officers, increasing numbers of merchants took the risk of smuggling.¹¹ After the introduction of opium by Westerners and the abolition of the English East India Company's privileges in 1833, contraband trade was open to all merchants. After 1840, William Scott described the commercial conditions in Canton thus: 'The only way you can get to the inhabitants of China is by smuggling.'¹² 'From the 1850s onwards, the lawless and turbulent class of people who posed as wreckage scavengers or other legitimate occupations of various kinds engaged in smuggling in the coastal regions, from Hong Kong to the countless bays and creeks on the thousands of miles of coast in the Guangdong province. The Chinese officials despised smugglers rather than fearing them, and connivance, rather than prevention, made the administrative system incapable of regulating vast amounts of traffic.'¹³ All of these encouraged merchants to smuggle regularly, eluding taxes by using small sea pots.

¹⁰ Chen xiyu, *Zhong guo fan chuan yu hai wai mao yi*. pp. 227–229.

¹¹ Liang Jiabin 梁嘉彬, *Guang dong shi san hang kao* 广东十三行考 [The studies on the thirteenth Hong]. Shang hai shu dian 上海书店, 1989, pp. 363–384.

¹² Neville Williams, *Contraband cargoes, seven centuries of smuggling* (Hamden, Conn. Shoe String Press, 1961), p. 224.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 223–226.

4. Main concepts

A key question emerges when specific schemes on pirates and bandits are examined in this chapter: how do we define ‘pirates’ or ‘bandits’? Piracy neither was nor is an unchanging phenomenon; rather, it is a concept that is still evolving. Generally, piracy is a recorded human activity related to travel and trade. ‘It may be assumed that various enterprising individuals perceived the great profits of transporting goods and intercepted these goods on the way.’¹⁴ Plundering, with or without violence, is an ancient practice.¹⁵

Richard Leirissa proposes piracy as ‘a kind of trade based on theft instead of exchange’.¹⁶ The salient hallmark of piracy and banditry is the aim of procuring material wealth by robbery, heist, and even murder and other violent methods. These activities were all described as illicit by authorities. They could be viewed as organised crime, once they were conglomerated into confederations. They signed agreements and proceeded to carry out periodic illegal maritime or overland commercial activities. Trade was a pull factor for pirates. The flourishing trade routes and sea ports were usually staked out by pirates. Just as Joseph Campo points out in his analysis on Rayat (*orang laut*), piracy was a voluntary business activity with the specific goal of profit.¹⁷

¹⁴ Philip Gosse, *The history of piracy* (London: Longmans, 1932), p. 1.

¹⁵ Charles Grey, *Pirates of the eastern seas (1618-1723), a lurid page of history* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1933), p. 8.

¹⁶ Richard Z. Leirissa, “Changing maritime trade in the Seram Sea” in G.J. Schutte, *State and trade in the Indonesian archipelago* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), p. 112.

¹⁷ Joseph NFM a Campo, “Discourse without Discussion: Representations of Piracy in Colonial Indonesia 1816-25”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34, 2 (June 2003): 202.

4.1. Definition of pirates

It is worth noting who the pirates in Sino-Vietnamese waters were. In fact, these pirates were often made up of traders, fishermen, and even inlanders from China and Vietnam. Their status was ambiguous in the eyes of the Nguyễn dynasty and even to themselves; they would only be labelled ‘pirates’ or ‘smugglers’ in Vietnamese chronicles once they dealt with contraband commodities prohibited by the Nguyễn court. Therefore, these pirates could switch roles from fishermen to pirates or merchants to smugglers at any time. The line between fishermen, soldiers, ship crew, and even merchants was blurred, as was the line between ‘licit’ and ‘illicit’ activities. ‘Licit’ and ‘illicit’ activities were defined by the administration depending on whether they defied or threatened the ruler’s interests, be they political or economic.

Based on this situation, pirates were generally called *Tặc* (贼, thief) or *Phi* (匪, bandits or pirates), *Thanh Phi* (清匪, Qing pirates), *Nghịch Phi* (逆匪, treacherous bandits or pirates), or *Hải Phi* (海匪, seafaring pirates). Only the pirates who were listed in the Vietnamese official documents of Huế Court are analysed in this study, so the conflict between the Nguyễn authorities and ‘culprits’ in the eyes of the Huế rulers are clearly delineated. ‘Pirates’ named by the Nguyễn court appeared in Chinese records as *Di Phi* (夷匪, barbarian pirates), *Di Phạm* (夷犯, barbarian perpetrators) or *Nan Di* (难民, barbarian refugees).¹⁸ It is noteworthy that *Thanh Phi* in Huế records included

¹⁸ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 265, p. 35, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 313; Vol. 230, pp. 6–8, p. 302 ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, Vol. 163, pp. 12–13, p.

Chinese pirates, who cruised southeast China, the Gulf of Tonkin, and even the ocean frontier in southern Vietnam and the Gulf of Siam. The meaning of *Thanh Phi* cannot be accurately clarified, because records in the documents of the Nguyễn dynasty were vague. Since people from Qing China were called *Thanh Nhân* (清人), it is logical that the pirates from Qing China were called *Thanh Phi* (清匪, Qing pirates). It was possible that they were from southeast China, northern Vietnam, or Cochin China.

Among these ‘pirates’, some were professional, some were occasional, and the rest were reluctant pirates because they feared arrest.¹⁹ Occasional pirates were usually part-time and seasonal fishermen. In the seasons when fishing was poor and hazardous, looting was the best way for them to ease the pressure of survival.²⁰

In 1829, around 10 ships’ worth of Chinese came to Quảng Yên. These Chinese ships declared to local officials that they were just passing through and fishing there. However, they did not have any certification to moor in Vietnam.²¹ It is possible that they were fishermen as well as pirates. This pattern is apparent in official documents, which recorded other similar cases where Sino-Vietnamese pirates were captured. In 1834, many Chinese ships journeyed in Vietnamese waters, smuggling rice. In addition,

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¹⁹ Robert J. Antony, *Like froth floating on the sea: the world of pirates and seafarers in late imperial south China* (Berkeley, Calif: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 88–103.

²⁰ Dian H. Murray, ‘Living and Working Conditions in Chinese Pirates Communities, 1750–1850’ in David J. Starkey, E.S. van Eyck van Heslinga, J.A. de Moor, ed., *Pirates and privateers: new perspectives on the war on trade in the 18th and 19th centuries* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1977), p. 50.

²¹ Phan Thúc Trục. Quốc Sử Di Biên. Minh Mệnh period.

they frequently attacked passing trade junks.²² Usually, honest fishermen were also armed with weapons to defend themselves from pirates. Thus, it was difficult to distinguish pirates from honest fishermen.²³ It is possible that they were fishermen as well as pirates, even if they declared themselves fishermen during official interrogation after their capture. In 1839, the General Governor of the Hải Dương and Quảng Yên provinces arrested a gang of Chinese pirates led by Li Gongsong (李公宋). This gang of Chinese pirates comprised approximately 60 people who were fishermen in the area.²⁴ In 1839, nearly 500 Chinese ships assembled around the Chang Son in Quảng Yên province from August and September to March or April the following year. These Chinese ships were fishing in Quảng Yên waters.²⁵ Besides Chinese fishing ships, Chinese pirates also included many merchants.²⁶

The multitudinous accomplices of pirates and bandits included seafarers, mariners, soldiers, fishermen, and paddlers. Whether pirates or bandits, they were mobile and flexible. They usually formed large networks from sea to land. Bandits would scurry to the sea, while pirates would flee to the land once they were pursued. The difference between bandits and pirates was blurred. As Eric Tagliacozzo noted, there was no ontological category of ‘pirates’; they often moved in and out of piracy and many other

²² ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 121, p. 14.

²³ Captain AG Course, *Pirates of the Eastern Seas* (Frederick, Muller, 1966), p. 165.

²⁴ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 200, p. 10.

²⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 193, p. 14.

²⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 201, pp. 19–21.

professions.²⁷ Furthermore, the huge networks made by bandits and pirates were interconnected. Chinese secret societies and rebellions were supported by Chinese and Vietnamese pirates. Some of them were pirates and bandits as well. They were people in the lowest class of society, viewed as ‘scum’.

4.2. Description of bandits

Chinese bandits must be examined by virtue of the interconnections between Chinese and Vietnamese bandits before Vietnamese banditry is explored in this chapter. Bandits, outlaws, rebels and secret societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were confusingly known by similar terms like *dao* (盜, robber), *zei* (賊, thief), *zei fei* (賊匪, thieves and bandits), *fei* (匪, bandits and pirates), *hui fei* (會匪, bandits organised into associations), and *ni fei* (逆匪, treacherous bandits or pirates). There were no accurate terms to demarcate the different groups, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when secret societies became a part of ‘delinquent’ and repressive gangs.

In Chinese history, banditry was associated with rebels. In general, banditry was a series of various complex plundering and looting activities which connected a great deal of ‘contradictory strains’. In most cases, their enterprises represented endeavours to seek more resources under the strain of sudden or endemic disasters. In a sense, banditry was only an organised form of survival behaviour. The banditry at higher levels

²⁷ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret trades of the Straits: smuggling and state-formation along a Southeast Asian frontier, 1865-1915* (Ann Arbor, Mich: University Microfilms International, 2005), p. 239.

probably had some political aims and sometimes evolved into open rebellions.²⁸ Perry divided banditry into three categories: the gang, the semi-permanent gang, and the banditry arm, all sorted by size, composition, geographical scope, and durability.²⁹

Wakeman delineated the distinctions among bandits (*dao*, 盜), outlaws (*zei*, 賊), and secret societies (*mi mi hui she*, 秘密会社). He generalizes that bandits were rural gangs that robbed at random and temporarily; they did not exist as one large, stable confederation. Outlaws existed in the social periphery and had little contact with the peasantry. Levying tolls, kidnapping travellers, collecting harvest taxes, and occasionally attacking small administrative centres were common activities for them. They were generally opposed by the peasantry. In the secret societies, there were a great number of peasants who had left their land and were driven by the state of the economy to steal or commit robbery for survival.³⁰

The secret societies merit more attention because their activities were salient in Chinese society in the nineteenth century. Most scholars contend that Chinese 'secret societies' had an open organisational structure and political dissidence, and did not

²⁸ Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and revolutionaries in north China, 1845-1945* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1980), p. 75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–74. As to the different stages of evolving gangs of bandits, Eberhard categorised them into four stages: the petty group of bandits symbiosis with local villages; the gangs of bandits incorporated into near gangs in number; the victorious gang expanded to the nearest city; the huge gangs of bandits co-operated with local gentry and achieved ultimate victory in establishing the new dynasty and turning into the new elite. Eberhard, Wolfram, *Conquerors and rulers, social forces in medieval China* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 101–106.

³⁰ Frederic, Wakeman, *Strangers at the gate: social disorder in south China, 1839-1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1966), pp. 121–122.

comprise marginal groups. Some feel that they signified ‘the formation of the illegal petty bourgeoisie’.³¹ Jean Chesneaux defined them as ‘social bandits’. In general, they were armed robbers. They also kidnapped for ransom and attacked government convoys.³²

‘Social banditry’ was interlinked with China’s peasant rebellions. Irwin Scheiner points out:

Only peasants and their community could create ‘social bandits’ and endow them, as well as other socially displaced and unattached itinerant laborers, preachers and story-tellers, with mythic savior-like powers. Estranged and geographically distanced from political centers, as the bandits had similarly been outlawed, peasants could express their communities’ moral cohesiveness and political opposition to the regime by supporting the guerilla activities of the bandits.³³

‘Secret societies’ functioned as rallying forces for rebels and bandits in the nineteenth century, helped by the severe social turbulence created by rebellions, in particular, the Taiping Rebellion, even though the rebels did not regard rebellion, but rather, mutual aid and criminal entrepreneurship as their *raison d’être*. Therefore, the line separating

³¹ Jean Chesneaux, “Secret society in China’s history evolution” in Jean Chesneaux, ed., *Popular movements and secret societies in China, 1840-1950* (Stanford, Calif, Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 17.

³² Jean Chesneaux, *Secret societies in China in the 19th and twentieth centuries* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1971), p. 61.

³³ Irwin Scheiner, “The mindful peasant: sketches for a study of rebellion”, in *Journal of Asian Studies* hereafter *JAS*, 32, 4 (August 1973): 581.

banditry, ‘secret societies’, and rebel activities became ambiguous. The benchmark used by the Qing authorities to define and suppress rebels and pacify insurrections in the nineteenth century was the fact that they were bandits, rather than members of secret societies.³⁴

Apart from socio-economic and climatic factors, the government’s ineptitude in matters such as frontiers, disparate trade partners, overlapping zones for political power, and multiple ethnic or clan zones further blurred the line between banditry and rebellion.³⁵

Hence, it was not surprising that bandits, rebels, outlaws, and secret societies were ebullient and mutually dependent in the Sino-Vietnamese frontiers during the nineteenth century when rebellions and secret societies were rampant in southern China. Furthermore, there was not a big difference in the views of the two governments. Outlaws (贼) and bandits or rebels (匪) meant essentially the same thing in Huế and Beijing. Consequently, from the perspective of the Nguyễn authorities, bandits, outlaws, rebels (Chinese who fled to Vietnam, as well as Vietnamese), and Chinese secret society members who fled to Vietnam created social turbulence and threatened their legitimacy. Thus they were called *Tặc* (贼) or *Phi* (匪), *Sơn Tặc* or *Sơn Phi* (山匪 mountain bandits), *Hội Phi* (会匪), *Thanh Phi* (清匪), or *Nghịch Phi* (逆匪). Here, the

³⁴ Cai Shaoqing 蔡少卿, *Zhong guo jin dai hui dang shi yan jiu* 中国近代会党史研究 [A study of societies and parties in pre-modern China]. Bei jing, zhong hua shu ju 北京, 中华书局, 1987, p. 24.

³⁵ David G. Atwill, “Trading Places: Resistance, Ethnicity, and Governance in 19th Century Yunnan” in Robert J. Antony and Jane Kate Leonard, ed., *Dragons, Tigers and Dogs* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University, 1998), pp. 245–271.

bandits who joined rebellions and confronted the government were publicly named *Nghich Phi* (逆匪), and the government endeavoured to exterminate them. The bandits who did not join the rebellions were named *Son Tặc* or *Son Phi*. The central government also sought to neutralise them, even though they did not join the rebellions.

In conclusion, these groups were a potential threat to the authorities in terms of security and the economy. They were defined by the administration as illegal groups. This was attributed to the fact that their activities were classified as violations of law and order. Their activities regularly caused turmoil and even rebellions, which could potentially overthrow the rulers. Thus, Vietnam's rulers endeavoured to quell pirates, bandits, and other groups that might threaten their position. With regards to the economy, the material wealth that should have been acquired by legitimate merchants and the rulers was drained by pirates and bandits. The state did not obtain quite enough profit from monopoly and tax regimes for its own financial survival. Thus, the state had to demarcate the line between 'licit' and 'illicit' trade and activities in order to maintain political and economic power as well as security among its rivals.³⁶

5. Four main types of illicit trade

People who engaged in illegal trade during this period can be categorised into four groups: private merchants who engaged in illegal trade activities, complicity by Vietnamese officials, bandits and pirates. However, the lines between these groups, as

³⁶ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret trades of the Straits*, p. 5.

well as between legal and illegal trade, were blurred. Illegal trade was conducted quite frequently via collaboration between Chinese merchants and pirates, pirates and bandits, Vietnamese officials and Chinese merchants, and so on. Accordingly, these four categories of unsanctioned trade were not only interconnected throughout northern Vietnam and southeast China, but also fostered new trading patterns in areas not easily reached by legal trade. Tax evasion by Chinese merchants and illicit trade activities under the name of Vietnamese officials, or in cooperation with corrupt officials, formed a part of the extensive historical context of smuggling.

5.1. Private merchants involved in smuggling

Chinese merchants were a vital source of smuggling contacts along the Sino-Vietnamese overland and maritime borders. Smuggling items were usually goods like rice and opium, which could provide Chinese merchants with quick, lucrative profits. Tax evasion was the usual method that Chinese merchants used in non-authorised trade. There were many methods of tax evasion, but the primary method was alteration of the size and type of ship used in trade.

Chinese vessels were levied different taxes based on the taxation regulations of the Huế Court. Taxes also varied in different sea ports, ranging from Nam Kỳ to Bắc Kỳ. Furthermore, Chinese vessels from different places in China had to comply with different tax regulations in order to maintain balance in the kingdom while encouraging more Chinese merchants to trade there. The Nguyễn had complicated tax regimes in

order to curb any type of tax evasion. However, many Chinese merchants utilised a loophole in the Huế taxation system to carry out non-sanctioned trade activities. Thereby, the taxation system in Nguyễn was undermined by various clandestine trade activities.

Trade junks regularly conducted ‘secret trade’ by altering the class of their vessels. Chinese junks did not always match the vessel class or place of origin listed in the vessels’ register. In 1811, Zhu Fuguan (朱富观) and Li Wenyuan (李文远), two Cantonese merchants, chartered Hainanese junks to trade in Gia Định in order to evade tax, as the tax on Hainanese vessels was lower than the tax of vessels from Guangdong. Their plot came to light, and the customs authority forced them to pay taxes as Cantonese ships.³⁷ As frequent tax evasion occurred, the Huế Court had to overhaul the taxes on Chinese junks. In 1817, according to the memorial of Nguyễn Đức Xuyên (阮德川), many Chinese ships from Hainan came to Vietnam, carrying more goods and passengers than vessels from other provinces, for lucrative profits. Nguyễn Đức Xuyên’s advice was that the government should take practical measures to stem smuggling. Gia Long approved of Xuyên’s suggestion, and revised the tax regulations. Chinese junks were levied taxes as Guangdong or Fujian vessels if there were cargoes and passengers from Guangdong or Fujian on the ship. The tax was pegged to a certain area if the proportion of cargoes from that area was the largest, even if the junk was loaded with cargoes and passengers from other regions or provinces.³⁸

³⁷ ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 42, pp. 4–5.

³⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 55, p. 9.

Due to the tax exemption given to Chinese shipwrecks, many Chinese trade junks carried out smuggling activities by disguising themselves as shipwrecks. In 1816, Nguyễn Đức Xuyên, who was in charge of Grand Transportation System, reported on the thriving smuggling to Gia Long. Some vessels faked the ship's register to evade taxes; others posed as shipwrecks to avoid paying taxes.³⁹ In 1838, a group of Chinese merchants hatched a scheme for tax exemption. These Chinese junks worked with Vietnamese on the shore for around five or six months and made clandestine deals.⁴⁰

Vietnamese vessels of the Grand Transportation System were categorised into many classes.⁴¹ These vessels were allowed to undertake commercial activities in the next year as long as they finished certain duties such as shipping rice from southern Vietnam to northern Vietnam. The Vietnamese government offered them lower traffic or free duty when they traded based on the amount of governmental duty accomplished. However, these junks of the Grand Transportation System did not engage in commercial activities as freely as common trade vessels. To some degree, they were half-official or official junks. In addition, the Grand Transportation System of Vietnam also included

³⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 53, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 196, p. 7.

⁴¹ The Grand Transportation System in the Huế Court was the primary transportation system that combined domestic waterways and ocean waterways into a huge transportation system in order to transport crucial goods such as rice, copper, and military items or other provisions throughout the whole of Vietnam. Compared with authorised private junks, the ships belonging to the Grand Transportation System had an obligation to transport vital goods for the court and country. Thus, they were flexible; they were official junks but also acted as commercial vessels. For these junks, transporting and trade proceeded in turns. Furthermore, their tax exemptions were different, something the ordinary private junks did not have. KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 256, pp. 12, 29, 257.

many sojourning Chinese junks. In 1832, the Vietnamese government had to prevent Vietnamese ships from posing as common Chinese ships, because many Chinese junks or Vietnamese vessels disguised as common Chinese junks were smuggling rice to China for lucrative profits.⁴² In 1833, a Chinese junk which belonged to the Grand Transportation System of Nguyễn, as one of the Đại Dịch Thuyền (代役船), left Hà Nội to trade abroad and never returned. It was later observed that many Chinese merchants' ships as Đại Dịch Thuyền smuggled rice to China. However, their junks were not Đại Dịch Thuyền but changed other-class junk to entry Vietnam when they returned to Vietnam. Thereafter, Minh Mạng forbade sojourning Chinese vessels in Vietnam from going abroad to areas such as Hạ Châu, and other countries, limiting them to domestic regions.⁴³ In 1837, some Chinese in Gia Định who had Đại Dịch Thuyền, tried to trade in Nam Kỳ to Bắc Kỳ. However, Emperor Minh Mạng refused this request, considering the fact that many Chinese took advantage of manufacturing ships to smuggle rice and opium.⁴⁴

In addition, Chinese merchants deliberately reported cargoes incorrectly in customs. In 1816, a Chinese named Zeng Shiliang (曾仕亮) captained a vessel from Fujian to Gia Định for trade. He stored six big pearls in the cargo, but did not declare them to the local customs office.⁴⁵ In 1831, some Chinese merchants were arrested for smuggling opium. These smugglers were forced to pay 3,000 taels more than they had to lawfully

⁴² ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 78, p. 8.

⁴³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 88, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 177, pp. 27–28.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 52, p. 1.

pay according to the amount of their cargoes, which was worth approximately 20,000 taels.⁴⁶

5.2. Complicity by Vietnamese officials

Chinese merchants usually improved their deals by taking advantage of the clout of Vietnamese officials. Chinese merchants obtained more profits when they under-traded under the cloak of Vietnamese officials. Clandestine trade, Chinese merchants, and Vietnamese officials were interdependent.

Corruption in customs and bribes from Chinese merchants to cover up illicit trade were rife. In 1811, Pan Yuanji (潘原记) from Hainan bribed a local official at the Sa Kỳ seaport Lâm Ân to let him avoid declaring goods for tax.⁴⁷ In 1836, Lê Văn Nhuận (黎文润), a local official in Vĩnh Long (永隆) and Yên Thái (安泰) in the south, was bribed to allow Chinese merchants to leave Vietnam while smuggling rice.⁴⁸ In 1844, Hoàng Văn Lộc smuggled silk and opium to Vietnam, but was later reported to the Vietnamese government. He was released after the first trial. After his release, Hoàng Văn Lộc (黄文禄) gave Trần Văn Thông (陈文聰), the Provincial Administration Commissioner, money as a token of thanks for releasing him, but Thông refused. However, Nguyễn Văn Lý (阮文理), the Surveillance Commissioner in Phú Yên,

⁴⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 77, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 43, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 169, pp. 7–9.

accepted 50 taels of silver and two taels of high-quality eaglewood from Hoàng Văn Lộc.⁴⁹

Some Vietnamese officials helped the ongoing smuggling by Chinese merchants, as certain officials could be kept in the dark about illegal activities. Others turned a blind eye to the illegal trade of the Chinese merchants. In 1830, Pan Huiji (潘辉记), a Chinese under the patronage of Duke Định Viễn (定远公) in the Nguyễn court, used an official ship for trade in order to pay less tax.⁵⁰ In 1832, Duke Diên Khánh (延庆公) allowed the Chinese merchant, Ye Lianfeng (叶连丰) to trade without paying taxes. However, Ye's junk was not duty-free but, rather, an altered common vessel.⁵¹ In 1837, Huang Ye (黄叶), a Chinese merchant in Gia Định, registered his private junks as official vessels for trade in southern Vietnam, northern Vietnam, China, and other Southeast Asian regions with the help of Duke Kiến Yên (建安公) for about a decade without paying any tax.⁵²

Lastly, some Vietnamese officials not only directly collaborated with Chinese merchants in illegal trade, in particular, the rice and opium trade, in Southeast Asia, but also faked certificates of registry and built junks illegally. In 1832, a Vietnamese official, Mạc Hầu Hy (莫侯熿), smuggled rice to Hạ Châu by intercepting Siamese pirates.⁵³ In the same year, Hoàng Công Tài (黄公才), the Provincial Governor of Ninh

⁴⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 40, p. 22.

⁵⁰ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 67, p. 6; Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu A57/7 Vol. 16.

⁵¹ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 78, p. 16.

⁵² Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 179, pp. 29–30.

⁵³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 79, p. 26.

Bình (宁平), built ships and traded illegally. Furthermore, he also faked the ships' certifications for carrying contraband items. Phan Bá Đạt (潘伯达) was appointed the official to investigate this matter, which ended in Hoàng Công Tài committing suicide to escape punishment when the officials discovered opium in his vessels.⁵⁴ In 1833, Nguyễn Hữu Khôi⁵⁵ deployed soldiers to the mountains to chop wood without approval from the Nguyễn court, and either sold this wood to Chinese merchants in Qing China or manufactured vessels illegally under the protection of Lê Văn Duyệt (黎文悦).⁵⁶

5.3. *Pirates*

Besides merchants and Vietnamese officials, occasional and professional pirates were a large group of smugglers. Differing from private merchants, pirates usually procured

⁵⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 85, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Gia Long established Gia Định Thành Tổng Trấn. Before Minh Mạng abolished Gia Định Thành Tổng Trấn, three general governors managed Gia Định Thành, Lê Văn Duyệt was the longest one as the governor-general of Gia Định Thành among other two counterparts (1812–1813, 1820–1832). Furthermore, he was the most prominent. After Lê Văn Duyệt's death, Minh Mạng abolished Gia Định Thành Tổng Trấn Quan instead of governor-generals in every province. Bạch Xuân Nguyên (白春元), who was the provincial administration commissioner in Gia Định province investigated crimes committed by Lê Văn Duyệt and punished Duyệt's subordinates. Lê Văn Khôi was one of Duyệt's subordinates. Prior to the 1830s, Nguyễn Hữu Khôi from Cao Bằng was pursued by the government and fled to Thanh Hóa due to his rebellion. At that time, Lê Văn Duyệt was in charge of Thanh Hóa. Therefore, Nguyễn Hữu Khôi surrendered to Lê Văn Duyệt. Soon afterward, Nguyễn Hữu Khôi obtained Lê Văn Duyệt's trust and was adopted as his son. Nguyễn Hữu Khôi then followed Lê Văn Duyệt back to Gia Định and was appointed as a high-ranking official. Furthermore, he changed his name to Lê Văn Khôi. In 1833, Khôi killed Bạch Xuân Nguyên (白春元) and his family. Afterwards, he killed Nguyễn Văn Quế (阮文桂), the governor-general in Gia Định province. At that time, Khôi instigated revolts. Khôi and his followers quickly occupied most of southern Vietnam. However, the revolts by Khôi were ultimately quelled by the Nguyễn court.

⁵⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 90, p. 10.

goods by violent methods such as pillage. Additionally, they were not only a potential security threat at sea, but also on land. They shared not only the lucrative profits, but also the power of the administration.

Waves of Chinese pirates

Chinese pirates usually cruised around the South China Sea, the Gulf of Tonkin, and further southwards due to the geographical proximity of southeast China and northern Vietnam. The connection between Chinese and Vietnamese pirates was ubiquitous. The rise and fall of Chinese pirates had an inevitable impact on their Vietnamese counterparts. The noteworthy height of pirate activity occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin and further southwards at the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century. The first peak of the pirates, which was characterised by frequent activity led by Zheng Yi, Cai Qian, Zhu Fen, and Zhang Bao, occurred from the end of the eighteenth century to 1810.⁵⁷ The initial rise of pirates was due to the asylum they obtained from Tây Sơn, such as safe headquarters and protected bases, which supported piracy in both Vietnam and China.⁵⁸ Hence, the second peak of Chinese piracy was not necessarily occasional. During this period, quelling Chinese pirates and peacekeeping in Vietnam's waters were the main targets of the Nguyễn court in revitalising and fostering friendly Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations. At its height, Chinese pirate activity in the

⁵⁷ Antony, *Like froth floating on the sea*, pp. 43–51.

⁵⁸ Dian H. Murray, *Pirates of the South China coast, 1790-1810* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 49.

Gia Long period was therefore not as rampant as it was in China. In addition, Hué did not indulge the Chinese pirates, but cooperated with the Qing administration in subduing them.

The Chinese pirates who plagued the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin were increasingly active from around 1832–1849. The Nguyễn court also suffered from Chinese piracy during this period. During the Minh Mạng period, the Chinese pirates in southeast China were a force to be reckoned with. Two prominent Chinese pirates during the piracy boom were Shap-ng-tsai (Shi Wuzai, 十五仔) and Chui Apoo (Xu Yabao, 徐保仔), who cruised the South China Sea and Hong Kong's waters in order to pillage commercial junks. British trade suffered a huge blow from the privateers belonging to Chinese pirates. The second peak of Chinese piracy, from 1832–1849, ceased as soon as the British China squadron destroyed 57 pirate junks, killing more than 900 pirates.⁵⁹

The emergence of the second peak in piracy can be attributed to three factors. First, the Chinese court did not enforce any effective measures or establish a strong naval force to quell pirates.⁶⁰ Secondly, with the first opening of ports in Sino-Western treaties since the issue of the Nanjing Treaty after the first Opium War, more and more Westerners entered open sea ports such as Hong Kong in China. Increasing opportunities for trade between Westerners and Chinese encouraged more pirates to

⁵⁹ Gosse, *The history of piracy*, p. 281.

⁶⁰ Hunt Janin, *The India-China opium trade in the 19th century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1999), p. 140.

plunder trade junks as well as Western vessels. Finally, a boom in China's opium trade exacerbated the rampancy of pirate activity during this period. Prior to the early nineteenth century, the Qing court issued a ban on opium imports. However, by the 1820s, the volume of opium imported into China was around three to four chests per ship.⁶¹ Western vessels and opium ships were thus plundered by pirates such as those on *Hellas* in 1840.⁶²

Piracy was a significant problem in negotiations between the Qing and British, with piracy thriving from the 1850s onwards. The Treaty of Tianjin formally put this matter on the agenda, as pirates were a menace to the growing British trade; pirates plundered countless trade junks even though the British attempted to keep Chinese merchants away from Hong Kong.⁶³ Apart from Chinese pirates from overland secret societies, members of the Taiping rebellion cruised the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin. From the 1850s onwards, the rise of Chinese pirates wreaked havoc on trade vessels along the Cochin-Chinese coasts, the Gulf of Siam, the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, and the settlement of Singapore.⁶⁴ Around the 1860s, the activities of

⁶¹ Liang Jiabin, *Guang dong shi san hang kao*, p. 176.

⁶² Hunt Janin, *The India-China opium trade in the 19th century*, pp. 138–139.

⁶³ Grace Fox. *British admirals and Chinese pirates, 1832–1869* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1940), p. 143.

⁶⁴ Hooi, Christopher Liang-yin, *Piracy and its suppression in Malayan waters, 1800-1867* (Academic exercise - Dept. of History, University of Malaya, 1957), p. 12. Hunt Janin, *The India-China opium trade in the 19th century*, p. 142.

Chinese pirates reached a new peak, prompting China to negotiate agreements with six other Western nations between 1861 and 1869 with the aim of controlling piracy.⁶⁵

The headquarters of Sino-Vietnamese piracy⁶⁶

Pirates lived on the waves, which made them both mobile and versatile. However, isolated seafaring could not exist, as Chinese pirates and other seafarers were heavily reliant on land for their survival. They had to depend on people on the shore for victuals, water, matting, rope, and other provisions. Gunpowder, weapons and information were all necessary for the pirates' security purposes. Furthermore, pirates had to dispose of their illicit goods as well as clean and even repair their junks. Thus, pirates had to establish bases in local villages on land in order to carry out their operations on land as well as at sea. They made contacts on shore with a cross-section of local society that formed a huge network of accomplices comprising fishermen, merchants, soldiers, bandit gangs, secret societies, the remnants of rebellions, and so on.

The Sino-Vietnamese pirates who plagued southeast China, the Gulf of Tonkin, and the coast of northern Vietnam possessed four vital headquarters on land that they used to dispose of loot, repair vessels, supplement provisions, and procure information. The first one was Jiang Ping (江坪) Jiang Ping was a natural choke-point situated in Guangxi en route from China to Vietnam. Furthermore, Jiang Ping was an ideal

⁶⁵ Fox, *British admirals and Chinese pirates*, p. 145.

⁶⁶ Here we call them 'Sino-Vietnamese' not because they were overseas Chinese in Vietnam [yue nan hua qiao (越南华侨)] but because they operated across the Sino-Vietnamese borders at will.

headquarters for pirates; it was easily defensible due to deep, turbulent currents, and could be approached only by vessels of a certain size. Finally, because Jiang Ping was a frontier town, Chinese control of the region was not much stronger than that of the Vietnamese.⁶⁷ By the 1790s, Jiang Ping had become a booming frontier town as well as a pirate lair. A large Vietnamese squatter population settled at the entrance to the harbour. Many of the residents traded in pirate loot and supplied their provisions. Local merchants from Jiang Ping also traded with pirates here.⁶⁸

The second major hideout for Sino-Vietnamese pirates was Lian Zhou and Qiong Zhou (Hainan), which were in the lower prefectures of Guangdong. Lian Zhou was close to northern Vietnam by land, while Qiong Zhou was connected to northern Vietnam by sea. At the close of the eighteenth century, pirates from the qi bang (旗帮, Flag Gangs) in Guangdong steadily emerged from Lian Zhou. The Tian Di (天地会) and Niu Tou (牛头会) societies were established here to service the pirates' operations. Furthermore, secret societies supported pirates in confrontations with the local government in Lian Zhou.⁶⁹ Some islands off the shore were also used by pirates as strongholds for their operations in Hainan. Naochou and Weichou flanked the peninsula located along the route of the salt fleets of Dian Bai, as well as vessels that passed through the narrow straits of Hainan.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Murray, *Pirates of the South China coast*, p. 20.

⁶⁸ Antony, *Like froth floating on the sea*, p. 123.

⁶⁹ Zheng Guangnan 郑广南, *zhong guo hai dao shi 中国海盜史 [The history of Chinese pirates]*. hua dong li gong da xue chu ban she 华东理工大学出版社, 1999, pp. 313–314.

⁷⁰ Murray, 'Living and Working Conditions in Chinese Pirate Communities 1750-1850' in *Pirates and*

The third base of the Sino-Vietnamese pirates was the coastal villages and islands off the northern coast of Vietnam, which were dotted with reefs and inlets. Besides Jiang Ping, coastal regions further south in Vietnam such as Nghệ An, Doan Mien, and Huế were used as headquarters by pirates.⁷¹ Vân Đồn, Ba Phung, and Tràng Sơn in Quảng Yên, Đồ Sơn in Hải Dương, and Thanh Hóa in northern Vietnam surpassed Jiang Ping as the premier strongholds of both petty and professional pirates from the 1810s onwards. Quảng Yên, which was dotted with reefs, inlets, and islands, served as a natural location to ambush merchants, dispose of loot, and trade illegally with merchants. It was common for large numbers of Chinese merchants to flock to these lairs in order to trade with pirates. In 1838, Nguyễn Công Trứ (阮公著) reported to Minh Mạng that a great number of Qing merchants had clustered together in Tràng Sơn and its vicinities for illegal trade.⁷² Squatter smugglers also transferred contraband rice to Qin Zhou and Lian Zhou from here.

The pirates managed not only to concentrate on certain areas, but also made their presence felt in all the rivers and streams that could accommodate them; small rivers flowing to the sea were the scenes of much pirate activity. The last pirate base was a group of sea ports on the shore that were interconnected with overland water systems and flourishing trade cities situated in estuaries in northern Vietnam. From Bạch Long Vĩ to the Red River Delta, there were off-shore rocks and reefs stretching for about 60

privateers, p. 58 .

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁷² Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu, AHv195/1-12, A.57/1-11, Vol. 23.

miles, some wooded, some bare, some low-lying, and others elevated. This terrain made it difficult to pursue pirates here. Furthermore, many creeks connected the rivers and river mouth to the sea, providing ample opportunities for the pirates to evade pursuers. Hải Phòng had a reputation as a ‘pirates’ nest’, a supply stop once pirates landed or when bandits sailed to sea, or vice versa, when they were being pursued by the authorities. Sha-ng-tsai (Shi Wuzai) obtained supplies from Haiphong, antagonising the government.⁷³

Collaboration of bandits from mountain to sea

No pirates could survive once isolated from the land; supplies and other provisions had to be obtained from the land. Thus, making contact with the overland world was a necessity for pirates.

There were islands which became the haunts of pirates; here, they could easily rush out from concealment to attack incoming traders, refit their vessels, and stock up provisions. Pirates had plagued the ocean frontier where the authority wielded by Vietnam and China’s central governments was weak. Some land locations served as backups against the possibility of pursuit. They were also premier strongholds for trading with merchants and supplying provisions, since it was necessary for the pirates to dispose of booty and repair their vessels. The overland world was enmeshed with the seafaring world. This, together with Sino-Vietnamese pirate collusion and the mobility

⁷³ Captain AG Course, *Pirates of the Eastern Seas*, p. 165.

of these pirates, made the suppression of piracy much more difficult. Moreover, it was difficult for the Chinese and Vietnamese governments to capture pirates once the pirates shifted from the sea to the land. Many Chinese pirates who collaborated with Vietnamese pirates in the Gulf of Tonkin, for example, in Qin Zhou and Lian Zhou, were members of secret societies or the remnants of the Taiping rebellions.⁷⁴ The Vietnamese women on shore also sold rice to the Chinese pirates.⁷⁵ In 1845, Chinese pirates landed in Vạn Ninh in Vietnam in order to escape pursuit by the Chinese government from Chinese to Vietnamese waters. The Vietnamese officials arrested four Chinese pirate ships and repatriated them to Qinzhou in China.⁷⁶ Interestingly, there is a unique example that shows Western missionaries were also involved in piracy and banditry during the Tự Đức period. In 1859, a Portugal missionary, who called himself a marshal, led two Western vessels, 10 Chinese ships, and around 200 pirate ships to fight with the Vietnamese armies at Hà Nam in Quảng Yên.⁷⁷ During the Dao Guang period of the Qing dynasty, a Vietnamese, Trần Như Hải (陈如海), colluded with a Chinese, Yang Jiufu (杨就富), and raided the waters of Vietnam.⁷⁸

Chinese and Vietnamese pirates and smugglers

⁷⁴ Zheng Guangnan, *zhong guo hai dao shi* (1999), pp. 313–314; Hunt Janin, *The India-China opium trade in the 19th century*, p. 143.

⁷⁵ Antony, *Like froth floating on the sea*, p. 114.

⁷⁶ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 20.

⁷⁷ ĐNTL, Chính Biên IV, Vol. 28, pp. 15–16.

⁷⁸ Wang Zhichun 王之春. *Qing chao rou yuan ji* 清朝柔远记 [Foreign Matters in Qing]. Zhong hua shu ju 中华书局. p. 214.

Chinese and Vietnamese pirates thrived in the Gulf of Tonkin and were far from well-mannered merchants. They lurked along busy trade routes to plunder and pillage. Many Chinese pirates cruised the Vietnamese ocean border and hid in Vietnamese junks.⁷⁹ Other pirates pillaged the water frontiers of Fujian and Guangdong for a long time. They usually fled to the Vietnamese ocean borders to ask Vietnam for amnesty once they were pursued by the Qing government.⁸⁰ In 1832, Nguyễn Bảo (阮保) conspired with Chinese pirates with 10 ships for heist.⁸¹ Apart from plundering vessels, these pirates also smuggled rice and other commodities to other Chinese in Vietnamese waters or traded provisions with the Vietnamese.⁸² These illegal activities were viewed by Nguyễn court as threatening the security of Nguyễn's dominance as well as jeopardising the economy.

Many Vietnamese pirates joined Chinese pirates' gangs and vice versa. 'Several years ago, long-haired Vietnamese cruised the waters of the Fujian and Guangdong provinces. Most of them joined the pirates for survival.'⁸³ Based on several official reports, in 1833, pirates plied the waters of Lianzhou and Qiongzhou, which were adjacent to Vietnam. Zhang Kuachun (张 春) reported that there were around 30 corsairs and 100 pirates plundering the sea at the mouth of Hồng Loa Sa (红螺沙) and Bạch Long Vĩ. In 1833, Chinese officials arrested many pirates such as Ruan Yaguan

⁷⁹ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, Vol. 11, pp. 15–16. in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 273.

⁸⁰ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, Vol. 106, pp. 22–23, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 282.

⁸¹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 83, p. 12.

⁸² Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, Vol. 199, pp. 19–20. in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 290.

⁸³ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, Vol. 102, pp. 8–11, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 281.

(阮亚管) and his followers in Zhushan (竹山) and the sea around Qinzhou. Li Yade (李亚德) and his followers were apprehended in Hepu County (合浦县), while Liang Yayou (梁亚有), Lan Yawan (蓝亚晚) and their followers were captured in Wei Zhou (涠洲). In the Gu Island arrest, the chief leaders, such as Cǎi Hǎi Lǎo (盖海老), were Vietnamese and were also arrested.⁸⁴

In 1843, Chinese pirates who cruised the Vietnamese ocean to attack trade junks were arrested, and their vessels and weapons confiscated by Vietnamese officials. Jin Er'ji (金二纪), who was the leader, admitted that they did ply the Vietnamese waters in order to plunder vessels.⁸⁵ Nguyễn Vietnam eventually beheaded Jin Er'ji and his followers in order to maintain order at sea.⁸⁶

To the Nguyễn court, Chinese pirates were the main troublemakers in Vietnamese waters, as the many islands, reefs and inlets that peppered the coast of northern Vietnam served as pirate lairs. Nguyễn Vietnam endeavoured to quell pirates, whether they were Chinese or Vietnamese. In the first year of the Gia Long period, the Nguyễn government arrested nine Chinese pirates in Vietnamese waters and extradited them to the Tai Ping (太平) Prefecture in China.⁸⁷

By the Minh Mạng period, Chinese pirates regularly harassed passing junks in Vietnamese waters. Two Chinese pirate ships appeared in the waters off Quảng Bình in 1831, and in 1838, a large group of Chinese pirates was found in the waters off the

⁸⁴ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 226, pp. 25–30, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 301.

⁸⁵ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 395, pp. 26–27. in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 320.

⁸⁶ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 17.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Vol. 131, p. 16.

Khánh Hòa (庆和) province.⁸⁸ By the Thiệu Trị period, Chinese pirates were still active in Vietnamese waters. In 1843, around 20 ships of Chinese pirates in Quảng Nam were discovered by the Nguyễn court. Later on, the two biggest ships, along with five other Chinese pirate ships, plundered the waters of Vietnam. In 1844, Nguyễn Vietnam captured three Chinese pirates, Huang Yayi, Xu Yasi and Su Bilan, in the Quang Yen province. Soon afterwards, Nguyễn Vietnam apprehended the Chinese pirates Huang Qi and Li Yali in the Quảng Yên province.⁸⁹ From the Tự Đức period onwards, Chinese piracy in Vietnam grew. In 1849, Ye Yawu, Yan Yayang and another 140 Chinese pirates in Quảng Yên, along with 50 Chinese pirates in the Hải Dương province, were arrested by Vietnamese authorities.⁹⁰

The pirates used a wide variety of ships and weapons, which they secured by capture or purchase. The largest gangs of these pirates were composed of thousands of people and hundreds of junks; even the smallest gang had at least a few pirates and a couple of ships. In 1797, the Chinese pirates, Wu Daxiang (吴大相), Zhuang Deli (庄得力), and Li Da'an (李大安) surrendered to the Qing court. The total number of their gangs was about 100, including followers and relatives.⁹¹ In 1826, around 100 corsair ships showed up in Vietnam's waters.⁹² In 1832, Lê Văn Quý (黎文贵) reported that

⁸⁸ Ibid. Vol. 159, p. 16.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Vol. 131, p. 18.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Vol. 131, p. 21.

⁹¹ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录. Vol. 18, pp. 15–16, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 275.

⁹² Minh Mệnh Ngũ Trị Văn. A.118/2: Vol. 9.

about seven or eight pirate ships had appeared in Thanh Hóa to loot merchant ships.⁹³ In the Minh Mạng period, besides professional pirates, occasional pirates also plundered the Vietnamese waters. In 1833, Li Zengjie (李增阶) reported to the Emperor of Qing that the authorities had tracked these pirates to Dai Mao Island (玳瑁洲), situated on the Sino-Vietnamese ocean border. They found three pirate ships, each of which held about 100–200 pirates. Qing officials arrested 12 pirates, including their leader, Zhu Ya'er (朱亚二). Many pirates drowned in this endeavour. After that, pirates flocked to Giáp Châu Sơn Island, which was near Zhu Shan in China. About 30 pirate ships continued to pillage the waters. Moreover, they also occupied the Mã Châu (马洲), Giáp Châu (甲洲), and Lão Thử Sơn (老鼠山) islands on the Vietnamese ocean border.⁹⁴

Smuggling items

Rice, money and weapons were necessities for pirates. They usually landed to exchange and obtain necessities from locals on the shore or dispose of loot to acquire weapons or money on the black market. In 1807, the Qing government secured 14 corsairs, more than 50 different types of cannons, more than 3,000 jin of gunpowder, and a large number of assorted weapons.⁹⁵ In the same year, the Chinese pirates Zhou Da (周大) and Shi Er (石二) confessed that cannons weighing 5,000 and 2,000 jin in captured

⁹³ Ibid. A.118/3, Vol. 2.

⁹⁴ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 226, pp. 25–30, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 301.

⁹⁵ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录. Vol. 186, pp. 15–16, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 289.

ships had come from Vietnam.⁹⁶ In 1808, two famous pirates, Cai Qian (蔡牵) and Zhu Ben (朱贲), lurked in Sino-Vietnamese waters, trading regularly with local people. Many Vietnamese on the shore provided rice, drinking water, vegetables, and other daily provisions⁹⁷ to these Chinese and Vietnamese pirates⁹⁸ in return for silver and copper.

5.4. Bandits and rebels

Southern China and northern Vietnam were peripheral places to the Chinese and Vietnamese central governments. Itinerant people who were merchants or inhabitants increased the mobility and complexity of the Sino-Vietnamese overland frontiers. With regards to bandits in northern Vietnam, southern China was the best place to take refuge once they were pursued by the government of Nguyễn in Vietnam and vice versa due to the geographical proximity. Chinese and Vietnamese bandits journeyed through the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands at will. Here, as in Nguyễn Vietnam, it was difficult to distinguish ethnic Chinese from ethnic Vietnamese due to similarities in appearance. Usually, the Qing pigtail was an obvious clue. Some Vietnamese bandits even styled their hair in pigtails in order to evade the Huế court.

In this section, the main objects of discussion are two parts. One is the rebels, who regularly had special political agendas to oppose the dynasty. The other is the bandits,

⁹⁶ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录. Vol. 189, p. 7, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 290.

⁹⁷ Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录. Vol. 199, pp. 19–20, in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 290.

⁹⁸ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 60, p. 29.

who did not have any special political agendas and just made trouble. Both groups are described in this study since they quite often connected along the Sino-Vietnamese border. Many rebellions were composed of bandits, and many bandits joined rebellions to plunder more. Rebellions provided bandits with more chances to make trouble and raids. Bandits were also used by rebels to enhance their force to confront the present dynasty. Therefore, both the Chinese and Vietnamese governments used ‘*Tặc*’ (*zei*, 賊) or ‘*Phi*’ (*fei*, 匪) indiscriminately to describe rebels and bandits.

Revolts in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands

In the nineteenth century in northern Vietnam, rebels and bandits were regularly interconnected. Some bandits joined the rebellions and antagonised the central government of Nguyễn, but others did not and survived by intermittent pillaging. To Nguyễn Vietnam, both groups were labelled as one: *phi*. The bandits who joined rebellions and confronted the government were called *Nghịch Phi* (逆匪), and the government endeavoured to exterminate them. The bandits who did not join the rebellions were called *Sơn Tặc* or *Sơn Phi* (山匪). The central government also sought to quell them even though they did not join the rebellions. Normally, when the petty bandits did not join the rebellions or threaten national security, the government seldom eradicated them on a large scale. However, the Nguyễn court initiated the annihilation of any anti-government groups once the rebellions, which comprised bandits and rebels,

became widespread. Hence, the bandits and rebels were singled out as a group, as they were closely linked in northern Vietnam and southeast China in the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, confederations of rebels (賊) were persistent in northern Vietnam. In the early nineteenth century, gangs of rebels with political agendas revolted in opposition to the present dynasty and, in some cases, attempted to restore the former one. Major turmoil was caused by bandits in northern Vietnam. Lý Khai Ba (李开巴), who was indigenous to the region, revolted in Hung Hóa (兴化) in 1802, Phan Bá Dung (潘伯镛) in Nam Định (南定) in 1833, Lê Duy Lương (黎维良) in Ninh Bình in 1833, and Nông Văn Vân (农文云) in Tuyên Quang in 1833. These bandits revolted in different locations that were far away from Huế, so suppression of the revolts put tremendous strain on the Nguyễn court's resources.

From the 1850s onwards, bandits in northern Vietnam were heavily influenced by the rebellions in southeast China. Many Chinese bandits, some in major gangs, fled to northern Vietnam and stirred up Vietnamese hostility towards the local government. Muslim rebellions led by Du Wenxiu (杜文秀) in the Yunnan province influenced the border regions in northern Vietnam which were adjacent to Chinese provinces in Yunnan. At nearly the same time, the Taiping Rebellion started in Guangxi and Guangdong. Soon afterward, the Taiping Rebellion swept through nearly the whole of South China. The Taiping Rebellion, along with the many local revolts in the Guangxi province in China during this period, had a negative effect on the internal security of northern Vietnam, and generated unease there. A prominent example is the Ba Đường

bandits (三堂匪) of Thái Nguyên in 1851,⁹⁹ which included groups known as the Quảng Nghĩa Đường (广义堂), Đức Thắng Đường (德胜堂), and Lục Thắng Đường (六胜堂). Chinese bandits such as Hoàng Tặc (蝗贼) in Tây Sơn (1854) and Tạ Văn Phụng (谢文奉) in northern Vietnam (1861) also joined and inflamed the revolts in Vietnam.

Chinese and Vietnamese bandits

China was the natural refuge for Vietnamese bandits and vice versa. Therefore, Sino-Vietnamese bandits shuttling around the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands were ubiquitous during the nineteenth century. Nông Văn Vân¹⁰⁰, who was the general of the Bảo Lạc prefecture in Nguyễn Vietnam, rebelled in northern Vietnam. He fled to the Zhen'an Prefecture in Guangxi when he was pursued by the Huế court, and took refuge by shuttling between Guangxi, Tuyên Quang, and Thái Nguyên in northern Vietnam.¹⁰¹ The followers of Nông Văn Vân, such as Nông Hồng Thạc (农洪硕) and Nông Hồng Nhân (农洪仁), used the Sino-Vietnamese border regions as safe havens once the Nguyễn court captured them. Nông Hồng Thạc fled to the Guangling prefecture in

⁹⁹ Bandits were rampant in Guangxi. These bandits united into numerous gangs. They regularly named the main room of a house *mou tang* (某堂), where they came together to discuss how and what to plunder. They called themselves the same name as the main room where they gathered. They dismissed once they cut the melon from plunder. Zhang Yueqing 张月卿. *Tang fei zong lu* 堂匪总录 [The documents on Tang bandits]. Tai bei, xue she shu ju 台北, 学生书局, 1972. preface.

¹⁰⁰ He was not ethnic Vietnamese and the rebels by him was either not uprising by a minority people.

¹⁰¹ KĐTBBKNPCB, Vh.v.2701/19, Vol. 71, p. 2.

Guangxi.¹⁰² For the Chinese bandits in southeast China, northern Vietnam was also a place for them to reorganise their activities once they were pursued by the Chinese government. Wu Yazhong and Xie Ba and their followers, who were *Tang Fei* (堂匪, bandit gangs) that swept across the whole of Guangxi and Guangdong provinces in the 1850s, were chased by Feng Zicai (冯子材), the provincial military commander, then fled to northern Vietnam.¹⁰³ The Qing government pursued Wu Yazhong again, and he fled to Cửu Phong (九葑) in northern Vietnam three times.¹⁰⁴ Zhao Huadan (赵华丹), who was one of Wu Yazhong's followers, fled to Tỳ (莪) and Cốc Canh (谷) in northern Vietnam.¹⁰⁵ In the late nineteenth century, the Black Flag, led by Liu Yongfu, occupied Bảo Thắng in northern Vietnam. In the nineteenth century, Chinese bandits in northern Vietnam were a significant part of local rebellions in the country. Some Chinese fled to Vietnam and joined the local revolts, some crossed the borders solely for robbery, and others colluded with the local bandits in Vietnam.

Rebellions and the Chinese

Compared to the Nông Văn Vân rebellion, it was not difficult for the central government of Nguyễn in Vietnam to suppress the Phan Bá Dung (潘伯镛) and Lê Duy

¹⁰² Ibid. Vhv.2701/11, Vol. 39; Vhv.2701/12, Vol. 45, p. 15.

¹⁰³ Tai ping tian guo ge ming shi qi guang xi nong min qi yi zi liao bian ji zu 太平天国革命时期广西农民起义资料编辑组. Tai ping tian guo ge ming shi qi guang xi nong min qi yi zi liao 太平天国革命时期广西农民起义资料 [The documents on rebellions in Guangxi during Taiping rebellion period]. Beijing, zhong hua shu ju, 北京, 中华书局, 1978, p. 496.

¹⁰⁴ Zhang Yueqing, Tang fei zong lu. 1972, Vol. 11, p. 220.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 224.

Lương (黎維良) rebellions along with other small gangs of bandits such as Lý Khai Ba in Hưng Hóa. Moreover, the revolts by petty bandits did not last very long. However, the rebellion by Nông Văn Vân put a strain on the Nguyễn Court's resources and had far-reaching consequences. Revolts by Nông Văn Vân drew other petty bandits and consolidated his conflict with the Huế Court, which made the government's attempts to quell these revolts difficult.

It was common for the Chinese to participate in local revolts in northern Vietnam. In 1826, Phan Bá Dung worked with 5,000 people, including Chinese bandits and pirates, to plunder Hải Dương.¹⁰⁶ The gang of bandits led by Đinh Công Thự (丁公署) included many Chinese.¹⁰⁷ Three thousand Chinese miners took part in the rebellions by Lê Văn Khôi (黎文).¹⁰⁸ The bandits led by Nông Văn Vân mainly comprised the Chinese and locals in northern Vietnam. Apart from the Chinese who were engaged in agriculture, most of them were merchants, mine-owners, and peddlers living around the Sino-Vietnamese borders.¹⁰⁹ In 1833, armed with weapons and guns, nearly 2,000 bandits who were Chinese in Vietnam and Vietnamese peasants fought the Nguyễn in Bạch Thông (白通) in Tuyên Quang. General Đinh Quang Cấn (丁琬璉) thwarted the bandits at first but was eventually defeated by them. Soon afterward, the army deployed by the Nguyễn Court had to withdraw to Cẩm Hóa (感化).¹¹⁰ Nông Văn Vân not only

¹⁰⁶ ĐNTH. Chính Biên II, Vol. 42, p. 19.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 91, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 109, p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ KĐTBKNPCB. Vh.v.2701/7, Vol. 25, p. 33.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Vh.v.2701/6, Vol. 19, p. 26.

recruited Chinese and Vietnamese rebels, but also established his own army in the border regions of Qing China. In 1833, based on spy reports, one branch had approximately 200 people who were camped near Lão Tuyền (滂泉) in the Zhen'an prefecture of Qing. The other branch consisted of nearly 2,000 people who were waiting in Milong (密), Youlong (油), and Xiao Xia (小峡), which were adjacent to Bảo Lạc (保乐) in Tuyên Quang of northern Vietnam. Among these bandits at the border of Qing, around 200 came from Shaozhou (韶州). Their leader was Huang Alian (黄阿连), who had not taken any action, but awaited Nông Văn Vân's orders.¹¹¹

From the 1850s onwards, increasing numbers of Chinese bandits crossed the Sino-Vietnamese borders directly to enter northern Vietnam and pillage while revolts and rebellions were sweeping southeast China. The Sino-Vietnamese borderlands were swarming with Vietnamese and Chinese bandits. In 1849, more than 3,000 Chinese bandits entered Vạn Ninh from Qinzhou of China and looted the area.¹¹² In the same year, Huang Wan (黄晚) led more than 7,000 Chinese bandits to Lạng Sơn to plunder it.¹¹³ In 1853, Chinese bandits were pillaging Quảng Yên.¹¹⁴ By the Tự Đức era, northern Vietnam had suffered at the hands of Chinese bandits, with disorder, rebellions, and turmoil rampant in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands.

Chinese Merchants and Bandits

¹¹¹ Ibid. Vh.2701/6, Vol. 21, p. 12.

¹¹² ĐNLT, Chính Biên IV, Vol. 4, p. 28.

¹¹³ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 6, p. 20.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 9, p. 4.

Chinese merchants were indispensable to the bandits in northern Vietnam in this era. They were usually coerced into banditry once they were captured, and procured commodities and money for the bandits, who viewed this as a shortcut to get provisions and other necessary articles such as money. It is not clearly recorded in the archives whether these Chinese merchants who joined the bandits served them by trading with other merchants or people. Without a doubt, the bandits benefited greatly from Chinese merchants in terms of the acquisition of supplies and disposal of loot. In 1833, Zheng Wenxi (郑文喜), Liang Wenzu (梁文足), and Ruan Wenlian (阮文莲) were arrested for banditry by the officials in Tuyên Quang. In this case, they were Chinese merchants caught stealing money and goods for bandits.¹¹⁵ Occasional communications probably existed between bandits and merchants. In 1834, the government caught several bandits, including Nguyễn Khắc Chung (阮克钟) and Hoàng Viêt Trưởng (黄曰长), who were followers of Nông Hồng Thạch. The Huế Court also captured three Chinese merchants, Bi Xihong (闭熙洪), Chen Ruju (陈如居), and Liao Xuanhe (廖宣和). These Chinese merchants declared to the officials that they lived there, and were not bandits. It was suspicious, however, that these merchants could not have any relations with local bandits after they were interrogated and released.¹¹⁶

Chinese mine owners and Bandits

¹¹⁵ KĐTBKNPCB. Vh.v.2701/6, Vol. 22, p. 20.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Vh.v.2701/11, Vol. 41, p. 6.

It is worth noting that Chinese mine owners joined in bandits and rebels in northern Vietnam. A large number of Chinese migrated to northern Vietnam in the seventeenth century to exploit the rich mineral there. Consequently, Chinese miners were dominant in northern Vietnam. Furthermore, the government leased mines to Chinese merchants and collected tax as a central revenue per annum. It was easy for the Chinese miners to gather in large numbers to incite local unrest once they were instigated by local Vietnamese revolts. In 1833, Lê Văn Khôi recruited around 3,000 Chinese miners and colluded with the local headmen to start revolts in Lạng Sơn. Many roads in Lạng Sơn and Quảng Yên were blocked by them.¹¹⁷ In 1834, the government captured a bandit whose name was Hoàng Bảo Lin (黄宝铃). Based on his confession, a Chinese mine-owner, Wu Jinxian (巫进贤), who opened the Xa Lý (车里) gold mine in Lục Ngạn District (陆岸) in northern Vietnam, had joined the revolts. In 1833, Nông Hồng Thạc rebelled with his help. Wu Jinxian later fled to the Siling prefecture (思陵) of Qing China after the Vietnamese government circulated orders to arrest him.¹¹⁸ In 1834, Nông Hồng Nhân and his brothers, Nông Hồng Cẩn and Nông Hồng Huyền, together with Lương Quang Phượng (梁光凤), Lương Quang Trùng (梁光重), Lương Quang Thiện (梁光善), and Chinese mine-owners occupied the borders between the Tuyên Quang and Thái Nguyên provinces. The Chinese mine-owners were Zhang Fuwen, Zhang Changzhi, and Zhang Changsheng, the respective owners of the Nhân Sơn, Tổng Tinh, and Vụ Nông mines. They were arrested in the same year by officials of the

¹¹⁷ ĐNTHL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 109, pp. 24–26.

¹¹⁸ KĐTBKNPCB. Vh.v.2701/17, Vol. 64, pp. 6–7.

Nguyễn court and confessed that they had surrendered to the bandits out of fear. These bandits had plundered their mines and ordered them to transport rice.¹¹⁹ For the bandits, weapons and guns were indispensable if they were to confront the government of Nguyễn successfully. Apparently, mines could solve a lot of their problems: saltpetre mines, which were rich in elements used to make gunpowder, were vital to the bandits. The bandits also used the saltpetre mine owners and miners to smuggle weapons and guns into Bảo Lạc in northern Vietnam as well as rice with the ‘help’ of the Chinese merchants. However, by 1834, Nông Hồng Nhân and his brothers, Nông Hồng Cẩn (农洪瑾) and Nông Hồng Huyền (农洪炫), failed in their conflict with Nguyễn Vietnam due to shortages of rice and weapons.¹²⁰

6. Conclusion

The smugglers, which comprised assorted individuals such as Chinese pirates, bandits, merchants, and so on in northern Vietnam, were not only contributors to the Sino-Vietnamese commercial contacts, but also benefactors of the bustling Asian commerce in the nineteenth century. In one respect, Chinese pirates, bandits, and their accomplices were economic pioneers who fostered new opportunities and facilities in some regions not easily reached by ‘legitimate’ Sino-Vietnamese trade networks. To a certain degree, they expanded the scale of commercial exchange in northern Vietnam. In other respects, these Chinese smugglers were closely interconnected with Vietnam’s

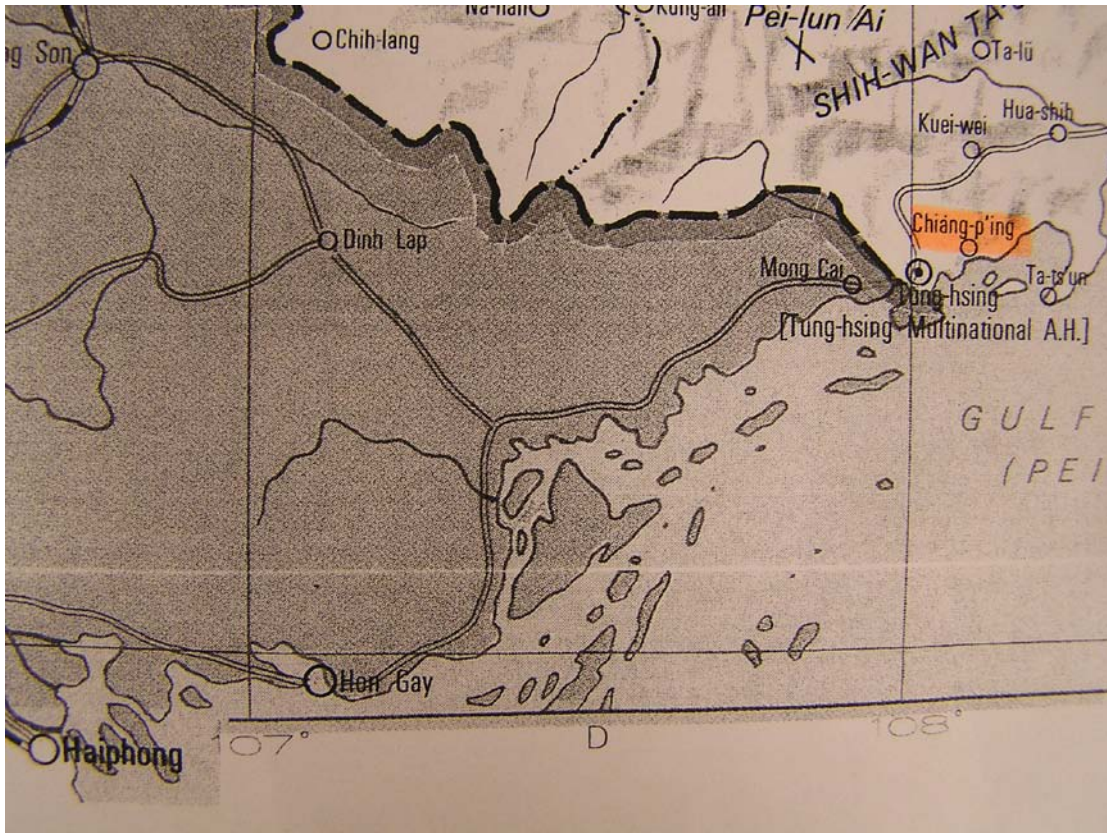
¹¹⁹ KĐTBKNPCB. Vh.v.2701/11, Vol. 39, p. 25. ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 120, p. 33.

¹²⁰ KĐTBKNPCB. Vh.v.2701/13a, Vol. 47, p. 6.

government and society. These contrabandists became indispensable in Sino-Vietnamese commercial relations. Sino-Vietnamese trade relations became vigorous due to illicit traders.

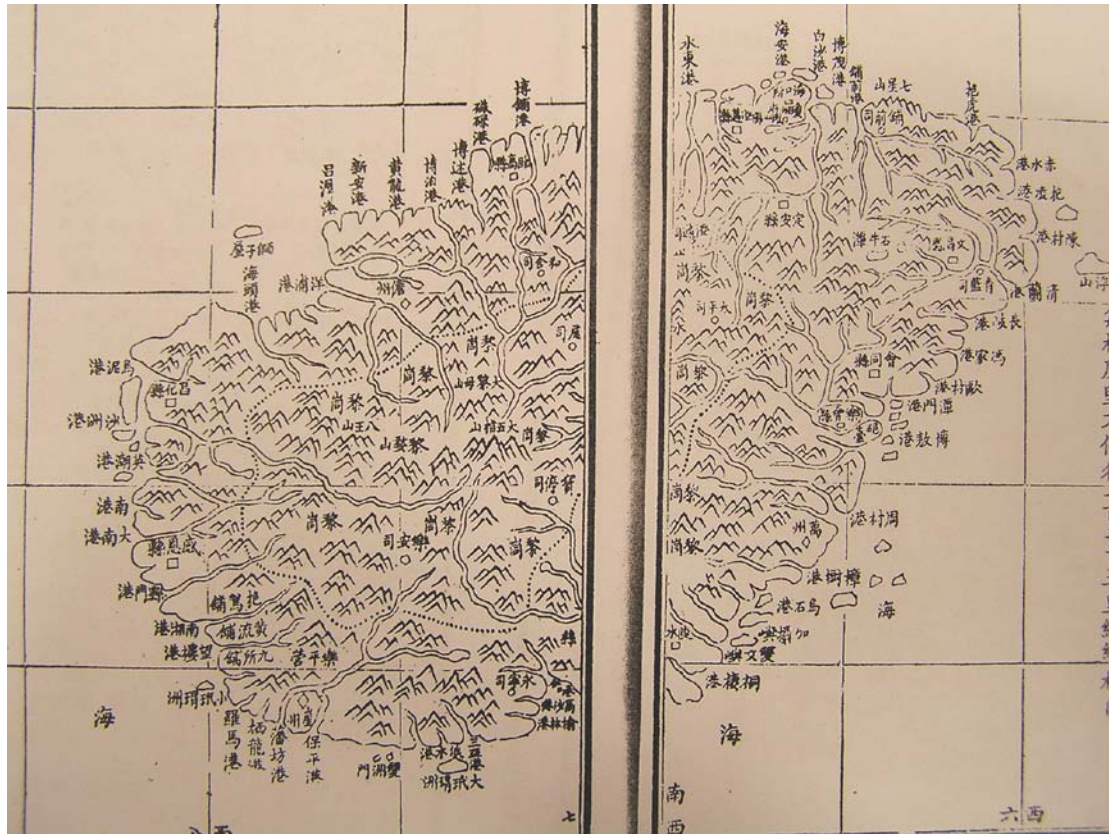
The smugglers, who obtained huge profits illegally, experienced a swift, clandestine accumulation of wealth that did not provide any economic profit for the Huế rulers, but also ran the risk of turmoil, caused by the illegal business, breaking out at any time. Correspondingly, the Nguyễn Court moved towards holistically annihilating illicit trade, such as smuggling, fraud and so on. In accordance with this attitude, rhetoric on the eradication of smugglers by the Nguyễn authorities occurred more frequently than it did in actual policy. By the same token, measures to curtail and eradicate illegal trade were put in place. One measure was a contraband policy to enhance the regulation on domestic resources in Vietnam; the other was a defence system to step into the frontier to pacify smuggling and rebellions. However, the Huế court's annihilation of illegal Sino-Vietnamese trade activities engendered a series of changes in Sino-Vietnamese relations, both diplomatically and politically. These are discussed in the next two chapters.

Figure 2: The Map of Jiang Ping in Guangxi



Resource: *The times atlas of China*, Times books, 1974, p.82-83

Figure 3: The Map of Qiongzhou Prefecture in Guangdong Province



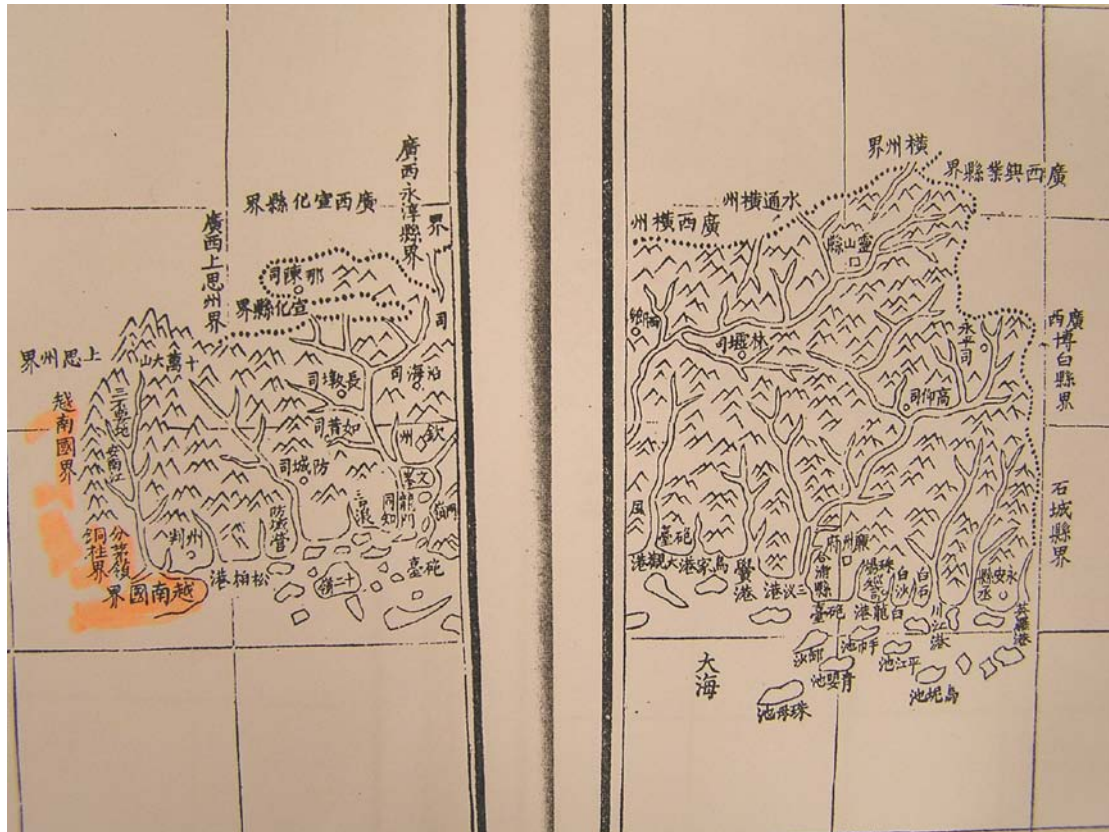
Resource: Ruan Yuan edited, Guang Dong Tong Zhi, Vol. 87, p.1646

Figure 4: The Map of Qinzhou (part)



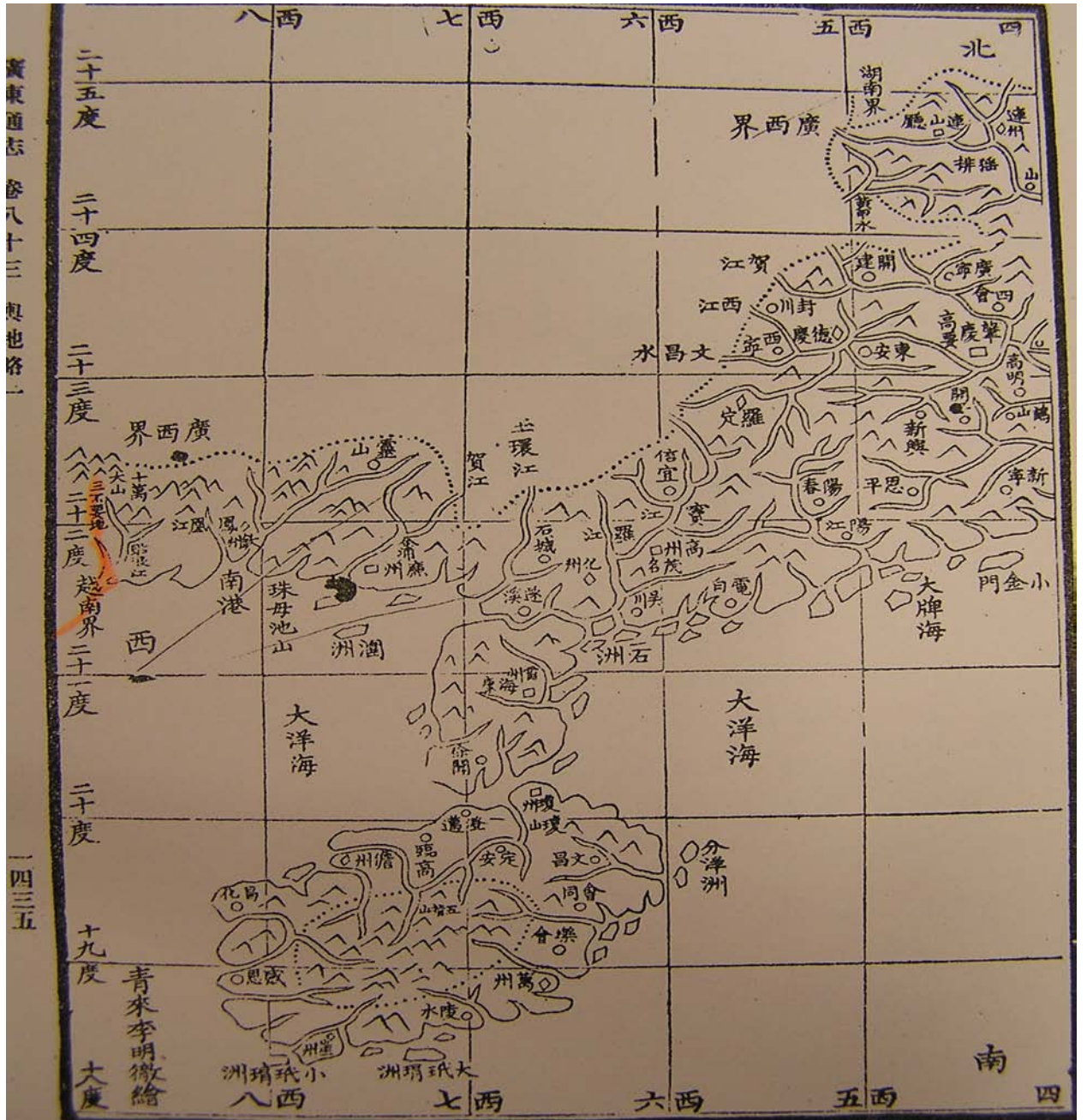
Resource: Ruan Yuan edited, Guang Dong Tong Zhi, Vol. 87, p.1620

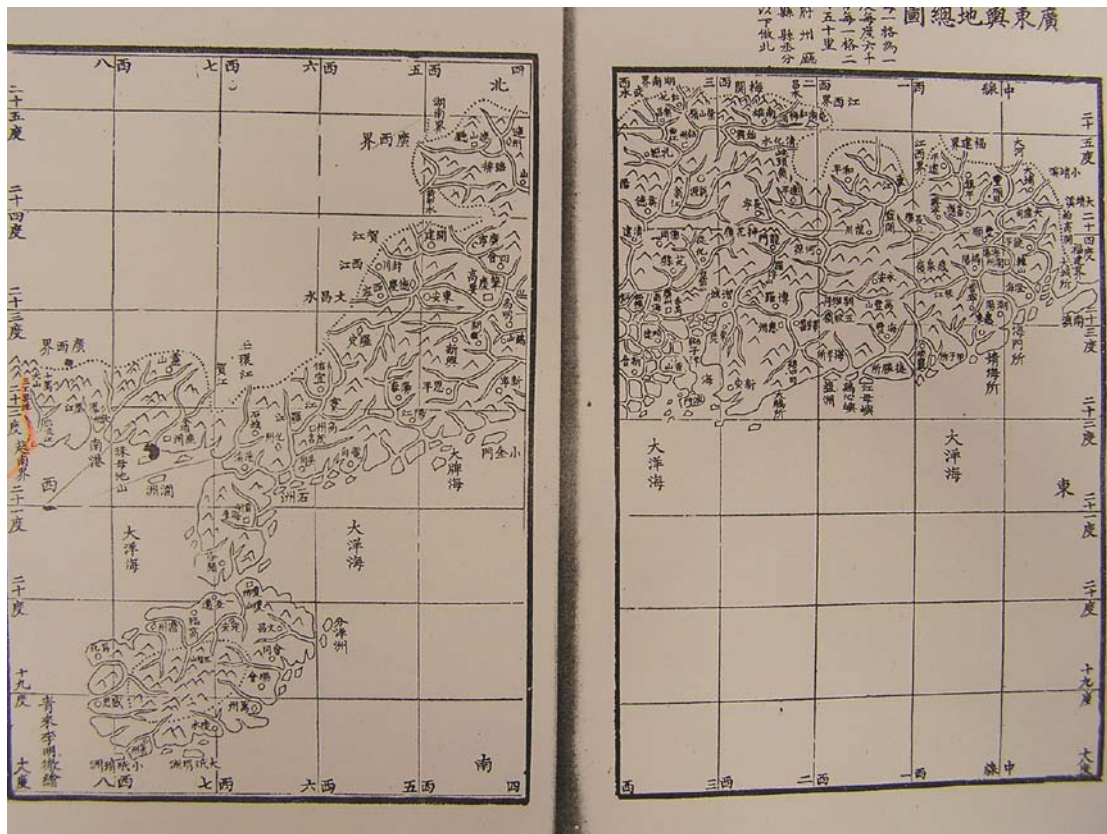
Figure 5: The Map of Lianzhou



Resource: Ruan Yuan edited, Guang Dong Tong Zhi, Vol. 87, p.1616

Figure 6: The Map of Guangdong





Resource: Ruan Yuan edited, *Guang Dong Tong Zhi*, Vol. 87, pp.1434-1435

Chapter 5: Contraband¹ and prohibited items

1. Introduction

Contraband and smuggling were interlinked in non-government-sanctioned trade activities. The smuggling reflected the fluctuations of the Sino-Vietnamese trade in northern Vietnam. The contraband policy reflected how the Huế court responded to the entwining ties among smuggling, trade contacts, domestic demand and the like. To discover these rationales focused on power, revenue, and morality from a state perspective on contrabands policy is the first step towards analysing how smuggling and Vietnam's contraband policy influenced the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Among the items banned by the Nguyễn government, some, like opium, were completely prohibited; while others like rice or human beings were prohibited for export. The others were contraband of all sorts smuggled in by merchants, such as copper or fake coins.

The legislation controlling them ranged from different periods of Huế history, and altered greatly during the Nguyễn era. As for prohibited items, these were not contraband in a strict sense. National demands determined when or to what degree certain goods became forbidden items. In general, some goods were prohibited from either export or import. Some goods were exchanged for other vital merchandise from

¹ As for contraband, few items that Nguyễn issued were prohibited from both import and export. Generally, most items were banned from either import or export. Please see the part on 'terms' in the introduction.

foreign merchants. Others were neither allowed to be imported nor exported. Concurrently, some goods were not prohibited goods during certain periods. However, they became prohibited goods in another time period. They also evolved according to Huế commercial policy and demands.

The prohibited items policy was part of a strategy to protect Vietnam's security and economic interests in view of its status as a peripheral country in Asia. The breadth of banned items, the social and historical context of the emergence of banned items in Nguyễn, the relationship between licit and illicit trade and prohibited items, and the reasons why the Huế court imposed bans on these items are explored in this chapter.

2. Main prohibited items

2.1. Opium

Judging purely by the number of cases in historical records, no commodity can compare with opium, which has been smuggled so often and with such high returns in China and Southeast Asia during the nineteenth century. For sheer volume and intensity, opium was, without doubt, by far the most important smuggled item that crossed the Sino-Vietnamese maritime and land borders. The overflow in Vietnam was the coming together of factors in the opium trade in Asia. The first was the opium trade in China, and the other was that in Southeast Asia.

Opium trade in China

In the early stages of history in Asia, including regions in Southeast Asia, opium, along with other commodities, was transported by the Portuguese.² Opium in China can be traced back to the seventeenth century, when Arab merchants brought it to China as a commodity. Shortly after that, Chinese imperial edicts against smoking opium were imposed. On the heels of the first ban on opium, other restrictions ensued.³

Opium brought in by British ships flooded the markets in China on a large scale at the close of the eighteenth century. The British dumped opium in China in order to change its trade position. The opium was circulated in different local markets by the huge, complicated, and stratified distribution system once the opium was brought ashore. Around the 1840s, almost every vessel going up the coast carried opium from a single mercantile house in Canton.⁴ The rapid import of opium in China boosted smuggling along the southeast coast of China. Concurrently, rampant smuggling sabotaged the Canton system, which confined European deals to one port.⁵

The collapse of the Canton system typified the decline of the central government's supervisory role of and monopoly over foreign trade in China, which had brought about the previous chaos in the social order economically, commercially, and politically. Opium not only created more social problems in China, but also became intertwined

² Genevieve Bouchon, "Notes on the Opium Trade in Southeast Asia during the Pre-Colonial Period" in Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund, ed., *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, C.1400–1750* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), p. 105.

³ John S. Gregory, *The West and China since 1500* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 79.

⁴ Allen, Nathan, *The opium trade: including a sketch of its history, extent, effects, etc. as carried on in India and China* (Lowell: JP Walker, 1853), p. 15.

⁵ John S. Gregory, *The West and China*, p. 81.

with the central revenue of China in the second half of the nineteenth century. Opium was an indispensable economic element that functioned in late imperial China, influencing all areas, from central to local administration, and from the bureaucratic to the civilian. Opium served as a substitute for cash, but was also used by local officials to meet taxation quotas. Furthermore, opium also benefited the Qing coffers in terms of prompting reforms and alleviating deficits caused by the suppression of rebellions in the late nineteenth century.⁶

Opium trade in Southeast Asia

The mass consumption of opium came about in Java when the Dutch controlled Java's import trade by conquering Banten in 1682. The trade in opium offered dealers low transport costs and extraordinary profit margins. The VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) monopolised the opium import trade from Bengal to Batavia, and the Chinese distributed it to local markets in Java. As a large-scale import item, opium, which was exchanged for supplanting Indian cotton, prevailed in the Malay world in the eighteenth century.⁷

The salient feature of the opium trade in Southeast Asia was the Chinese, who were engaged in opium distribution. Chinese merchants, coolies, and other settlers provided

⁶ Jonathan Spence, "Opium Smoking in Ch'ing China" in Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Carolyn Grant, ed., *Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1975), pp. 167–173.

⁷ Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 499; A. Reid, "A new Phase of Commercial Expansion" in A. Reid, ed., *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 63.

consumer markets and products for export. The circulation of opium by Chinese merchants via junk trade occurred all over Southeast Asia. The trade pattern in Southeast Asia evolved into the exchange of opium for other items such as silver, copper, tin and the like.⁸ By the middle and late nineteenth century, Singapore, along with other emerging free ports such as Labuan, boosted the penetration of opium into Southeast Asia. The heavy involvement of the Chinese in the opium trade was striking, whether they were individuals, Chinese syndicates, or small-time operators.⁹

These Chinese involved in opium deals spread their business to southern Vietnam through inter-regional trade in southern Vietnam, Singapore, and other regions in Southeast Asia. Generally, other regular goods as well as opium flowed everywhere in Southeast Asia in prosperous trade exchanges. Like Chinese merchants in other regions in Southeast Asia, they established an indisputable stronghold for the opium trade in Vietnam, either by licit or illicit methods.

Opium in Vietnam

Opium from commercial and other exchanges with China flowed into Vietnam along the overland and maritime routes, from Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong to northern Vietnam.

⁸ Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy, A study of the Asian opium trade 1750-1950* (New York, Routledge 1999), p. 56.

⁹ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trade of the Straits*, pp. 154–168.

Due to its proximity to China, opium entered Vietnam easily, in particular northern Vietnam, via overland and maritime routes, together with merchants and smugglers. Overland opium was smuggled chiefly from Yunnan and Guangxi. Merchants sold opium in exchange for cotton and other local commodities from Yunnan to northern Vietnam and other overland regions in Southeast Asia. Also, rebels used the money from opium sales for military materials such as weapons, which they bought from the French.¹⁰ Insofar as maritime merchants were involved, merchants in China as well as Chinese merchants in Cochin-China and Siam shipped quantities of opium to Vietnam. In addition, the pirates who flourished along the littoral Sino-Vietnamese borders and in the Gulf of Siam also freighted opium to Vietnam.

On the other hand, opium as a medicine was traded between China and Vietnam during the seventeenth century. As early as the seventeenth century, Ming China imported opium from northern Vietnam for medicinal purposes.¹¹ In turn, the trade in Đàng Ngoài (Tonkin) was dominated by Chinese merchants during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The merchandise between China and Tonkin commercial contacts were mainly aromatics, and medical products that Tonkin exported to China. On the other hand, the Tonkinese imported an array of Chinese drugs in medical concoctions.¹²

¹⁰ Ella S. Laffey, "Relations between Chinese provincial officials and the Black Flag Army, 1883–1885" (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1971), Chapter 2.

¹¹ Stephen Tseng-his Chang, "Commodities imported to the Chang-chou region of Fukien during the late Ming period. A primary analysis of the tax list" in *Emporia, commodities and entrepreneurs*, pp. 164–165, Table I, medicinal material.

¹² Khoo Kay Yong, "Responses to Restrictions: Maritime Commerce in seventeenth Century Tonkin" (Honours thesis, Dept. of History, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, National University of Singapore,

Opium as tobacco was smoked no earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century in Asia. The Dutch were the earliest people to prepare a mixture of opium with tobacco by diluting opium in water. Opium as tobacco was consumed in this manner in Java. Soon afterwards, Chinese settlers on Formosa imitated this method.¹³ It was during this period that Indo-China also began chewing opium as tobacco.¹⁴ Therefore, it is reasonable to say that opium was consumed in Vietnam, not as medicine but as tobacco, no earlier than the eighteenth century.

Smuggling and policy

Opium was considered an important item, and so was restricted in Nguyễn Vietnam. The policies on opium were considerably revised during the Nguyễn dynasty. The ban on opium had two aspects. Firstly, the import of opium was forbidden. Secondly, smoking or extracting opium was outlawed.

In the earlier period of Emperor Gia Long's rule, opium was not contraband but tax-exempted merchandise. The common paulswort, opium, and cuttlefish began to be taxed in Hà Tiên, a place in the Mekong Delta, and governed by Mạc Tử Thiêm (莫子添), who was an ethnic Chinese of the Mạc family under Nguyễn overlordship. In 1810, Emperor Gia Long expressed his sympathy towards the local people in Hà Tiên, and

1995), pp. 37–38.

¹³ Laufer Berthold, *Tobacco and its use in Asia* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1924), pp. 23–24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

exempted the common paulswort, opium, and cuttlefish from tax.¹⁵ However, in 1818, a ban on opium in Gia Định was imposed by the Huế court.¹⁶

By the Minh Mạng period, the Nguyễn rulers clearly understood the harmful effects of opium consumption, and imposed bans. Furthermore, the government issued many regulations on the punishment meted out to those guilty of smuggling, smoking, or engaging in other activities associated with opium. In 1820, opium was banned, including the smoking, storing, extracting, refining, and trading of the drug. People could not escape from being punished if they harboured offenders, or covered up their illegal activities. In the eyes of the Nguyễn court, opium was highly toxic, because foreigners such as the Chinese had spread the smoking habit to Vietnam, and smoking opium was harmful to one's health and caused people to neglect their duties.¹⁷

The Nguyễn court had different punishments for those who smoked or smuggled opium. Generally, the punishments for smoking opium were not as strict as those for the import of opium, but this was only up till 1832, when relatives of the emperor and officials, such as Tôn Thất Huyền (尊室誼) and Hoàng Công Tài (黃公才), were also smoking opium. The government issued another ban on opium in the same year.¹⁸ In 1835, the Nguyễn court issued regulations on reporting and denouncing, as well as checking and catching, people involved in smuggling or smoking opium. Those who reported people who smoked or smuggled opium were rewarded with more than 20 taels

¹⁵ ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 40, pp. 26–27.

¹⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 57, p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 4, p. 6.

¹⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 86, p. 4; Vol. 87, pp. 37–38.

of silver, based on the number of opium smugglers or people who stored it. At the same time, strict measures were also taken against foreign merchants who shipped opium to Vietnam.¹⁹

Many merchants still continued to berth in Vietnam with opium on board, despite the many bans on opium issued by the court. The opium in Tonkin came mostly from Chinese merchants by overland and maritime routes. Due to the geographical proximity to southern China, opium flowed into northern Vietnam from southern China during the boom of the opium trade in China. Yunnan was distinctive in the Sino-Vietnamese opium trade overland networks. Native chiefs (土司) set up operations in unmonitored places for the production and sale of opium to ethnic Han traffickers. Furthermore, the inter-regional flow of opium, which was provided by native chieftainships, engendered a marked division in opium traffic, in which indigenous minorities planted opium and sold opium to Chinese smugglers, who then distributed them to local consumer markets within or beyond the national boundaries.²⁰

Opium smuggling was so dominant in northern Vietnam that the endeavours of French colonial authorities to tax the opium trade and establish opium restrictions were sabotaged in the late nineteenth century.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 162, pp. 12–13.

²⁰ David Bello, “The Venomous Course of Southwestern Opium: Qing Prohibition in Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou in the Early nineteenth Century” in *Journal of Asian studies*. 62, No. 4 (Nov. 2003): 1116.

²¹ Hakiem Nankoe, Jean-Claude Gerlus and Martin J. Murray, “The Origins of the Opium Trade and the Opium Regime in Colonial Indochina” in John Butcher and Howard Dick, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming, business elites and the emergence of the modern state in Southeast Asia* (New York, N.Y. : St. Martin's Press ,1993), p. 195.

Most opium in Tonkin was smuggled by Chinese merchants, even though Chinese leaseholders had established 17 warehouses, and had 681 sanctioned retail locations. Aside from private Chinese merchants, bandits and rebels were engaged in opium smuggling from Yunnan to northern Vietnam. Muslim rebellions facilitated opium smuggling to Shan areas and Burma in exchange for weapons and other military equipment.²² Bandits cannot be ignored either, since they also participated in smuggling opium. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Black Flag and the Yellow Flag, which were organised rebellious groups in Guangxi that operated from the 1860s onwards, used the money from smuggling opium in Tonkin to exchange for military equipment, such as weapons from the French.²³

Seafaring smugglers from China shared the profits from the opium trade with overland smugglers. Chinese merchants were the main people involved. In 1831, one ship loaded with opium and owned by Wu Daru (吴大如), a Chinese merchant, arrived in a seaport in northern Vietnam. An official in Bắc Thành (Hà Nội) reported this to Emperor Minh Mạng, and the emperor then dealt out punishments for the Chinese merchant and his accomplices. The culprits, Ye Xuan (叶旋) and Chen Si (陈四), were exiled, while Wu Yinghong (吴应洪), Wu Daru's younger brother, and Li Beng (李) faced life imprisonment. The sailors and girder workers were flogged with a stick, and

²² Chiranan Prasertkul, *Yunnan Trade in the nineteenth century: Southwest China's cross-boundaries Functional System* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1989), p. 61.

²³ *Ibid.*; Ella S. Laffey, "Relations between Chinese provincial officials and the Black Flag Army, 1883–1885"; and GW Clark, *Kweichow and Yunnan Province* (London, 1894).

the cargo was confiscated.²⁴ In 1836, Chinese junks that had smuggled 65 jin of raw opium and 25 taels of boiled opium from Guangdong were discovered in Quảng Nghệ.²⁵ In 1857, a British sailor, Edward Brown, helped pirates capture a larger Fujian trading junk on its way from Qinzhou (Chin-Chew) to Vietnam. This Fujian junk carried opium, gold bars, and other valuable goods. Furthermore, Brown also ferried half a chest of opium, worth 210 silver dollars in trade, for his own profit, along the Vietnamese coast after he had resigned from the Hong Kong police.²⁶ Some opium was taken back by Chinese pirates. In 1837, a Chinese corsair was seized by Vietnamese officials, and the opium, sand, and bamboo poles they carried were confiscated.²⁷ Furthermore, some Nguyễn officials smuggled opium from Southeast Asian regions in the process of conducting official business. In 1836, Trần Hưng Hòa (陈兴和) and other officials smuggled opium and books on Catholicism, after they had completed their official business and returned from Hạ Châu (present-day Malaysia and western Indonesia).²⁸

The burning of opium in Guangdong, led by Lin Zexu, had an impact on the Nguyễn court, and the government took more stringent precautions against the smuggling of opium to Vietnam.

In the eyes of the Nguyễn rulers, the effective measures put in place to ban and wipe out opium from China could cause foreign smugglers to transfer their opium business to

²⁴ Minh Mệnh Ngũ Trị Văn. A118/3, Vol. 1, p. 30b.

²⁵ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 170, p. 13.

²⁶ Hunt Janin, *The India-China Opium Trade*, pp. 134–144.

²⁷ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 178, p. 4.

²⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 170, p. 10.

Hạ Châu. Additionally, the administration had to take very firm measures to stop the opium trade from flourishing.²⁹ In 1839, the Nguyễn court issued another ban on opium, and restrictions were placed on the smoking, storage, extraction, and distribution of opium.³⁰ In the same year, some Chinese merchants were beheaded for smuggling opium or suspicious books and suspicious passengers.³¹ Later, Emperor Minh Mạng instructed officials to be careful of foreign merchants, especially Chinese merchants.³² After the first Opium War in China, the Nguyễn court had maintained a sharp vigilance on the opium situation. In 1843, officials in Hà Tiên reported that six European ships carrying opium were anchored in a coastal province in Siam. The Siamese confiscated the opium and other cargo, and closed the seaports so as to narrow the entry points into Siam. This event aroused alarm in the Huế court.³³

With respect to the opium supply in Vietnam, Crawford noted that

Of opium the consumption of the kingdom, estimating the wholesale price at 3,500 Spanish dollars a chest, is stated to be about 150 chest[s] a year, two thirds of this being estimated for Tonquin and one third for Cochinchina and Kamboja.³⁴

²⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 201, p. 24–25.

³⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 207, p. 4–5.

³¹ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 48, p. 41.

³² Thường Hành Điển Lệ 常行典例 [The regular statutes of Imperial Vietnam] Viện Hán Nôm . A.2102, p. 50.

³³ ĐNTL, Chính Biên III, Vol. 27, p. 27.

³⁴ “Crawford’s report on the state of the Annamese Empire” in Alistair Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Huế*, p. 262.

As for the channel for the entry of opium into Vietnam, small amounts of opium came in on junks, but larger quantities came in overland.³⁵ Furthermore, Chinese smugglers played a crucial role in opium smuggling from China to Vietnam. From the Jia Qing and Dao Guang period onward, the Triads (San he hui, 三合会) held the lion's share of the opium smuggling business in seaports in Huangpu, Macao, and Zhujiang, and the water systems in Guangdong province. Moreover, smoke gangs (Yan bang, 烟帮) in Sichuan and Yunnan co-operated with Ge lao hui (哥老会, brotherhood) to smuggle opium.³⁶

In the early years of the Tự Đức period, the smoking of opium had spread to most places, even the capital. Smokers included local people, as well as royal officials and relatives. Some merchants hired local fishermen to bring opium into Vietnam for them, and other merchants used passengers on ships to carry opium. This kind of smuggling in Vietnam made it difficult to capture the offenders.³⁷

During the Tự Đức period, opium was banned many times. However, the ban did not effectively quell the spread of opium. In 1862, many officials reported to Emperor Tự Đức that the smoking of opium was still widespread in Vietnam. Large consumer markets stimulated merchants to smuggle opium. Officials presented a memorandum to Emperor Tự Đức stating that heavy taxation should replace the prohibition of opium, in

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Cai shaoqing, *Zhong guo jin dai hui dang shi yan jiu*. p. 23–24.

³⁷ Tự Đức Chiếu Dụ 嗣德诏谕 [Edict and proclamation in the Tự Đức period]. Viện Hán Nôm. A.58, p. 121.

order to choke its widespread and pernicious influence. For every 40 jin of opium found on Chinese merchants, the value of one jin was levied in tax. In 1863, a heavy tax on opium was ratified by the Huế administration for trial instead of the previous complete prohibition of opium. The total tax on opium per year was 382,200 string of copper.³⁸ However, it seems that this heavy taxation did not solve the problem. In the same year, officials reported to Emperor Tự Đức that annulling the prohibition on the opium had caused it to become a more serious, pernicious, and widespread influence in Vietnam than ever before.³⁹

The Nguyễn court had to tax opium to supplement the central fiscal income in the last years of the pre-colonial period in Vietnam. The Vietnamese monarchy chartered an opium concession to Chinese merchants until the establishment of formal protectorate status in Annam. Shortly after the French began their conquest of the south, the French administration in Cochin China attempted to squeeze out the Chinese influence from the opium trade by various endeavours. Thus, the efforts that the French administration took, whether it was a ‘bidding war’ for the sake of disintegrating the formation of Chinese groups, or raising prices for refined opium, actually further encouraged the illicit opium trade to flourish, and there were negotiations between the colonial administration and Chinese merchants in order to seize the lion’s share.⁴⁰ In addition, the French were still not entirely in control of the opium markets in Tonkin in the last

³⁸ ĐNLT, Chính Biên IV, Vol. 31, pp. 5–6.

³⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 33, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Nankoe, Gerlus and Murray, *The Origins of the Opium Trade*, pp. 183–189.

decades of the nineteenth century. By 1890, most Chinese leaseholders were still engaged in the illicit opium trade and smuggling. In Vietnam, nearly as much as 60 per cent of the opium trade was conducted by illicit traders.⁴¹

2.2. Human movement

Opium smuggling occurred in northern Vietnam across the borders and over the entire period examined. Opium was light in weight and easy to hide, and was thus stored or freighted by passengers, crew, merchants and the like. However, not all forbidden items were so easy to conceal. The movement of human beings was not allowed by the Nguyễn administration along the overland or maritime Sino-Vietnamese borders, but it proliferated with the growth and expansion of migration and commercial exchange.

Passengers and human trafficking in Vietnam

The Nguyễn court imprisoned foreigners who immigrated to Vietnam without registering and paying poll tax. Broadly speaking, the attitude of the Nguyễn government toward Chinese immigrants was obviously lenient, and Huế encouraged them to immigrate. At the same time, Vietnamese were strictly prevented from emigrating. Illegal human movement occurred frequently, whether it was among crews, passengers, merchants, or labourers' surreptitiously entering, following by Chinese junks plying between China and Vietnam or transiting through Vietnam. We will focus

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 195.

on the movements of two main groups: Chinese and Vietnamese. Concurrently, the Chinese can be categorised into some sub-categories. Taken together, the movements of these two different ‘categories’ of human beings demonstrate the wide pictures that were in place, and the geographic dispersion among Vietnam and China and even Southeast Asia.

Chinese

Populations in countries such as Vietnam and Siam in Southeast Asia were slowly increasing in size during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even though the population of China exceeded that of Southeast Asia in terms of the speed of growth.⁴² Overpopulation caused great pressure for survival. Furthermore, the Qing court had a series of policies on abrogating maritime bans and return migration during the eighteenth century. Emperors Qian Long and Yong Zheng implemented flexible policies and regulations that dealt with matters relating to maritime trade, as long as seafarers did not threaten the internal security of China. Loosening the previously strong grip on trafficking benefited the Qing rulers with a large revenue from maritime trade. Because of this, the Qing did not completely re-impose the ban on maritime activities, despite the example of the Batavia tragedy of 1740.⁴³ In 1754, the Qing Emperor

⁴² Anthony Reid, “Low Population Growth and Its Causes in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia” in Norman G. Owen, ed., *Death and Disease in Southeast Asia: explorations in Social, Medical and Demographic History* (Singapore : Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 34.

⁴³ The large waves of Chinese migration since the sixteenth century made a great contribution to the economy in colonial Batavia. Soon afterwards, the continuous migration of coolies caused the growth of

declared that overseas seafarers would be allowed to return home, and their property would be protected.⁴⁴ Many traders, miners, planters, shipbuilders and the like, who were living and working overseas, flocked back to China due to this policy. The loosening of policies on maritime activities encouraged more Chinese to venture to make their fortunes, and then return home wealthy to China.

Besides opportunities for making a fortune in the Nanyang (South Seas) and the Qing's flexible policies, war and calamity were also factors that forced large numbers of Chinese to go abroad. The Opium Wars stimulated Chinese emigration. The signing of treaties and the cession of treaty ports and improvements brought about by foreign trade during the Opium Wars were important incentives for Chinese emigration. The treaty system brought about greater opportunities for Chinese venturing overseas. At the same time, the British administration enticed more and more Chinese to go to Southeast Asia after the cession of Hong Kong. Hong Kong became a new departure point for Chinese emigrating to Southeast Asia alongside the growth of British power in Southeast Asia.⁴⁵

the economy in the VOC-ruled area of Batavia. The Dutch suggested transporting unemployed Chinese to other Dutch colonies in Ceylon and South Africa in order to solve the problem of bankrupts from the sugar business in Batavia, which had been caused by saturation in European markets and sharp competition from cheaper Brazilian sugar. A rumour that the Chinese coolies would all be thrown overboard en route created riots in the countryside. The Dutch authorities were afraid that the Chinese within Batavia were collaborating with the insurrection and, on 9 and 10 October 1740, brutal searches and killings of Chinese were carried out in Chinese areas. This massacre lasted three days, and between 5,000–10,000 Chinese were killed.

⁴⁴ Ng Chin Keong, "The Case of Chen I'lao: Maritime trade and overseas Chinese in Ch'ing policies, 1717–1754" in Ptak and Rothermund, ed., *Emporia, commodities and entrepreneurs in Asian maritime trade*, pp. 373–400.

⁴⁵ Wang Gungwu, *The Nanhai trade: early Chinese trade in the South China Sea* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), p. 229.

Furthermore, successive droughts, floods, famines, and diseases as a result of the Taiping Rebellion, and other small rebel groups in Liang Guang and Yunnan from 1848–1865, created disruptions in the social order, and aggravated misery and hardship. In terms of policy, in 1860, the Qing finally declared that Chinese emigration was not ‘illicit,’ but that it would begin to be legalised. This declaration ended the final curtailment of Chinese emigration.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the demand for labour in Southeast Asia had been the pull factor for Chinese emigration since the seventeenth century. Rapid commercial expansion, low population growth, and a relatively disparate and pluralistic political system since the sixteenth century in the Southeast Asian world made labour important.⁴⁷ The region’s chronic labour shortage was complemented by China’s growing population. In relation to this point, the Chinese economy in Southeast Asia began to predominate in the eighteenth century, and the kinship or pseudo-kinship ties that accompanied Chinese migration formed and influenced the key local organisational structure, known as the kongsi or shareholding partnerships, which typified the Chinese business enterprise.⁴⁸ In addition, the exploitation of metals, especially tin mining in the Malay Archipelago, caused more Chinese to flock to Malaya to find their fortune during the nineteenth

⁴⁶ Wong Lin Ken, "The trade of Singapore, 1819–69", *The Journal of Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, Part 4, No. 192 (Dec. 1960): 112.

⁴⁷ Anthony, Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia" in A. Reid, ed., *Slavery, Bandage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 157.

⁴⁸ Carl A. Trocki, "Boundaries and Transgressions: Chinese Enterprise in eighteenth and nineteenth Century Southeast Asia" in Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini, ed., *Ungrounded Empires: the cultural politics of modern Chinese trans-nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 63.

century. Penang and Singapore were populated after they were founded by the British administration. It was during this period that Chinese coolie migration reached its high point.⁴⁹

Chinese migration occurred sporadically under Chinese rule and continued after Vietnamese independence. Chinese migrating to Vietnam attributed this to many reasons. In general, insofar as migration was concerned, these Chinese either voluntarily migrated to Vietnam, or were forced to do so. Chinese migration can be categorised into various types. The first was human trafficking. Based on Chinese archives, after the Jia You period in the Song dynasty in the eleventh century, some southern Chinese duped people into becoming servants, and they were then transferred to and sold in Vietnam. The amount of human trafficking ranged from some hundreds to thousands annually.⁵⁰

The second type were Chinese who were forced into Vietnam or soldiers stationed in Vietnam. A great many Chinese were preyed upon and fled to Vietnam during the Sino-Vietnamese wars that raged from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Military generals in northern Vietnam obtained 300 Chinese soldiers when Zhu Yuanzhang fought with Chen Youliang in Longzhou of Guangxi in the 14th century.⁵¹

Apart from these examples, there were also some soldiers stationed in Vietnam who did not completely retreat to China when the Ming Emperor decided to withdraw from

⁴⁹ Wong Lin Ken, "The trade of Singapore", p. 112.

⁵⁰ Ma Duanlin 马端临, *Wen xian tong kao 文献通考* [Encyclopedia of history and biography] (Hangzhou, Zhejiang古籍出版社, 2000), Vol. 330, p. 2594.

⁵¹ *DVSKTT*, Vol. 7, p. 431.

Vietnam in between 1427 and 1428. Innumerable Chinese had to stay in Vietnam for numerous reasons.⁵²

The third group was made up of refugees. Their role is well recorded in the overseas Chinese history in Vietnam. This type of Chinese migration occurred in the period of Chinese dynastic changes, such as the change from the Song to the Yuan dynasty, or the Ming to the Qing dynasty. In 1274, a great number of Chinese, together with their wives and belongings, arrived on as many as 30 junks in Vietnam. Soon afterwards, they were permitted to remain in Vietnam by the Vietnamese government.⁵³ Mo Jiu (Mạc Cửu) led many Chinese to settle down and live in southern Vietnam. In 1679, Yang Yandi and Chen Shangchuan, who were governors during the Ming dynasty with more than 5,000 followers and 50 junks, arrived in southern Vietnam.⁵⁴

The last group was made up of Chinese merchants and miners. It is not surprising that a large number of Chinese merchants settled in Vietnam during the commercial boom in the South China Sea, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The rise of Hội An, a famous commercial town in Vietnam, was connected with Chinese merchants.⁵⁵ The Chinese made great contributions to the rise of southern Vietnam.⁵⁶ The Vietnamese authorities arranged for Chinese of all kinds to settle properly in

⁵² Zhang tingyu 张廷玉, *Ming shi* 明史 [The history of the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing, zhong hua shu ju 北京: 中华书局, 1974), p. 8324.

⁵³ ĐVSKTT, Vol. 5, pp. 348–349.

⁵⁴ ĐNTL, Thiên Biên, Vol. 5, p. 22.

⁵⁵ Chen Chingho, Shiqi-ba shiji Hui'an Tangrenjie ji qi shangye, *Xinya xuebao* 3.1 (1957), pp. 273–332.

⁵⁶ Li Tana, *CochinChina*.

Vietnam. In 1663, the Vietnamese court separated the Chinese living in Vietnam from local Vietnamese habitants. The Chinese did not live together with the Vietnamese, but instead in special settlements, in order to distinguish their different customs.⁵⁷ By 1698, Vietnam had set up the Gia Định Prefecture. Soon afterwards, Vietnam also established the *Thanh Hà Xã* and *Minh Hương Xã* villages for Chinese who traded and settled in southern Vietnam.⁵⁸

The Chinese presence was indispensable by the nineteenth century. With regards to commercial aspects, Chapters 1 and 2 provided information on how Chinese trade junks brought wealth to Nguyễn Vietnam, but also how the Nguyễn court indirectly controlled Chinese commerce. Concurrently, the Nguyễn rulers of Huế also strictly limited the increasing Chinese influence in Sino-Vietnamese border areas. By virtue of geographical proximity and the expansion of trade, Chinese junks plied between southern China and Vietnam. The Nguyễn government encouraged itinerant Chinese merchants to trade in Vietnam, but these merchants had to leave once they had finished their dealings in Vietnam. Generally, they were not allowed to live in Vietnam permanently, although in many cases, Huế also recruited Chinese merchants to develop commerce on the frontier. During the Thiệu Trị period, the Nguyễn recruited Chinese merchants to develop border villages in Ninh Biên in Hưng Hóa province.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ VSTGCM, Chính Biên Vol. 33, p. 5.

⁵⁸ ĐNTL, Thiên Biên, Vol. 7, p. 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 8, p. 22–23.

Besides, many Chinese migrated to Vietnam across the Sino-Vietnamese border. There were no discrete laws or regulations to prevent Chinese from entering Vietnam during the Nguyễn dynasty. Some Chinese migrated from border provinces in China, such as Guangxi and Yunnan, by land or sea. Registering and paying the annual poll tax or serving the corvee were compulsory if they intended to remain in Vietnam.⁶⁰ During the Minh Mạng period, more and more Chinese came to Vietnam for a variety of purposes. Some of them came for trade, and some came simply to make a living. The increase in Chinese immigrants prompted the Vietnamese authorities to revise their regulations on the Chinese in 1838. The new policy stated that it was compulsory for Chinese transient traders to register and pay tax in Lạng Sơn. They had to pay three strings of coins if they came in March and returned in June or July, and five strings of coins if they stayed longer until August, September or the end of the year.⁶¹ Whether they came by land or sea, if they intended to settle down, these Chinese registered under the guarantee of the leaders of the local *Minh Hương*. Otherwise, they were immediately evicted.⁶² The Chinese played an important role in the economy of Vietnam such as planting, fishing, and mining. The Nguyễn lured the Chinese to help them to develop frontier areas through exemption from tax. In 1844, the government recruited Chinese and native people to establish villages in Điện Biên Phủ, and rewarded them with land

⁶⁰ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 44, p. 65.

⁶¹ Ibid. Vol. 44, p. 64.

⁶² Ibid. Vol. 44, p. 65.

to farm.⁶³ Nonetheless, these Chinese who remained in Vietnam were forbidden to engage in trade.⁶⁴

The Nguyễn government endeavoured to attract merchants and the common Chinese to service Vietnam by registering or paying the assorted taxes. However, the Huế court issued regulations with regards to some of the Chinese who were potential troublemakers. Some Chinese passengers who arrived on junks with no relevant certifications became a serious problem in Vietnam. Usually, Chinese who entered Vietnam by sea were called passengers (搭客). This term was still used for Hóa Kiêu in the mid-twentieth century. Frequently, these Chinese passengers came to Vietnam by Chinese junks for business or related purposes. Huế did not entirely prevent illicit passengers from landing, even though Chinese passengers were restricted to disembarking and staying without registering. Illegal human migration was prevalent by the middle of the Minh Mạng period. The Nguyễn rulers noticed the underground increase in the number of Chinese in the country. In the Minh Mạng period, Chinese immigration by junk far exceeded the regulations set by the Vietnamese authorities. The number of ‘surreptitiously entering’ passengers was in the thousands, and they lived in villages close to one another. It was possible that Chinese migration around the 1830s also brought with it illegal passengers from China. Furthermore, these illegal migrants created social unrest, such as inviting Vietnamese people to smoke opium, and stirring

⁶³ ĐNLT, Chính Biên III, Vol. 44, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Lục Bộ Điều Lệ 六部條例 [The regulations of Six Boards] Viện Hán Nôm A.62. Released in the 17th year of Gia Long (1818).

up conflicts. Hence, the Vietnamese administration was incensed by the number and activities of unregistered Chinese passengers.⁶⁵ Huế had to issue restrictions on the numbers of Chinese entering the country due to the social disarray they created, which endangered the internal security of Vietnam, even though the Vietnamese authorities were lenient towards Chinese immigration. In 1829, the Nguyễn government released a new policy on Chinese people entering the country. This new policy stated that Chinese newcomers before 1829 were allowed to settle and pay tax. For those entering around and after 1829, a guarantee backed by the head or chief of the local *Minh Hương* was compulsory for those who intended to remain in Vietnam. Chinese from Chaozhou needed the head of a local Chaozhou *Minh Hương* as their guarantor, Chinese from Guangzhou needed the head of a local Guangzhou *Minh Hương* as their guarantor, and the obligations of the rest of the Chinese immigrants can be deduced from the previous examples. Overall, registering and paying tax were compulsory obligations for these newcomers, or else the heads of the local *Minh Hương* would be punished.⁶⁶

Vietnamese

Considering that the control of human resources was compatible with dominating territory and consolidating the power of the throne, the Huế court unified people in Vietnam as much as possible. The Vietnamese authorities practised confinement

⁶⁵ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 61, p. 6; and Vol. 82, p. 28.

⁶⁶ Minh Mệnh Tấu Nghị 明命奏议 [Memorials and public papers in Minh Mệnh period]. Viện Hán Nôm. Vh.v.96/2, p. 16.

policies to curtail Vietnamese emigration, especially those of Vietnamese women, to avoid losing valuable members of the population. In general, Vietnamese workers or women were smuggled to China or regions in Southeast Asia. Some Vietnamese women who married Chinese men went to China illegally with their husbands, and this was defined as illegal human movement by the Vietnamese authorities. Other women were smuggled to Southeast Asia for sex purposes to serve the needs of the local Chinese or others.

In 1809, Vietnamese emigration was declared illegal, and Siamese ships were not allowed to ferry returning Vietnamese.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Vietnamese officials scrutinised passengers in vessels from Siam that berthed in Hà Tiên. If found guilty, junk owners would be punished by three strokes of the bamboo rod and three years' banishment, and convicts would be castigated by 100 strokes of the bamboo rod. Cargo and money freighted by illegal passengers would be impounded by officials.⁶⁸ The Huế court imposed a ban on the trafficking of Vietnamese women during the Minh Mạng period. Around the 1830s, Deng Fuxing (邓福兴), a Chinese merchant in Quảng Nam, married a Vietnamese woman in Hội An, and took her back to China. Eventually, he was arrested by Vietnamese officials, because he illegally carried Vietnamese women abroad. Finally, Deng was punished by the Board of Punishment under the charge of trafficking in human beings and was banished, and his Vietnamese wife was enslaved.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 39, p. 4.

⁶⁸ KĐĐNHĐSL, A54, Vol. 48, p. 38.

⁶⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 62, pp. 11–12.

In 1839, Emperor Minh Mạng issued a prohibition on marriage between Chinese men and Vietnamese women, even though sources on the link between the Deng Fuxing event and Minh Mạng's restriction were ambiguous. In addition, any children who were born from such unions were not allowed to go abroad at will.⁷⁰

Throughout the Nguyễn dynasty, human movement abroad was continually declared illicit. In 1871, the Board of Punishment was given orders to take strict precautions in every seaport against women going abroad via Chinese vessels.⁷¹ At the same time, Vietnam was deeply implicated in human trafficking in Southeast Asia. By virtue of the skewed sex ratios, such as the expansion of coolie labour in the Straits Settlements, smuggling women for sex purposes was common. Both Siam and Vietnam were source countries for smuggled women who served Arabs and Chinese in Singapore.⁷² Chinese sampan owners reported to the Dutch that the workers were from Vietnam even though no passengers had been mentioned on the vessels' manifest. Accordingly, Vietnam was involved in the illegal Sino-Southeast Asian movement of human beings, even though the Vietnamese administration endeavoured to prevent Vietnamese from emigrating.

2.3. Copper and other precious metals

Opium was not the only illicit commodity that clandestinely crossed over the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, as well as in whole northern Vietnam. Many other goods

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Lại Bộ Hình Danh Tắc Lệ Tục Biên 吏部刑名则例续编 [The regulations of the Personal Board]. Viện Hán Nôm. A1301, p. 64.

⁷² Tagliacozzo, *Secret trades of the Straits*, p. 197.

also made the trip across the maritime or overland borders. Counterfeit currency and especially minted coins were other highly profitable forbidden items.

The original copper coin can be traced back to the Đinh dynasty in Vietnam, which cast Thái Bình Hưng Bảo (太平兴宝).⁷³ During the Mạc Đăng Doanh (莫登瀛) period, Vietnam also issued and circulated some metal currency, such as Đại Chính Thông Bảo (大正通宝).⁷⁴

Copper in Vietnam also flowed into China, due to the continually ebullient foreign trade. Up to the eighteenth century, a large amount of foreign copper flowed into southern China, such as the Jiang Zhe regions.⁷⁵ A variety of copper, such as Cảnh Hưng Thông Bảo (景兴通宝), was issued by the Vietnamese authorities and circulated in the later Lê dynasty in Vietnam. In total, 37 types of copper were issued and circulated from the middle to the end of the eighteenth century.⁷⁶

During the Trịnh-Nguyễn confrontation and civil war, commerce boomed in the South China Sea to Southeast Asia routes, increasing the demand for metal currency in southern Vietnam. Imported Chinese metal currencies, to some degree, met this demand.

⁷³ Ni Mo 倪模, *Gu jin qian lue* 古今钱略 [The metal currency], (Shang hai gu ji chu ban she 上海古籍出版社, 1992), Vol. 17, pp. 1516–1517.

⁷⁴ Weng Shupe 翁树培, *Gu quan hui kao* 古泉汇考 [The study of ancient metal currency] (Beijing, Zhong hua quan guo tu shu guan wen xian suo wei fu zhi zhong xin 北京: 中华全国图书馆文献缩微复制中心, 1994), pp. 1530–1536, p. 1540.

⁷⁵ Yang Yunping 杨云萍, “Yue nan qian bi yu zhong guo 越南钱币与中国” [Vietnamese metal currency and China] in Guo Tingyi 郭廷以, ed. *zhong yue wen hua lun ji*, 中越文化论集 [Studies on Vietnam and China] (Zhong hua wen hua chu ben she wei yuan hui 中华文委会, 1956), p. 291.

⁷⁶ Ni Mo, *Gu jin qian lue*, Vol. 17, pp. 1609–1634.

Nonetheless, by the early eighteenth century, this shortage was exacerbated, along with the implementation of the Japanese policy of sakoku that limited the export of precious metals. In addition, the war with the Khmer by Nguyễn Phúc Khoát, the growth of the population and the Ming prohibition on copper exports triggered the casting of zinc coins in Cochin China, thus causing inflation in southern Vietnam.⁷⁷ The Nguyễn cast a zinc coin in southern Vietnam in 1746. Soon afterwards, the Thiên Minh Thông Bảo (天明通宝) was circulated.⁷⁸

Tây Sơn also released metal currency such as Quang Trung Thông Bảo (光中通宝), and Quang Trung Đại Bảo (光中大宝), and others in northern Vietnam to meet the demand for metal currency.⁷⁹

Cash became the basis of Nguyễn finances by the mid-nineteenth century, by virtue of the growth of a money economy that forced cash into the system of taxation in Vietnam. Furthermore, a severe shortage of copper cash, which Vietnamese hungered for, occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. New mines, local mints, or imported copper from China and Japan, the issuance of paper currency, and even zinc

⁷⁷ Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*, pp. 94–96; John K. Whitmore, “Vietnam and the monetary flow of eastern Asia, 13th to 18th centuries” in JF Richards, ed., *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), p. 379.

⁷⁸ Iwamura, Shigekoto 严村成允, *An nan tong shi 安南通史* [The history of Annam] (Singapore 新加坡: 世界书局, 1957), p. 172.

⁷⁹ *Gu dai zhong yue guan xi shi zi liao xuan bian*, 1982, p. 611; Chen Yulong 陈玉龙, *Han wen hua lun gang: jian shu zhong chao zhong ri zhong yue wen hua jiao liu 汉文化论纲:兼述中朝中日中越 文化交流* [The outline of Sinology: Sino-Korean, Sino-Japanese and Sino-Vietnamese cultural communication] (Beijing, Beijing da xue chu ban she 北京: 北京大学出版社, 1993).

coins did not entirely solve this problem for the Vietnamese court.⁸⁰ The Vietnamese administration restricted the export of valuable metals for coins during the Nguyễn dynasty. The Huế court issued bans on copper, gold, silver and tin, which were the crucial metals for producing metal currency and were directly related with the national economy. Thus, the Vietnamese court controlled the major coinage casting programmes, and imposed various bans on precious metals in order to prevent them from flowing out of the country. However, a prohibition on copper and other valuable metals did not curtail the growth of a counterfeit currency in Nguyễn. A large number of counterfeit coins circulated in Vietnam during the Nguyễn dynasty, even though coinage was supervised and manned by the government of Nguyễn.

The circulation of counterfeit coins in Vietnam can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, a diverse and complex currency system existed in the extensive Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. The co-existence of a variety of coins in the border regions provided more profit-making opportunities for counterfeiters on both sides of the border. Due to the flourishing Sino-Vietnamese commerce along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, Vietnamese and as well as Chinese metal coins were the dominant currencies. Furthermore, few western dollars circulated in the frontier on account of exchange and commerce with Europeans. During the Ming dynasty in China, a large number of counterfeit Chinese coins, which were not produced by the Ming administration in China but were counterfeited by Vietnamese, circulated along the

⁸⁰ Victor Lieberman, "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History, c1350–c.1830" in *Modern Asian Studies* 27, No. 3, July (1993): 502, 504.

Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. More Chinese metal currency flowed to markets in Vietnam with the growth of Sino-Vietnamese commercial exchanges in northern Vietnam after the Jia Jing period of Ming. Shortly after the end of the Ming dynasty and from thence onward, more and more Chinese metal coins were taken to Vietnam by itinerant Chinese merchants and were circulated during the Sino-Vietnamese commercial expansion in the Qing dynasty. The main kind of Chinese metal currency that circulated in northern Vietnam during the 1740s was ‘circulating currency in Kang Xi, Qian Long and Yong Zheng reign’ (Kang Xi tong bao, Qian Long tong bao and Yong Zheng tong bao; 康熙通宝,雍正通宝,乾隆通宝).⁸¹ Prior to 1830, the Nguyễn court collected circulating metal coins during the Dao Guang reign of the Qing from local people as taxes in Cao Bằng. However, most Chinese metal coins collected by the Nguyễn administration in Cao Bằng were counterfeited by the Chinese.⁸² Archaeological evidence excavated in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands indicate that Chinese metal coins circulated after the Jia Qing period, along with other counterfeit Vietnamese metal currency.⁸³ Additionally, by the Minh Mạng period, Huế was issuing paper currency (Giao Tử) in northern Vietnam due to commercial expansion and a shortage of valuable metals.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Tang Guoyan 汤国彦, Yue nan li shi huo bi 越南历史货币 [The Vietnamese currency in history] (Zhong guo jin rong chu ban she 中国金融出版社, 1993), p. 44.

⁸² ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 66, pp. 2–3.

⁸³ Tang Guoyan, Yue nan li shi huo bi, p. 45.

⁸⁴ Paper currency issued by Minh Mạng in Cao Bằng was similar to the circulating valuables payment certification. Giao Tử was not paper currency in the modern sense. As recorded in Nguyễn dynasty chronicles, itinerant merchants and officials who did not like to carry too many coins could submit

Secondly, the issue of diverse coins in Vietnam and the circulation of currency as opposed to the various governments that had co-existed during the Tây Sơn wars, created more opportunities for fabricating coins to make profit. The policy on metal currency in Huế had certain traits. The issue of diverse coins, the co-existence of new and old coins, and the inferior quality of existing coins, particularly lead or zinc coins, always encouraged the growth of counterfeit currency.

Various metal coins circulated in Huế Vietnam were not of superior quality. There is direct evidence on the proportion of metals of all sorts in coins to prove this point. The first is the copper coin. Virtually all copper coins were melted with certain proportions of copper, white lead (zinc), and tin. In 1814, Huế cast Gia Long Thông Bảo using the coinage casting methods of the Qing, which had a proportion of 50 per cent copper, 41.5 per cent white lead (zinc), 6.5 per cent black lead, and two per cent tin. Therefore, copper coins in Nguyễn were a type of alloy since the Gia Long era.⁸⁵

In 1820, Emperor Minh Mạng changed the proportion for casting copper coins. The new proportion was 49 per cent copper, 45 per cent white lead (zinc), and six per cent black lead. In fact, the new copper coins decreased the amount of copper and removed tin from copper coins. The innovation of coins in the Minh Mạng period was the casting of bigger copper coins called *Mĩ Hiệu Đại Đồng Tiền*. These larger coins served not as

amounts of money above five strings to the local government in exchange for certification on which was recorded their name, address, amount of money, and so on. Itinerant merchants or officials could exchange money by this certification in places endorsed by the central government once they arrived at their destination. ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 174, pp. 8–9.

⁸⁵ ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 48, p. 7.

currency but as a reward to relatives of royalty or civil ministers.⁸⁶ Aside from larger copper coins, gold or silver ingots and coins of all kinds were produced, such as refined silver (Tinh Ngân, 精銀), official silver ingots (Quan Ngân, 官銀), and silver made in the Imperial Household Department, and solely for use by royalty (Nội Thưởng Ngân, 內帑銀).⁸⁷ With regards to counterfeit silver ingots, certain officials in the Huế court engaged in the forgery of silver ingots, such as Nguyễn Văn Tường (阮文祥) and Nguyễn Văn Khê (阮文溪) in 1832.⁸⁸ In addition, counterfeiters usually melted copper or lead into silver coins.⁸⁹ In terms of bullion in the Nguyễn dynasty, few documents record detailed information on bullion or gold ingots in Vietnam. These gold and silver coins served as a reward as well as metal coinage, and were forced to circulate with a fixed price by Emperor Minh Mạng.⁹⁰ Besides coins issued by the government, rebels also produced some types of copper coins such as Trị Nguyên Thông Bảo (治元通寶), and Trị Nguyên Thánh Bảo (治元聖寶) made by Lê Văn Khôi in southern Vietnam, and Nguyên Long Thông Bảo (元隆通寶) made by Nông Văn Vân in northern Vietnam.⁹¹

Compared with copper coins, the Nguyễn administration regarded white lead or zinc coins as better metal coins than copper ones in Vietnam. Emperor Minh Mạng proposed that the easily breakable white lead coins should be used for trade, because merchants would not hoard such coins or export them to foreign countries. Lead coins also

⁸⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 186, p. 19.

⁸⁷ Tang Guoyan, Yuen an li shi huò bi, pp. 55-57; ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 16, p. 20.

⁸⁸ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 81, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 181, pp. 9–10.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol 81, p. 3.

⁹¹ Tang Guoyan, Yuen an li shi huò bi, p. 50.

benefited people in Vietnam.⁹² However, the white lead coins that the Vietnamese rulers preferred to use could easily be counterfeited. One hundred jin of white lead worth 22 strings was cast into more than 40 strings of white lead coins. In this way, coin forgery flourished during the Nguyễn dynasty, especially in white lead coins due to the attractive profits, inferior quality, and lower cost.

The Nguyễn approved the circulation of zinc coins in Vietnam, and lead was a fundamental element for zinc coins. Thus, the administration issued bans on lead export and hoarding. Around 1830, counterfeit metal coins that circulated in Lạng Sơn generated rocketing prices and drove out real coins from the market. This event alerted the emperor to re-impose a ban on illicit minting in 1830. Those who engaged in forgery were to be executed as soon as they had been arrested, and the counterfeit coins would be confiscated. Concurrently, illicit hoards of metal coins had to be handed over after a certain time.⁹³ Tuyên Quang and Thái Nguyên in northern Vietnam were rich in lead, and as such, the Emperor Minh Mạng decreed that officials should investigate northern Vietnam thoroughly to impede the smuggling of lead.⁹⁴ Soon afterwards, a ban on illicit minting was imposed on account of the boom in illicit coinage casting in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. Zinc coins were not only forged in Vietnam but also in China, and the flow of counterfeit currency caused the Nguyễn court to curb lead export and illicit hoarding in 1829.⁹⁵

⁹² ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 84, pp. 12–13.

⁹³ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 61, pp. 3–4.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 61, p. 4.

⁹⁵ Minh Mệnh Ngũ Trị Văn. A57/7, Vol. 17.

Huế did not change its method of casting copper or white lead coins during the Thiệu Trị period, and continued to cast copper coins such as Thiệu Trị Thông Bảo (紹治通寶) and other white lead coins.⁹⁶ Following the example of Emperor Minh Mạng, Emperor Thiệu Trị produced copper coins and white lead coins. In addition, Thiệu Trị cast Mĩ Hiệu Đại Đồng Tiền (美号大铜钱) as awards. Furthermore, he issued 41 kinds of gold and silver coins.⁹⁷ Unlike the method used for melting copper coins in the Minh Mạng period, Emperor Tự Đức increased the amount of copper in copper coins up to 60 per cent, decreased the amount of white lead to 40 per cent, and removed tin and black lead.

Besides coins issued by the Huế government, old metal coins from former dynasties as well as ancient coins were circulating in Vietnam. Population size and the number of transactions were presumably factors that the Vietnamese government took into account when endeavouring to maintain a sufficient supply of coins. Vietnam kept old coins in circulation, and the circulation of diverse coins provided greater opportunities for counterfeit currency in Nguyễn Vietnam.⁹⁸ Copper coins of all kinds, as well as lead coins issued by the Nguyễn, had been circulating in Vietnam since the Gia Long period, but copper coins remained predominant in northern Vietnam. . By the first year of Emperor Minh Mạng's rule, lead coins were widely employed in Vietnam. Nevertheless, counterfeit white lead coins put the Huế court on alert, as most of the

⁹⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên III, Vol. 5, p. 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 13, p. 8; Vol. 55, p. 24.

⁹⁸ John K. Whitmore, "Vietnam and the monetary flow of eastern Asia" in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, p. 369.

white lead mines were situated in northern Vietnam.⁹⁹ In 1817, the Huế court declared that existing coins, whether from former dynasties or ancient coins, could still circulate in Vietnam in the following five years. After five years, the government would take back all non-Nguyễn-issued metal coins.¹⁰⁰ However, many coins issued by the Tây Sơn administration circulated in Vietnam during the Minh Mạng period even though the Huế court had imposed a ban on former coins.¹⁰¹

A third reason for the long-term practice of counterfeiting was the shortage of precious metals such as copper, gold, and silver that remained throughout Vietnamese history until it became a French colony. The coinage supply was not sufficient to meet the demand for economic and social development in Vietnamese history in almost every period.¹⁰² By the nineteenth century, silver began to flow out of China, owing to the introduction of opium by the British in order to shift the trade balance with China. Indisputably, Vietnam was deeply implicated in the trade between China and Southeast Asia and even the world. Vietnamese gold and silver were exchanged for other goods from Southeast Asia, such as spices, along the international trade route. Occasionally a lack of copper in Vietnam meant that gold had to go to China in exchange for copper cash.¹⁰³ Silver flowed out of Vietnam with the shift in global trade trends at the turn of

⁹⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 5, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Châu Bản..Library of Australia national university. Reel 3.

¹⁰¹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 201, p. 1.

¹⁰² Alexander Woodside, "Political Theory and Economic Growth in Vietnam" in Anthony Reid, ed., *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies*, p. 261.

¹⁰³ RB Smith, "Politics and Society in Vietnam During The Early Nguyễn Period (1802-62)" in *Journal of Royal Asian Studies* (1974): 164.

the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, Yunnan, where opium was planted and transferred with the growth of commercial exchanges along the Sino-Southeast Asian frontiers, absorbed more and more silver, including silver from Vietnam, by the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Besides the outflow of silver in Vietnam that accompanied commercial exchanges along the southwest route of Sino-Southeast Asia, in the middle of the eighteenth century, many Chinese miners from the *Tống Tinh* mine in northern Vietnam freighted silver by making the silver into bangles and wearing them back to China. A large amount of silver and gold flowed into China with the Chinese miners in northern Vietnam.¹⁰⁶ These Chinese miners surreptitiously transported large numbers of valuable metals. ‘Of both metals a large quantity was smuggled into the neighboring provinces of China.’¹⁰⁷

Apart from the smuggling of metals by miners, merchants carried silver from Vietnam to China with their frequent commercial exchanges in Vietnam. Silver and gold could be used directly without casting them into coins for use as metal currency. Controlling the outflow of silver and gold was crucial for Nguyễn Vietnam to increase its gold and silver reserves and stabilise the economy. Vietnam imposed consecutive

¹⁰⁴ John K. Whitmore, “Vietnam and the monetary flow of eastern Asia” in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, p. 375.

¹⁰⁵ Chiranan Prasertkul, *Yunnan Trade in the nineteenth Century: Southwest China’s Cross-boundaries Functional System* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1989), pp. 60–61.

¹⁰⁶ Zhao Yi 赵翼. *Yan pu za ji 檐暴杂记* [Miscellaneous notes]. Vol 4. tai bei xin xing shu ju ying yin 台北新兴书局影印. 1983, p. 73.

¹⁰⁷ “Crawford Report on the State of the Annamese Empire” in Alistair Lamb, *The mandarin road to old Hué* . p. 262.

bans on the hoarding and export of silver and gold during the Nguyễn dynasty. Vietnamese and officials were not allowed to export gold and silver, or to illegally hoard them. Foreign merchants could deal in gold and silver as currency only in Vietnam. They would be flogged with a stick 100 times if they clandestinely took gold and silver out.¹⁰⁸ However, the Vietnamese government failed to curb the illegal export of gold and silver, as many merchants freighted out local silver (Thổ Ngân, 土银) around 1836. Compared with copper, silver served directly as a currency for commercial exchanges in the early part of the Nguyễn dynasty. Thổ Ngân was in effect approved as the main currency for the payment of tax or commercial exchanges by the Huế court during the Nguyễn dynasty.¹⁰⁹ The Thổ Ngân circulated in Vietnam was not cast by the government but by local people in China. These Chinese regularly faked these Thổ Ngân on which had Vietnamese reign titles. Thổ Ngân was introduced to northern Vietnam by itinerant merchants from China in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. Furthermore, Thổ Ngân circulated for a long time in Vietnam during the Nguyễn dynasty. Thổ Ngân was popular as a currency until the Thiệu Trị period. The Nguyễn court continued to levy tax by Thổ Ngân in Cao Bằng in 1847.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Thổ Ngân was usually produced by melting all kinds of silver ingots together.¹¹¹ Because silver was portable for trading, local silver exports created rocketing silver prices and a shortage of cash. The market price of silver in the Gia Long period was

¹⁰⁸ Lục Bộ Điều Lệ, A62.

¹⁰⁹ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 44.

¹¹⁰ ĐNTL, Chính Biên III, Vol. 70, p. 20.

¹¹¹ Tang Guoyan, Yue nan li shi huo bi, 1993, p. 45.

probably lower than the officially fixed price. Nevertheless, the market price of silver rocketed dramatically. Similarly, the price of silver and gold also rose quickly in the Minh Mạng period.¹¹² In 1836, the government had to issue Giao Tử in Cao Bằng in order to stem the outflow of gold and silver.¹¹³ However, the measures taken by the Nguyễn court were not effective and did not do much to quell the situation. In the 1830s, the Huế court imposed consecutive bans on silver and gold owing to the fact that the quantities of silver and gold had been greatly reduced in recent times, and as such people neither hoarded silver nor gold, nor used them to pay foreign traders.¹¹⁴

Copper and lead had been the main elements for casting metal coins since the early part of the Nguyễn dynasty. Copper and lead were generally restricted from export and hoarding in Vietnam. However, the restriction did not solve the problem of the shortage of precious metals in Vietnam. In one respect, the central government had allocated the quota of copper and lead in local administrations since the Gia Long period. In other respects, the Nguyễn court attempted to import them in order to strengthen the supply to meet the demand for copper and lead.

Huế permitted foreign merchants to import copper or lead to Vietnam with less or even no tax imposed. In 1811, Emperor Gia Long followed instructions from his ministers that merchants be exempted from the import tax if they harboured copper or lead and sold them to the Nguyễn court. However, deals involving these metals among

¹¹² Woodside, *Chinese and Vietnamese model*, p. 277.

¹¹³ ĐNLT, *Chính Biên II*, Vol. 174, pp. 8–9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* *Chính Biên II*, Vol. 193, pp. 12–13.

private merchants were still officially declared to be illicit trade.¹¹⁵ In 1812, Emperor Gia Long issued a ban on the hoarding of copper and lead.¹¹⁶ By the Minh Mạng period, the bans on copper and lead were still not revoked. In 1822, Huế re-declared restrictions on copper and lead.¹¹⁷ Concurrently, deals on copper and lead were still controlled by the Nguyễn rulers. In 1838, the Nguyễn government bought whole pieces of copper imported by Chinese merchants. Huế paid them 50 string of copper per 100 jin, and stressed that trading without the government's approval was illicit.¹¹⁸ In addition, as early as the 1820s, the Nguyễn authorities had to import a large amount of copper from Yunnan to supplement the urgent dearth of copper cash.¹¹⁹

The Huế imported quantities of white lead from foreign merchants, since white lead was a crucial element in the casting of zinc coins, which were the most common metal coins in Nguyễn. In general, they waived the tax on lead deals with foreign merchants. In 1804, the emperor's edicts stated that ships from Macao would be exempted from tax if they brought white lead ranging from 100,000 to 300,000 jin, and sold them to the Nguyễn government at a moderate price. However, the ships not only returned with white lead, but also paid tax if the amount of white lead was less than 100,000 jin.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 42, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 44, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Minh Mệnh Luật Đại Lục 明命律大略 [The concise laws in Minh Mệnh period]. Viện Hán Nôm .A.1795, p. 43a.

¹¹⁸ ĐNTL, Chính Biên, II, Vol. 197, p. 36.

¹¹⁹ "Crawford's general report on his mission to Cochin China", dated 3rd April, 1823, in *British missions to Cochin China: 1778–1822* (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society, 1961), p. 204.

¹²⁰ KĐĐNHĐSL, A.54, Vol. 48, p. 34.

Furthermore, the Vietnamese administration tightened its grip on the control of lead deals. Merchants who wished to sell white lead to the government had to procure certification from the Huế court that recorded the date of the transaction and the amount of lead. Those who transported lead without certification were illicit traders. In addition, the amount of lead that merchants carried had to tally with the information recorded on the certification. Otherwise, either the merchant or the certification could be declared illegal, and the merchant would be punished for smuggling lead.¹²¹

Finally, the Nguyễn administration allowed private merchants to charter coinage and mint to produce coins under the supervision of the government. Before the middle of the eighteenth century, Vietnam had to endorse private merchants to cast coins and even upheld forging to keep the economy functioning and keep up with monetary demand.¹²²

The Nguyễn administration firmly controlled coinage cast programmes. In 1803, the Nguyễn administration opened the coinage mint Bảo Hóa Cục in Bắc Thành (Hà Nội). It is interesting that Bảo Hoa Cục was in charge of taxing according to the amount of cast coins submitted by coiners, and that was sanctioned by the Vietnamese government. The government purchased copper themselves. The regular sale and purchase of lead for casting could result in rapid price inflation. Gia Long issued a ban on lead, and governmental coinage casts required a large amount of lead for casting. Consequently, the government managed and supervised coinage casting programmes chartered by

¹²¹ Minh Mệnh Công Văn 明命公文[The official documents in Minh Mệnh period] Viện Hán Nôm A.2528, p. 29.

¹²² John K. Whitmore, “Vietnam and the monetary flow of eastern Asia” in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, p. 370.

private merchants in the Gia Long period. By the Minh Mạng period, Huế stopped the casting of coinage by private merchants. Hence, coinage casting was safely controlled by the Nguyễn government by the Minh Mạng period. Furthermore, the Minh Mạng placed coinage casting within the armoury, which made coin samples. Huế issued examining regulations on coinage casting. During the Minh Mạng period, the quality of copper coins was better than that of the Gia Long period by virtue of firm supervision by the government and a change in the method for casting coins. Accordingly, there was less counterfeit currency in Vietnam in the Minh Mạng period than before. However, during the Thiệu Trị period, illegal minting began to flourish, even though the government issued bans on it in 1845 and 1846. Moreover, Huế changed the shape and metal proportion of silver ingot, in order to foil counterfeiters. However, the government did not completely curb clandestine minting. In 1846, Lê Văn Tiễn (黎文踐) in Hà Tiên (河仙) melted copper to forge official silver ingots.¹²³ In the second year of Tự Đức's reign, civil ministers reported to Tự Đức that the Huế court should put counterfeit currency on the agenda. The Nguyễn court approved the opening of more local mints by merchants under governmental management. The government provided metals for the coinage and the merchants paid taxes. In addition to this, Huế declared that people could procure metals such as copper or lead and cast coins themselves as long as they reported it to the local government and were registered. Hence, the Huế government loosened its grip on official coinage and by the Tự Đức period, endorsed

¹²³ ĐNTL, Chính Biên III, Vol. 60, p. 20.

private merchants, including Chinese merchants, to cast coins. In 1858, Guan Hengji (关衡记) and Li Daji (黎达记) were licensed to open lead mines in Thái Nguyên in northern Vietnam, and permitted to cast white lead coins.¹²⁴ However, some merchants continued to cast counterfeit currency while others minted coins with the permission of the government.

2.4. Rice

Apart from opium, precious metals and humans, rice was a significant contraband item at the time, even though there was also indisputable evidence of staple rice transactions, especially in southern Vietnam, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Compared with precious metals, rice was a significant item in the national economy and a source of livelihood for people during the Nguyễn dynasty. Large scale smuggling of rice could result in local shortages of rice, which could create rice riots, which in turn endangered the royal throne and created social unrest. Thus, Huế not only tightly controlled rice deals, but also issued a ban on the export of rice. Even so, the restrictions on rice in different periods of the Nguyễn dynasty were distinctive.

The rice supply was interconnected with agricultural harvests, which had been hit by several disasters. The two crucial rice supply bases were the Red River Delta and the Mekong River Delta. A poor harvest concurring with disasters or bad weather forced the Huế court to transfer rice from the south to the capital or northern Vietnam, or vice versa, by way of the grain transport system, in order to meet the demand for rice.

¹²⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 19, p. 16.

Furthermore, the shortage of rice in Vietnam caused the court to encourage rice imports and impose restrictions on rice exports. In turn, a good harvest offered a surplus rice supply to balance the demands of the whole country. At the same time, the Nguyễn rulers sanctioned the use of rice in exchange for other vital articles from foreign traders, such as military equipment. Nonetheless, merchants frequently smuggled rice for huge profits when disasters and poor harvests caused a shortage of rice and skyrocketing prices. *Veritable Nguyễn records* states that good harvests only occurred in 1824, 1830 (Bắc Thành), 1835, 1838 (Bắc Ninh), 1840 (Bắc Thành), 1841, 1844, and 1849.¹²⁵ However, high rice prices occurred frequently during these years due to bad weather or a disaster and a poor harvest, in particular, in 1833, 1835, and 1836.¹²⁶

Rice from Vietnam was usually exported or transferred to two places. One was China, in particular southern China, and the other was regions in Southeast Asia. In Emperor Minh Mạng's mind, rice was more important than gold or other valuables. However, the revenue during his reign had greatly increased, but the quantity of rice was less than that of the Gia Long period.¹²⁷ The rice produced in the Mekong Delta, particularly in Gia Định Thành, was consistently better than that in northern Vietnam. On some occasions, rice from Gia Định Thành supplemented the needs of regions lying north of Bình Định.¹²⁸ Therefore, the court had to control the rice trade in southern

¹²⁵ Phan Thúc Trục, *Quốc Sử Di Biên*. p. 148, p. 199, p. 259, p. 271, p. 281, p. 291, p. 370; ĐNTL, *Chính Biên IV*, Vol. 2, p. 43.

¹²⁶ See the table of disasters in northern Vietnam, ĐNTL, *Chính Biên II*, Vol. 91, p. 135, p. 170.

¹²⁷ ĐNTL, *Chính Biên II*, Vol. 169, pp. 14–15.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* *Chính Biên II*, Vol. 26, p. 10.

Vietnam in order to meet the country's needs. However, the smuggling of rice in southern Vietnam was not effectively quelled since smuggling rice to China and Southeast Asian countries afforded illegal traders great profits.

Generally, rice imports rather than exports were promoted during the Nguyễn dynasty. However, whether rice was exported or imported was determined by the demand of the court and the country as a whole. Prior to the establishment of Nguyễn Vietnam, in 1789, in the south, Nguyễn Phúc Ánh exchanged rice for military equipment supplied by Chinese vessels, in order to succeed ultimately in defeating the Tây Sơn brothers. Chinese junks were allowed to export 300,000 jin of rice to China if they freighted 100,000 jin of steel, iron, black lead and sulphur to Vietnam; or 220,000 jin of rice for 60,000 jin of steel, iron, black lead and sulphur; or 150,000 jin of rice for 40,000 jin of steel, iron, black lead and sulphur. Three hundred jin of rice was permissible for export if they carried less than 40,000 jin of steel, iron, black lead and sulphur, and the tax on junks was not waived.¹²⁹

Apart from exchanging rice for military equipment, the Nguyễn had formulated prohibitions on rice exports since the Gia Long period. People were banned from selling rice to foreign merchants. The buyers or sellers would be flogged 100 times with a stick and banished.¹³⁰ Rice smuggling reached its height in the Minh Mạng period, even

¹²⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 4, p. 12.

¹³⁰ Lục Bộ Điều Lệ A62; Quốc Triều Yếu Điển 国朝要典 [The important statutes of imperial Vietnam] Viện Hán Nôm. A.1614, p. 5.

though a restriction on rice was again issued in 1824.¹³¹ Many factors, such as severe smuggling, a shortage of rice caused by famine or plague or a poor harvest were the cause of these restrictions on export, as well as the encouragement of the import of rice into Vietnam.

The great demand for Vietnamese rice in neighbouring countries due to the population growth, especially in southern China, stimulated the outflow of Vietnamese rice and created a boom in rice smuggling during the Nguyễn dynasty. The Huế court issued a series of policies to promote the import of rice. In 1825, the exemption of tax chiefly depended on the amount of rice on board the foreign ships harboured in Vietnam, especially junks from Siam and Hạ Châu.¹³² The more rice carried by a foreign ship, the greater the tax exemption.¹³³ Domestic rice trading was driven by the Vietnamese authorities in order to meet the needs of the country. Free duty was generally offered to urge traders to deal rice in domestic regions. Taxes were waived if junks anchored with a cargo of only rice.¹³⁴ However, junks could not obtain a full waiver of duty once they moored with rice as well as other goods.¹³⁵ In 1865, a Chinese merchant named Wan Shun (万顺) carried Siamese rice and was permitted to trade in Bình Thuận with a tax waiver.¹³⁶

¹³¹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 26, p. 10.

¹³² Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 34, p. 7.

¹³³ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 48, p. 36.

¹³⁴ Ibid. Vol. 49, p. 17.

¹³⁵ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 194, p. 19.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 30, p. 2.

The illicit rice trade was not rigorously impeded by the Huế court, even though Huế issued consecutive restrictions on rice during the Nguyễn dynasty. Often, merchants succeeded in practicing a ‘surreptitious rice trade’ by some means. On one hand, Chinese junks were specially altered in design to export rice to China in order to escape tax or tax fraud once they returned to Vietnam.¹³⁷ On the other hand, some Chinese merchants smuggled rice under the pretext of shipbuilding or the trading of other goods. Rice smuggling occurred frequently, and some Vietnamese merchants disguised themselves as Chinese merchants so as to smuggle rice. It was the increasing number of such activities that prompted the Vietnamese administration to impose a restriction on local merchant ships disguised as Chinese junks.¹³⁸

In 1828, Huế prohibited Vietnamese junks from going to Hạ Châu for rice deals, owing to an excess of vessels exporting rice to Hạ Châu.¹³⁹ Two main places supplied Hạ Châu and other regions in Southeast Asia with rice: one was Siam, and the other was Gia Định Thành in Vietnam. In 1832, more and more merchants laden with rice from Vietnam travelled to Southeast Asian ports due to a poor harvest and rice yield in Siam caused by flooding in the previous year. Consequently a great amount of Vietnamese rice was shipped to Hạ Châu. Furthermore, an official named Mạc Hầu Hy conducted illicit rice deals in Southeast Asia under the pretext of seeking out Siamese pirates.¹⁴⁰ In 1836, Huế assigned many officials to Hạ Châu on official business, and these

¹³⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 88, p. 8.

¹³⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 177, pp. 27–28; Vol. 78, p. 8.

¹³⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 52, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 79, p. 27.

officials reported that they had found many junks and merchants from Vietnam trading rice with local people in Hạ Châu and buying opium in return. This report caused the Nguyễn government to reinstate a prohibition, so that local Vietnamese were not allowed to sell rice to Chinese merchants or foreign traders.¹⁴¹ Many Đại Dịch Thuyền in Vĩnh Long in southern Vietnam sailed out to deal in rice, but few of these deals occurred in domestic rice markets. It is possible that some of them went to China to sell rice in distant waters to dealers such as Cantonese or Hainanese merchants, as well as to Hạ Châu.¹⁴²

By virtue of their geographical proximity to China, especially at Hải Dương and Quảng Yên where many isolated islands and inlets were situated, illicit rice transactions occurred frequently in these areas. Overpopulation in China since the eighteenth century spurred the import of rice in Qing China, and great profit for clandestine rice deals engendered the undercover flow of Vietnamese rice to southern China.

In 1824, people suffered from a great famine in Qinzhou and Lianzhou in China, and the price of rice rose dramatically, amounting to four and even five taels per dan.¹⁴³ Many Vietnamese illegally traded rice to Qinzhou and Lianzhou. Concerned by the outflow of rice, Emperor Minh Mạng ordered officials to take strict measures against the smuggling of rice to China.¹⁴⁴ Vietnamese as well as Chinese merchants clandestinely transferred rice to China, even though the Nguyễn court restricted the

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 166, p. 33.

¹⁴² Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 167, pp. 15–16.

¹⁴³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 29, pp. 12–13.

¹⁴⁴ Minh Mệnh Ngũ Trị Văn. A118/1, Vol. 6.

Chinese in Vietnam from trade.¹⁴⁵ In 1836, Nguyễn Công Trứ, the General Governor in Hải Dương and Quảng Yên, instructed the Huế court to license merchant certifications strictly because there were some Vietnamese who built junks in Hải Dương and Quảng Yên for the ‘stealthy transfer’ of rice to Chinese merchants.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, Vietnamese authorities implemented a system so that each merchant obtained a certain quota for rice under the supervision and assignment of the Nguyễn court in Vân Đồn and Vạn Ninh.¹⁴⁷

By the Thiệu Trị period, the illicit outflow of rice in two districts was severe. Some small local vessels practised rice smuggling, plying in Quảng Yên and its vicinity. Around 1845, many Chinese ships for catching pirates joined in the ‘clandestine rice deals’ with local Vietnamese. Considering that underground rice transactions were egregious, Huế had to re-impose a ban on rice in 1845.¹⁴⁸ The Vietnamese authorities took firm steps to subjugate illicit rice dealing or illegal exports to China or Hạ Châu by the Tự Đức period.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Vietnamese restrictions on rice did not completely succeed in curtailing the underground rice trade. In 1858, a large number of Chinese ships anchored outside Phan Thiết Waters (潘切汛) in Bình Thuận (平顺), and were deeply implicated in the illicit rice trade with Vietnamese.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Minh Mệnh Tấu Nghị. Vh.v. 96/6, pp. 10–28.

¹⁴⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 167, p. 20.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 53, p. 12.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 5, p. 13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 20, p. 43.

In summary, the illegal rice trade was severe during the Nguyễn dynasty, even though Huế declared rice a forbidden item, and attempted to curtail stealthy rice transactions and keep rice transactions firmly in royal hands.

The export of rice was theoretically illegal during the Nguyễn dynasty. However, the government regularly sanctioned rice export in exchange for other important goods such as copper and military resources. The merchants illegally traded rice for copper or military resources before selling them to the government. ‘Illegal rice export’ in the Huế Court was a necessary and important supplement for its political economy.¹⁵¹ A dearth of copper caused Nguyễn to use Chinese merchants to freight rice for exchange.¹⁵² In 1814, one vessel loaded with saltpetre from Macao sold its cargo in Vietnam at the price of 100 jin for 10 Portuguese dollars. As a reward, this junk was granted freedom from duty and was allowed to take rice and other forbidden items on the return voyage. In the meantime, other cargoes were approved for sale in Vietnam.¹⁵³ However, the purchase of rice from private merchants without Nguyễn approval was still not allowed.¹⁵⁴ Apart from the exemption from duty, Chinese ships were allowed to carry rice to China.¹⁵⁵ Generally, every person on the ship was allotted one fang of rice when they sailed back. However, in this instance, every person was authorised to freight back 100 jin of rice.

¹⁵¹ Li Tana, “The eighteenth-century Mekong Delta and its world of water frontier” in Anthony Reid and Nhung Tuyet Tran, ed., *Viet Nam Borderless Histories* (Madison : University of Wisconsin Press , 2006), p. 159.

¹⁵² On this point, please refer to the last section on 'copper and other precious metals'.

¹⁵³ KĐĐNHĐSL, A54, Vol. 48, p. 35.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁵ ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 4, p. 12.

Apparently, Huế took advantage of Chinese merchants to supplement their military provisions. During the Qing period, the Nguyễn administration swapped military materials for rice in view of China's rising demand due to the population boom from the late eighteenth century, even though as a forbidden item, rice was prohibited for export. Apart from Chinese merchants, itinerant merchants from other regions in Southeast Asia were also implicated in the exchange of military materials for Vietnamese rice, and other beneficial goods. Siamese merchants could purchase forbidden items such as silk cloth and textiles and other local goods in Vietnam as long as they sold saltpetre to the Nguyễn government.¹⁵⁶

2.5. Silk and fabric

Silk and china were vital goods in Oriental-Occidental commercial exchanges. China as well as silk and tea were imported by Occidental regions from the Orient. Apart from China as the predominant silk exporting country in Asia, Vietnam was another important place for the export of silk in exchange for other goods such as spices and copper. Most cloth such as crepe, satins, and silks for use in southern Vietnam were not manufactured locally, but came from Tongkin or China.¹⁵⁷ Prior to the middle of the sixteenth century, the Japanese made contact with Vietnam, and exchanged Japanese and Spanish silver for Chinese and Vietnamese silk. The Chinese and Japanese began to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên I, Vol. 9, p. 31.

¹⁵⁷ George Finlayson, *The Mission to Siam and Huế, 1821–1822* (Singapore and Oxford: Oxford University Press, in association with the Siam Society, 1988), p. 311.

arrive in Vietnam with the growth of Hội An as a booming emporium during the seventeenth century, and exchanged their large quantities of mainly silver and copper cash for silk, sugar, and other items.¹⁵⁸

In accordance with global commercial exchanges, the Vietnamese rulers had to restrict illicit silk exports to keep the trade of silk and other fabrics in Nguyễn hands. A ban on silk and all other kinds of cloth was a direct way for the Nguyễn to control the silk trade tightly. The Nguyễn court issued different bans on silk and other sorts of fabrics to meet domestic demand in Vietnam.

Cloth and silk textiles were indigenous products from Vietnam and necessities for the local people. Trading them in domestic regions met the needs of local people, but exporting them to earn greater profits would create rocketing prices, which would mean that the poor would not be able to afford clothing, and so the disadvantages of export outweighed the advantages. Therefore, cloth and silk textiles, raw silk, boiled-off silk, and silkworm cocoons were forbidden items for export during the Nguyễn dynasty. However, it is noteworthy that restrictions on cloth and silk textiles export had a certain quota. The first ban on cloth and silk textiles was released in 1795. This ban stated that Chinese merchants were prevented from buying over five jin of raw silk and over five rolls of cloth and silk textiles.¹⁵⁹ In 1819, both raw and boiled-off silk were not allow for export by Chinese or Western ships.¹⁶⁰ In 1826, silk was again restricted from

¹⁵⁸ John K. Whitmore, “Vietnam and the monetary flow” in *Precious Metals*, pp. 379–380.

¹⁵⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 8, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Lục Bộ Điều Lệ. A62.

export.¹⁶¹ However, silkworm cocoons were not forbidden goods. Because of this, an increasing number of foreign ships came to Vietnam to buy silkworm cocoons and this caused silk prices to rocket. Soon afterwards, the Huế court observed this phenomenon and made new regulations on silkworm cocoons. The regulations indicated that without the approval of the Nguyễn administration, the trading of silkworm cocoons by foreign merchants was illicit. Offenders were flogged 100 times with a stick, and the silkworm cocoons would be confiscated by the Vietnamese authorities.¹⁶² However, many Chinese merchants, driven by the huge profits, still took silk to China clandestinely. In 1837, Nguyễn officials were sent to China to purchase items there, including silk. Ironically, the silk that the Vietnamese officials brought back was made in Vietnam, and had been disguised with dyes by Chinese merchants, before being stealthily transported into China.¹⁶³

3. Conclusion

Chinese traders played an important role in the illegal trade between Vietnam, China and even other regions in Asia, smuggling crucial goods such as opium, copper and rice into or out of Vietnam. In the course of their illicit activities, Chinese merchants became the vital bridge in trade contacts between Vietnam and China, and elsewhere in Asia.’ Moreover, Chinese smugglers became a driving force to the opium deals that Vietnam

¹⁶¹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 40, p. 21.

¹⁶² KĐĐNHĐSL, A54, Vol. 48, p. 40.

¹⁶³ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 178, p. 15.

engulfed, the shift in trade trends, as well as the outflow and dearth of precious metals, especially Vietnam's silver and copper. Concurrently, as far as the Nguyễn government was concerned, Chinese merchants also became a kind of tool to accomplish its political and economic goals of obtaining other important items such as military resources or copper. Be it the Chinese merchants or the contraband policy, both completed the profit monopolisation of the Nguyễn rulers. However, they could neither mitigate the impact that Euro-Asian commercial exchanges exerted on Vietnam nor facilitate the Huế court with a normative response to the alien world outside Vietnam.

Chapter 6: Defence and Security

1. Introduction

The Sino-Vietnamese frontier comprised dynamic transnational indigenous inhabitants, migrants, and multi-cultural confederations. Additionally, the two central governments (China and Vietnam) that shared a common border continued to impose their own political, economic, and cultural values on the frontiers. Endogenous forces in the frontiers were swamped by exogenous influences from seemingly remote central authorities, which inevitably sparked off instability and rebellions. Decisions on how to control the northern frontier were influenced by its complexity and the sheer size of China, and became a critical factor in northward expansion for the Nguyễn administration. Therefore, frontier policy in Huế had to develop around complex local conditions as well as Qing China's frontier policy and practices.

The main purpose of this chapter is to address how commercial activity on land and at sea placed much emphasis on security strategies and defence. We also explore how the indigenous people in northern Vietnam were integrated into the frontier defence strategy under Huế authority, and how the Nguyễn court attempted to realise its conquest of territories under the Sino-Vietnamese tributary system, keeping in mind the Qing's aggressive frontier practices. How the frontier policy of Qing China influenced the direction of the evolution of the Vietnamese frontier, and how socio-cultural factors in Vietnam affected government decisions in terms of frontier strategy and defence are

also examined. Lastly, an alternative perspective is used to reassess the Nguyễn dynasty, and its military and economic security will also be discussed.

2. Ideas about frontier defence

In Qing China's frontier defence, the overland frontiers, rather than ocean territories, were the predominant concerns of imperial security, even though a great debate on defence policy had occurred in the Qing court during the 1870s.¹ Vietnam enjoyed the benefits of seafaring trade in its long maritime history. Thereafter, until the Nguyễn era, maritime trade became prominent with regards to national security. Between the defence of overland frontiers and ocean territories, Huế Vietnam had in fact been pragmatically responding to coastal conditions, even with the dominance of Confucianism in Vietnam, which stressed agrarian development as a primary priority. However, Vietnam did not neglect its overland frontier defence, since it had to handle cautiously the potential threat from northern China and affirm its dominance in the highlands.

In 1808, Emperor Gia Long introduced the concept of Tráng Phong Thủ (壯封守, consolidating defence). By the Minh Mạng period, he proposed to employ Tu Đức (修德, cultivating Vietnam through Confucianism) and Thiết Hiểm (設險, setting up barriers) to fortify the sovereignty of the Nguyễn court. To fulfil this aim, he ordered the

¹ Immanuel CY Hsu, "The Great Policy Debate in China, 1874: Maritime Defence Vs. Frontier Defence" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964–1965): 212–228.

construction of enormous walls, set up emplacements for cannons, and armed coastal areas with guns and other military equipment.²

By the nineteenth century, China was more concerned about its other frontiers, such as the Sino-Russian frontier; the southern frontier was neither a pertinent issue nor a threat. Therefore, compared to other eras, the threat from China was reduced for Nguyễn Vietnam. Thus, the key focus of security issues shifted from military to economic issues. By the Nguyễn era, Vietnam's security regime targeted mainly Westerners, merchants, bandits, and pirates. In Vietnam, the Tourane (Đà Nẵng) seaport was the only port specially established for Westerners; they were only allowed to enter Vietnam via Đà Nẵng until the Minh Mạng period.³ However, the Nguyễn court's policies regarding Westerners were not homogenous. The Huế government had various policies on different categories of Western vessels, while the Nguyễn court only allowed Western vessels to land in order to obtain provisions such as fresh water and firewood without going further inland. The number of Westerners who were allowed to land for trade could not exceed 10 at a time, and their weapons were tightly restricted. Western merchants could trade near the port after they registered the details of their cargo in the official records, but they were still prohibited from entering the local villages.⁴ Vietnam continually regarded Westerners as a potential source of coastal disorder, whether they were merchants or simply shipwrecked crews. Apart from the

² ĐNТL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 53, p. 17.

³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 160, p. 2.

⁴ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 158, p. 17.

concerns about Westerners, the concerns of the Nguyễn rulers included retaining the predominance of Confucianism in Vietnam, as it had been since the Minh Mạng period, and suppressing unorthodox beliefs. Westerners introduced Catholicism, which conflicted with Confucianism. Christianity had been established in Vietnam for more than two centuries. Prior to the Nguyễn dynasty, Christianity had been abolished in Vietnam. Therefore, Western missionaries were sharply scrutinized by the Huế, as they were the primary mode of the dissemination of alternative theological views in Vietnam. Furthermore, the active persecution of Christianity was used as one of the reasons for French colonisation.

From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, this potential theological threat from Westerners was not eradicated from the worries of the Huế rulers, even though Minh Mạng decreed a prohibition on Catholicism. It is thus understandable that the Nguyễn court still kept a wary eye on Westerners even during the reign of Tự Đức.

Smugglers and merchants involved in unauthorised transactions were a major security issue. Cheating, tax evasion, and smuggling carried out by merchants alarmed the court, as opium and other contraband could threaten national security and the rulers' income. The key to frontier defence was to restrain people, as well as to control them in certain areas in order to manage them easily. The regulation of travelling merchants was the first agenda. It was previously mentioned that the Chinese in Vietnam were not allowed to engage in maritime trade. Thus, Chinese merchants had to make regular trips to Vietnam even if they were authorised traders, and were not allowed to linger in

Vietnam for a long period of time. Moreover, local Vietnamese were also banned from maritime trade, although in 1817, Emperor Gia Long abolished the ban on maritime trade in Hạ Châu.⁵ Furthermore, empty junks were not allowed to anchor in Vietnam. During the Gia Long period, the certifications of merchants had to be accurately distributed by officials. The government had to take precautions against unscrupulous merchants for the sake of frontier security.⁶ Apart from issuing bans to restrict people's mobility, the Nguyễn court also established military stations to guard the land and offshore ports to protect the coastal waters.

Bandits and pirates were the main parties that engendered disorder in the maritime and inland frontiers. From one perspective, bandits and pirates were a group who operated and obtained material wealth by force. From another viewpoint, violence, plundering, and other destructive activities occurred in tandem with illicit trade, which was usually the catalyst for disorder along the frontier territories, both overland and maritime.

Therefore, Nguyễn frontier defence polices were targeted at preventing disorder caused by bandits and pirates. Establishing enormous ports and stations were essential for this, enabling the court to swiftly and extensively control and police entire regions. Vietnam established 143 sea ports and 141 inland stations throughout the country.⁷ These ports and stations had emplacements and military equipment to facilitate effective attacks once they found suspicious ships and individuals. In addition, the government also

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 36, p. 2.

⁷ Thông Quốc Duyên Hải Chư. A.79.

stationed troops at plenty of strategic overland passes and sea ports for instant deployment.

3. Coastal Defence

3.1. Garrisoning the frontiers

During the Gia Long period, Vietnam started to garrison its maritime frontiers. In 1803, Gia Long requested that the officials in seaports keep a vigilant lookout for pirates and report relevant information in a timely manner. In 1806, he designated vessels from Nghệ An, Thanh Hóa, and Huế to garrison the waters around the Biện Sơn (汴山), Bạng (蚌) and Úc sea ports.⁸

Essential military activities, which comprised building fortresses and barracks, stationing troops at strategic areas, and arming fortresses with cannons, occurred during the Minh Mạng period. In 1827, a total of 11 new fortresses were built in the mountainous areas of BìnhĐịnh. There were a total of 32 fortresses with ready troops in Vietnam.⁹

Hải Dương and Quảng Yên were strategic places to patrol the oceans and curtail pirate activity, so the government consolidated defence forces in these locations. In 1839, the Nguyễn court built several new fortresses in Hải Dương and Quảng Yên. By 1834, Hải Dương was one of the provinces with the most fortresses. At Đồ Sơn (涂山)

⁸ KĐĐNHDŚL, Vol. 159, p. 28.

⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 49, p. 7.

in Hải Dương, the government deployed numerous junks to patrol the area. Additionally, barracks and ready troops were also established there.¹⁰

Apart from Hải Dương and Quảng Yên, Hà Nội was equipped with 69 emplacements, and there were a total of 484 emplacements in Bắc Kỳ.¹¹ As for fortresses, in 1834, the number of fortresses in Bắc Kỳ amounted to 55. It had 14 fortresses, some of which were located in sea ports and strategic spots such as Đồ Sơn and Trục Cát (直葛). Bắc Ninh was second only to Hải Dương, with 11 fortresses, while Sơn Tây had eight fortresses.¹² Sơn Tây, Bắc Ninh, and Hải Dương were the most important areas even though they were not coastal provinces. These provinces connected the inland river zones with the coastal zones and the sea in northern Vietnam. This huge interlinked water system made it easy for Vietnam to control and conduct surveillance from overland to sea.

The government also prescribed the number of soldiers to be stationed in fortresses in certain districts. Hưng Hóa is a good example. After a discussion with the Board of War, Minh Mạng authorised the stationing of 50 soldiers at each major fortress, and not more than 20 soldiers at common fortresses.¹³

3.2. Patrols at sea

¹⁰ Minh Mệnh Chính Yếu, A.57/10, Vol. 23.

¹¹ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 125, p. 12.

¹² Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 141, p. 19.

¹³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 190, p. 18.

Northern Vietnam was dotted with various inlets, rocky reefs, estuaries, bays, lagoons, and coves, which were natural hideouts and bases for pirate and perfect for launching attacks on passing junks or government forces. Prompt and precise surveillance of the pirates was critical for the Nguyễn court to win the battle against piracy, and patrolling was the first step towards this goal.

The government usually drew up detailed patrol schedules to maintain order at sea. Frequent patrols placed several remote coastal islands firmly under official surveillance. Warships were dispatched twice annually from March to July to patrol the sea north of Quảng Bình. The aim of patrolling was to maintain control of security in maritime territory, and to identify pirates and suspicious-looking Chinese vessels.¹⁴ Thus, patrolling was directly related to the apprehension of pirates. The court also conducted intensive patrols and raids on pirates in particular areas such as Thanh Hóa, which pirates were known to frequent.¹⁵ Vietnam in the Minh Mạng period perceived the crucial role that the coastline played in national security. In the eighteenth year of Minh Mạng's reign, more warships were allotted to arrest Javanese pirates in May, the time when Javanese pirates frequently plundered merchants in the waters of southern Vietnam.¹⁶ Furthermore, the government allocated more naval troops to patrol the bustling maritime trade routes. In 1839, Vietnam intensified patrols from the south of

¹⁴ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 159, p. 3.

¹⁵ Ibid. Vol. 59, p. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid. Vol. 59, p. 11.

Quảng Yên en route to the north of Bình Thuận on account of the route's strategic importance.¹⁷

The exchange of information between the central and local governments regarding ocean territories was an effective way for the court to formulate operational defence plans. Timely information reports on maritime territories gave the central and local governments the latest and most accurate information available. Vietnam issued regulations on reporting procedures regarding coastal defence, thus ensuring that the government would be given precise and detailed information. In 1840, the government in Quảng Yên assigned warships to patrol the ocean near Tràng Sơn from January to July. These warships would then give detailed monthly reports to the local government. Besides this, the local government was also required to submit regular reports to the court about the local people and newly established villages. These reports even included the Chinese fishermen living there, taking into account the fact that Tràng Sơn was a strategically important coastal area in northern Vietnam. Officials were assigned to Tràng Sơn once or twice every month to scrutinise the situation.¹⁸

The mutually dependent nature and role-playing versatility of pirates, fishermen, and merchants in coastal areas complicated the geopolitical perspectives of the imperial rulers. To indigenes on the coast such as fishermen, pirates, and smugglers dwelling along the Sino-Vietnamese frontiers, the geographical (but not the political) concept of boundaries did not exist. To other inhabitants such as inland inhabitants or governments,

¹⁷ Ibid. Vol. 159, p. 19.

¹⁸ Ibid. Vol. 159, p. 20.

geographical juxtaposition became simply an advantage in collusion and frequent communications. From the perspective of the Nguyễn rulers, cutting off contact between the Chinese and Vietnamese in frontier areas was an effective way to check the growth of pirates, impede collaboration between bandits, pirates and even fishermen along the coast, and eventually, annihilate the pirates. Therefore, apart from patrols at sea and timely, accurate reports on the maritime world, Huế made a point of evicting Chinese fishermen who were operating illegally in Vietnamese maritime territories, and even requested China's authorisation to pursue and capture pirates across the frontiers in order to curb criminal alliances between the Vietnamese and Chinese.

In 1833, 60 Chinese fished illegally in Vietnamese waters in Quảng Yên. On the one hand, Nguyễn sent diplomatic documents to the Chinese authorities. On the other hand, Minh Mạng decided to increase the number of warships defending the coast.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in the following year, many Chinese fishermen entered the marine frontier in Quảng Yên, prompting Minh Mạng to use naval force to expel the Chinese fishing boats once again.²⁰

The Nguyễn court remained watchful for fear of unrest in the frontier regions. In 1832, China asked the Nguyễn authorities to authorise Chen Jifa, a Chinese merchant, to pursue and arrest pirates at will in Sino-Vietnamese waters since the Chinese merchant used his own money, weapons and other equipment. However, Minh Mạng

¹⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 112, p. 21; xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 226, pp. 25–30 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 301.

²⁰ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 7.

refused this request, on the pretext that Vietnam and China both had clearly demarcated political borders. Minh Mạng believed that Vietnam would end up having to deploy its own military forces to assist Qing in apprehending the pirates, instead of the Chinese merely crossing the Vietnamese frontiers at will.²¹ The Nguyễn court cooperated with the Qing government in the pursuit of pirates, but still kept close tabs on the situation. In 1843, Chinese warships berthing in Tràng Sơn requested entry to Vietnam in order to arrest pirates. Thiệu Trị refused this petition and instead increased the number of warships deployed in Thanh Hóa, Nam Định, and Quảng Yên to intercept pirates.²²

3.3 The offshore islands: the expansion and evolution of Hải Phòng (sea defence)

Garrisons and patrols in the frontier regions were insufficient for Nguyễn Vietnam. In view of the fact that Huế did not abandon maritime activities, it appears that the expansion of power and conquests in the maritime world contained commercial benefits. Ensuring total control and remote governance on offshore islands emerged as a substantial issue for Hải Phòng. How was the government to defend the offshore islands for Vietnam? Assembling and controlling human resources on these offshore islands was crucial to this task. To the indigenes living in the Sino-Vietnamese maritime frontiers, the Chinese fishermen, merchants and even some government fleets were indispensable since they cooperated with Vietnam in sea defence activities such as capturing pirates.

²¹ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 83, p. 16.

²² Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 33, p. 26.

Piracy was rampant around various remote islands situated far from the coast where they could not be patrolled easily or thoroughly. To the government, Hải Dương and Quảng Yên were crucial locations in quelling unrest caused by bandits, pirates and smugglers. Furthermore, these two areas were located in strategic nodes along the busy commercial route that linked the South China Sea, central Vietnam, and Southeast Asia. There were two agendas behind the wish to control these two areas, including the remote islands. One was to secure Nguyễn Vietnam's ability to ensure its future dominance and keep these border territories out of Chinese hands. The second motive was the court's wish to control the commercial route, which would enable them to receive lucrative profits.

Apart from patrolling and garrisoning the frontiers, the organisation and regulation of the populace in the borderlands were effective measures used by the Nguyễn court to fortify their frontiers, both on land and at sea.

Pirates were generally the most difficult targets for the Vietnamese court to apprehend. Smuggling and plundering allowed them to thrive at sea, particularly during trade booms. This maritime menace was not as easily eradicated as when they were on land. It was not easy for civilians dwelling near the coast to tell pirates from honest fishermen and vice versa. The methods used to minimise the unrest created by these criminals and to arrest them determined the strength of frontier security. Vietnam endeavoured to separate land-dwellers from riparian people and encouraged

sea-dwellers to live on land by enforcing registration in official rolls and levying taxes on sea-dwellers.

Fishermen living at sea or residing offshore, and even captured pirates had to register in the official roll and pay taxes. In 1839, Nguyễn Công Trứ, the General Governor in Hải Dương and Quảng Yên, caught pirates, including 180 accomplices, and succeeded in making them accept amnesty and eventually serve the rulers of the Nguyễn court. Shortly after, Nguyễn Công Trứ divided them into four groups, called the four Tứ Giáp (四甲), based on the regions they came from. Each Giáp (甲) had a Giáp Trưởng (甲长) and Lí Trưởng (里长) who were in charge of the whole Giáp. These Giáp belonged to the sub-administrative unit of Vân Đồn. Here, Giáp functioned similarly to China's bao jia (保甲) system. However, the Huế authorities did not regulate Chinese offspring in Giáp as strictly as in other Chinese communities in Vietnam. Taxes were paid to the government according to the number of junks and persons in the Khai Vĩ (开尾) and Hà Cỗ (虾罟) communities. Khai Vĩ and Hà Cỗ were a group of people named Kai Wei and Xia Gu in Chinese. They were two Chinese fishermen communities floating near Vietnam and on the South China Sea.

Moreover, Chinese and Vietnamese fishermen were also organised into different groups in order to obtain licenses and ship certifications from the court. Each group had one principal who oversaw the whole group. One or two of them were selected to stay on the land for effective administration.²³ Difficulties in distinguishing fishermen from

²³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 201, pp. 3–4.

pirates forced the court to revise these regulations for two Chinese fishing communities. One or two of these Chinese fishermen were required to reside on land, but all the fishermen and their ships were registered in the official roll. Additionally, all Chinese, whether they were land-dwellers or water-dwellers, were levied taxes based on the standard tax regulations for Chinese in Vietnam. Each principal had a privilege: tax would be waived for one year. Furthermore, these vessels were inscribed with the words ‘ships in Quảng Yên’ on one side and the name of the owner on the other, both painted in green. Chinese fishermen were obliged to make regular reports to the local government of Quảng Yên and had to apply for official approval if they wanted to return to China.²⁴

In the Gia Long period, Chinese land-dwellers and fishermen who lived within Vietnamese territories or along the Sino-Vietnamese water frontiers made up the auxiliary forces that assisted the government in the defence of the sea and coast. In 1811, Xu Dakui (徐达魁) rounded up some fishermen and captured seven pirates and a ship.²⁵ In 1828, Chen Gui (陈贵), a Chinese living in Tràng Sơn, apprehended Lý Công Đổng (李公仝), a Vietnamese pirate.²⁶

In terms of maintaining order at sea and suppressing pirates, two groups merit mention: the Khai Mĩ and Hà Cồ communities. These two Chinese communities along the Sino-Vietnamese coastlands comprised fishermen and merchants. In 1839, Lý Công

²⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 208, pp. 14–16.

²⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 43, p. 39.

²⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 51, p. 34.

Tống and about 50 of his followers, notorious pirates in the northern ocean, were arrested by Khai Vĩ and Hà Cỗ and handed to the local authorities of Hải Dương and Quảng Yên.²⁷ In 1842, Mạc Mậu Sơn (莫茂山) and other pirates escaped into the waters of Quảng Yên and launched attacks on official ships. The Khai Vĩ and Hà Cỗ communities assisted Trần Bảo Thư (陈宝书) in annihilating the pirates.²⁸

By the late Thiệu Trị period, the Khai Vĩ and Hà Cỗ communities had evolved into an independent force, and Vietnam directly appointed them to get rid of pirates and maintain order in Vietnamese waters. Guo Youfu (郭有幅) and five other pirates in 1846, along with another five Chinese pirates in 1847, were all trounced by Hà Cỗ.²⁹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, these two Chinese fishermen communities made great contributions to security in the northern maritime territory of Vietnam.

It is noteworthy that Minh Mạng was reluctant to employ Chinese to quell pirates and maintain order at sea. In 1829, Chen Gui, a Chinese who had captured and submitted a Chinese pirate to the Vietnamese government in 1828, volunteered to gather Chinese fishermen to subdue pirates. Unfortunately, Minh Mạng refused his petition for fear that they would stir up trouble or incite revolts on the pretext of co-operating to suppress the pirates.³⁰ Obviously, Minh Mạng feared that the Chinese government wanted to expand its influence by suppressing the pirates on its own. During the late Minh Mạng period, the practice of employing Chinese to defeat pirates was abandoned.

²⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 200, p. 10.

²⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 24, p. 19.

²⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 58, 17; Vol. 65, p. 20.

³⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 57, p. 28.

In 1839, Nguyễn Công Trứ suggested using Chinese forces to exterminate pirates, but his suggestion was rejected by Minh Mạng. Coastal defence was a top priority for the Nguyễn dynasty; military and not civil force should constitute the bulk of coastal defence. It would be tantamount to losing the fundamental defence if Huế used Chinese fishermen and civilians to defend far-flung coastal areas.³¹ Thus, this practice did not last long in Nguyễn Vietnam.

The policy towards the Chinese in the context of the aim to eradicate piracy changed increasingly towards the end of the Minh Mạng period. Under Minh Mạng, Vietnam did not use the Chinese much. After him, Vietnam began to use the Chinese such as during the Thiệu Trị and Tự Đức periods. By the Tự Đức period, the Chinese had become a substantial force in quelling pirates in Vietnamese waters, regardless of whether the pirates were Chinese or not. By this time, Chinese merchants who destroyed pirates could obtain tax exemptions as an award.³²

In 1859, Nguyễn Công Quyền transferred three Chinese ships to get rid of pirates in Bình Thuận. Except for one official patrolling ship, the other two were Chinese shipwrecked crews in Vietnam.³³ In 1864, Peng Tingxiu (彭廷秀), a Chinese in Thanh Hóa, hired Chinese ships to patrol the sea, and captured two pirate ships.³⁴ In 1865, Tự Đức told the Board of War that Huế would hire Chinese vessels to help the central

³¹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 201, p. 20.

³² Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 35, p. 38.

³³ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 20, p. 40.

³⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 29, p. 39.

government to annihilate the pirates.³⁵ In the same year, Peng Tingxiu and three Chinese ships were again recruited to assist Vietnam in the eradication of pirates.³⁶ In 1863, Vietnam rewarded Huang Tingguang (黄廷光) with rice, wine, and money, as he had suffered in shipwrecks due to the aid he had given in the eradication of pirates in Bình Định.³⁷

Chinese fleets, including official and private junks, also joined the drive to exterminate pirates. In 1865, Chinese fleets fought alongside Vietnamese naval troops in the waters of Quảng Yên, eventually eradicating 41 pirates. These Chinese fleets also received 1,000 liang of silver as a reward.³⁸ In 1865, Chinese fleets under the direction of Nguyễn Tri Phương (阮知方) also helped to annihilate pirates in Hải Ninh.³⁹ In the same year, Chinese ships were once again recruited for sea patrols.⁴⁰ In 1865, Chinese fleets formed the bulk of the forces that worked with Nguyễn to subdue pirates in Hải Ninh.⁴¹ Furthermore, Chinese fleets intercepted pirates in the waters off Hải Ninh and Quảng Bình, and publicly captured Đông Văn Dũng (梁文勇) and other nefarious pirates.⁴² However, the co-operation in the annihilation of pirates generated some conflict between Vietnam and Qing. On one hand, Vietnam needed Sino-Vietnamese

³⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 31, p. 31.

³⁶ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 33, p. 9.

³⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 32, p. 7, 20.

³⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 32, p. 4.

³⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 32, p. 23.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 32, p. 31.

⁴¹ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 32, p. 37.

⁴² Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 33, p. 5.

cross-border co-operation to police the water frontier; on the other hand, co-operation could introduce Qing intervention. Qing officials regularly cruised in Vietnamese waters once they needed co-operation to capture pirates. On some occasions, the Chinese officials did not need any official certification when they crossed Sino-Vietnamese sea borders. The crossing of borders at will, and without the permission of the Vietnamese government, by the Chinese officials generated conflict. Therefore, during the early period of the Nguyễn dynasty, conflicts happened between China and Vietnam due to co-operation in frontier areas.

It is clear that the defence policy with regards to the Chinese catalysed crucial changes during the early period of the Nguyễn dynasty. A striking feature was the change of attitude toward cooperation in annihilating pirates with Chinese in the Minh Mạng period, which originated from the primary concern that the expansion of Chinese influence could impede and limit the control of Nguyễn Vietnam's central power on the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. Minh Mạng's choices demonstrated the consolidation of central power in the Huế court. In the Minh Mạng period, the consolidation of central power caused conflict, which originated from the occurrence of frequent power clashes between the two states in the Sino-Vietnamese overland regions and even the maritime frontiers. The following segment explores confrontation in the overland frontiers. The various attitudes from Minh Mạng which inspired the move to involve the Chinese in national defence reflected the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations.

3.4. Conquest on strategic islands⁴³

The integration of offshore islands into defence stations was closely linked to the concern over coastal defence. The Nguyễn government paid great attention to the role of these strategic islands, and they demarcated islands in order to oversee jurisdiction on these islets as much as possible in security matters.

Prior to the Nguyễn dynasty, some archipelagos not far from shore appeared on the map of Vietnam as transit places that supplemented essential stops used by plying junks, or as rescue spots for shipwrecks. Furthermore, some exploitation such as mining, fishing, and so on had already been undertaken in these areas.⁴⁴ Furthermore, during the eighteenth century, the French also recorded that Vietnamese naval units operated

⁴³ Political and diplomatic disputes on the Paracel or Spratly Islands between China and Vietnam are not of concern in this section. Chinese scholars have testified that ‘*Hoàng Sa*’ ‘*Trường Sa*’ in Vietnamese archives did not mean ‘Paracel or Spratly Islands’. On this point, most archives and documents and even research by scholars illustrate who had jurisdiction of these archipelagos, and the disputes have been settled. Therefore, no disputes will be discussed or re-evaluated. Only phenomena on occupied islets in Vietnamese waters are analysed herein. Some significant documents on disputes are listed here for reference. Huang Shengzhang, *nan hai zhu dao li lai shi zhong guo ling tu de zhang ju*. *Dong Nan Wen Hua*, 4, 1996. Huang Shengzhang 黄盛璋, *nan hai zhu dao li lai shi zhong guo ling tu de zhang ju* 南海诸岛历来是中国领土的历史证据 [The historical proof and documents that islands in South China Sea belong to China]. *Dong Nan Wen Hua* 东南文化, 4, 1996. Li Jinming 李金明, *yue nan huang sha chang sha fei zhong guo xi nan sha kao* 越南黄沙长沙非中国西南沙考 [A study that *Huang Sa* and *Trường Sa* in Vietnam were not Paracel or Spratly Islands of China]. *中国边疆史地研究*. *Zhong guo bian jiang shi di yanjiu*, 2, 1997. Han zhenhua 韩振华, *Nan hai zhu dao shi di kao zheng lun ji* 南海诸岛史地考证论集 [The collection on study on islands in South China Sea]. *Zhong hua shu ju* 中华书局. 1981. Dai Kelai and Tong Li 戴可来, 童力, ed., *Yue nan guan yu xi nan sha qun dao zhu quan gui shu wen ti wen jian zi liao hui bian* 越南关于西南沙群岛主权归属问题文件资料汇编 [The study on the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship in ancient time.] *He nan ren min chu ban she* 河南人民出版社. 1991.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper on the Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa Islands* (Saigon 1975), p. 16.

patrols between Hoàng Sa (Paracel) and the coast of Vietnam.⁴⁵ By the Nguyễn dynasty, the occupation of islands, reclaiming sovereignty over them, and proceeding with administration was common in Vietnam.

In 1832, the Board of Works reported to Minh Mạng that Hoàng Sa was a natural barrier in Vietnam's waters. Former dynasties had commissioned precise graphs before, but this graph did not chart the whole area, only a part of it; the exact geographical location of Hoàng Sa was still undefined. Minh Mạng dispatched officials to this area every year in order to make an accurate map. The official junk Ô Thuyền set off for Quảng Ngãi at the end of January. The government took over four private ships for official use in Quảng Ngãi and Bình Định in early February and sailed to Hoàng Sa in order to get detailed geographical information about it, such as its length, width, height depth, and surroundings. They also aimed to find out if there were hidden shoals and submerged reefs in the waters. In addition, they also drafted specific and detailed navigation routes and journey durations from different sea ports to Hoàng Sa. Minh Mạng dispatched Phạm Hữu Nhật (范有日), a navy general, to lead naval vessels to Hoàng Sa with ten inscribed wooden tablets, even though Vietnam had already planted the Vietnamese flag there in the Gia Long period. These wooden tablets were placed on some islands as markers en route to Hoàng Sa. The length of these wooden tablets was five chi, the width was five cun, and the thickness was one cun. Incrbed on the tablets were these words: 'Phạm Hữu Nhật, who was the principal of naval troops, was

⁴⁵ Note Sur l'asie Demandee par M. de la Borde a M. d'Estaing, *White Paper on the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Islands*, p. 24.

dispatched to Hoàng Sa to reconnoitre in the 17th year of Emperor Minh Mạng's reign.'⁴⁶

Apart from planting the flag, exploration, making maps, and some exploitation of natural resources, another striking decision of the Vietnamese administration in connection with Hoàng Sa was that of the regular conduct of official rescues for foreign shipwrecks. In the early seventeenth century, three Dutch ships sailed for Formosa. One of them, the *Grootebroek*, lost contact with the others and capsized near Hoàng Sa. The Vietnamese administration rescued this ship.⁴⁷ In 1833, Minh Mạng planted trees in Hoàng Sa with the main purpose of allowing navigators to recognise their surroundings and avoid getting shipwrecked.⁴⁸

From the above, it is clear that the attitudes towards the jurisdiction of maritime territories had evolved. The Huế court knew that controlling and meticulously regulating these separated islets, harbours, shoals, and half-tide rocks into different jurisdictions under the respective prefectures, sub-prefectures, departments or districts meant further expansion of the rulers' power. Cross-border administration provided a good example of the preoccupation with coastal defence, and the Nguyễn court's motives for colonisation and territorial expansion.

3.5. Naval fleet

⁴⁶ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 165, p. 25.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper on the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Islands*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 104, p. 16.

Vietnam established its naval force for security purposes, particularly along the coast. The Nguyễn court dispatched the naval fleet not only to strategic areas, but also at frontline maritime positions. In emergencies, Huế equipped coast-dwelling civilians with official boats for patrolling the sea. Furthermore, the Vietnamese court not only built assorted junks in order to repel pirates and other potential maritime threats effectively, but also purchased advanced ships from Western countries to upgrade its military equipment by the Tự Đức period.

The Nguyễn court stationed the naval fleet in capital and offshore areas as well. The Huế court had enhanced its naval forces by the Minh Mạng period. In 1829, the Nguyễn court reviewed the number of ships in each local administrative unit. The number of ships in Nghệ An, Bắc Thành, and Hải Dương were increased to a total of 10, 22, and 15 respectively. The ships in Nam Định were reduced from 15 to 11.⁴⁹

The Nguyễn also built various sampans that were manned by local civilians to defend the maritime frontiers in an emergency and meet the diverse demands of coastal defence. During the Minh Mạng period, the Huế court adjusted naval fleets effectively and flexibly in order to defend the frontiers. In the first year of Minh Mạng's reign, Vietnam mobilised local forces in Phú Quốc off the Cambodian coast to build big vessels, along with two smaller ships, all armed with guns and cannons in order to carry out patrols and apprehend pirates at sea.⁵⁰ In 1834, Minh Mạng ordered sampans to be built in areas along the coast. These sampans were flexible and convenient in

⁴⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 60, p. 25

⁵⁰ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 159, p. 1.

emergencies. Around two or three sampans were built in each offshore district. The government designated around 20 people from each local district as coxswains and sailors. Their responsibilities included patrolling, reconnaissance, delivering items, and drawing up regular reports.⁵¹ In 1835, Huế again ordered another two or three sampans to be built in every district along the coast to apprehend pirates. Vietnam also equipped local fishermen's boats with weapons and cannons to attack pirates and patrol the sea from time to time.⁵² In 1836, the government once again took the ships of local fishermen for official use and armed them with weapons and other military equipment for reconnaissance along the coastlands.⁵³ The Nguyễn court deployed more naval forces on the islands, as Vietnamese authorities regarded these islands as strategic locations. In 1847, the Nguyễn court had to establish new naval forces to handle routine security matters in the cities of Đà Nẵng, Điện Hải (奠海) and Yên Hải (安海) in Quảng Nam, at a time when Đà Nẵng was becoming increasingly important and increasing numbers of Westerners were berthing in Vietnam.⁵⁴

Huế's naval forces comprised not only vessels and sampans of various sizes, but also included small steamships from Western countries that were introduced by Minh Mạng. However, going by records in the chronicles of the Nguyễn, Western steamboats were not applied to military use but given to those who had been bestowed titles by Minh Mạng. In 1864, pirates were again thriving in Quảng Yên, and were impeding

⁵¹ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 124, p. 1.

⁵² KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 159, p. 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ ĐNLT, Chính Biên III, Vol. 66, p. 29.

regular trade along busy commercial maritime routes. By now, Tự Đức felt that steamboats would be more effective in restoring maritime order than other kinds of vessels. Thus, Tự Đức assigned Hoàng Văn Sưởng (黃文昶) to Hạ Châu to manufacture steamboats to police the maritime frontier, while Huế hired more coxswains and sailors to man two cupreous steamboats.⁵⁵ In the following year, the Vietnamese authorities spent 130,000 yuan to purchase another large steamboat made of copper from Hong Kong.⁵⁶

During the Nguyễn dynasty, plans for coastal defence did not stay at a certain level, such as only outfitting fleets or junks with firearms and cannons, but instead, shifted towards more fundamental improvements, such as naval training, which was highly valued in Nguyễn Vietnam. Accordingly, Huế trained its naval forces regularly. In 1847, the Nguyễn court required naval forces to patrol Quảng Nam once or twice a month.⁵⁷ In 1853, Tôn Thất Thường (尊室常) reported to Tự Đức on seven topics that had been approved by Tự Đức. One of them stated that vessels whose duty was to transport cargo should also be adept at naval warfare.⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that the Vietnamese authorities' navigation to Southeast Asian regions for trade and official business concealed an ulterior motive: nautical training. It was partly due to military equipment from other Southeast Asian regions that Nguyễn Phúc Ánh was able to defeat Nguyễn Quang Toản and eventually unify Vietnam. Thereafter, to the Nguyễn dynasty, military

⁵⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 32, p. 40.

⁵⁶ ĐNTL, Chính Biên IV, Vol. 34, p. 30.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 64, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 9, p. 9.

equipment from Southeast Asian regions, as well as nautical training, were indispensable. Navigation and other military activities were the best way for Nguyễn Vietnam to train its naval fleets en route to Southeast Asia for trade.

Apart from scheduled training and combating pirates at sea, naval fleets were also engaged in the transportation of military materials and convoying vessels containing rice and metal currency. In 1817, Vietnam dispatched naval fleets and allocated around 773 officials from Bắc Thành to transport newly issued metal currency and other goods to the capital.⁵⁹ Besides metal currency, naval fleets also transported important military equipment. In 1834, Vietnam dispatched Phan Văn Cửu (潘文玖) and Lê Văn Luận (黎文论), officials in the naval fleet, to convoy junks that were headed to Gia Định Thanh and loaded with three cannons, 40,000 jin of gunpowder, and other military equipment.⁶⁰ In many cases, naval forces assisted boats in shipping grain to the capital, such as in 1838, when the central government's naval fleets in Huế were assigned to escort boats transporting grain to the capital.⁶¹

3.6. Navigation and maritime transportation: Hạ Châu Công Vụ

Hạ Châu Công Vụ in the Nguyễn dynasty concentrated on two aspects. The first was commercial contact with regions in Southeast Asia, and the other was for military purposes. It was because of military resources from Southeast Asia that Nguyễn Phúc

⁵⁹ Châu Bản, Australia National University, Reel 3.

⁶⁰ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 136, p. 25.

⁶¹ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 192, p. 17.

Ánh defeated Tây Sơn Nguyễn's brother. By the Nguyễn dynasty, the Huế court did not cede these commercial contacts with regions in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the Nguyễn court awarded the officials who were sent to regions in Southeast Asia based on how much they fulfilled the quota for trade in Southeast Asia.⁶²

With regards to military aspects, the accumulation of information related to Southeast Asia was the motive for the trips to Southeast Asia. In 1823, Emperor Minh Mạng assigned Ngô Văn Trung (吳文忠) and Hoàng Trung Đồng (黃忠全) to navigate for Hạ Châu in the name of official business. One of their assignments was to collect information on local situations and customs, and even the marine route to Hạ Châu itself.⁶³ Even during the war between Vietnam and Siam, the court made great efforts to seek more information on the situation in Southeast Asia.⁶⁴ Moreover, rescuing the Westerners' shipwrecks and escorting them back to Southeast Asia to explore had been the choice of Nguyễn Vietnam.⁶⁵

Another objective of visiting Southeast Asia was to accomplish military undertakings, mainly to train naval forces and practice nautical sailing. Nguyễn Vietnam took more military equipment to go to Southeast Asia not only to annihilate pirates, but also to train naval forces and practice navigating to Southeast Asia. In the opinion of the Huế authority, it was necessary to train naval forces and become familiar

⁶² Ibid. Chính Biên, Vol. 207, pp. 6–9.

⁶³ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 19, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 117, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Tấu Biểu Danh Tập. 奏表名集[The collection on Memorials]. Viện Hán Nôm A2824, p. 25a; ĐNTHL, Chính Biên II, Vol.118, p. 7; Vol. 176, p. 1; KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 48, p. 1.

with the nautical route to Southeast Asia. However, the Nguyễn did not proceed with public military training, but carried it out under the guise of commercial exchange. Accordingly, in 1832, Emperor Minh Mạng used commercial certification instead of the formal official document to Singapore since Vietnam's naval trainings were normal in Minh Mạng's opinion.⁶⁶ In 1836, Nguyễn Tri Phương and other officials took ships that were equipped with 52 cannons and a large stock of cannonballs, and set off for various Southeast Asian countries including Singapore, Penang, and Dutch Batavia.⁶⁷ Without a doubt, training naval forces and practising navigation to Southeast Asia were still on the agenda.⁶⁸ Learning Western techniques was also a motivation for the voyage through Southeast Asia.⁶⁹

4. Overland frontier defence

Overland frontier defence was as crucial as maritime defence for the Huế court. Nguyễn Vietnam had to fortify frontier defences, keeping in mind the long coastline and rugged mountainous terrains so that there were fewer opportunities for invasion. With regards to overland frontier defence, the solution to the northern frontier issues directly influenced the Sino-Vietnamese political relationship. The northern overland frontier had been a crucial national barrier for Vietnam since its separation from China. The concept and practice of the northern frontier in Vietnam was fostered in negotiation and

⁶⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 85, p. 26.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 175, p. 13.

⁶⁸ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 295, p.12.

⁶⁹ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 187, p. 2.

compromise with its northern neighbour, which regarded forced conquest and indirect control—namely, using ‘barbarians to control barbarians’ (*yi yi zhi yi* 以夷治夷) under the tributary system—to be a gauge of frontier management. Consequently, China’s frontier management greatly influenced the evolving frontier of Vietnam and the historical perspectives of Vietnam’s authorities. From border wars in the Song Dynasty to strife in Qing China, the solutions to frontier issues reflected the pragmatic and dynamic strategy of Vietnam when it confronted an aggressive and ambitious superpower. It was not until Nguyễn Vietnam that the orientation and attitude towards frontier affairs became clear cut, accompanied by China’s changing frontier policy and the centralisation of the Huế administration in the northern borderlands.

4.1. The frontier policy of China from a historical perspective

The two primary concepts of China’s frontier ideology are *fushi guan* (服事观, submission) and *huayi guan* (华夷观, central culture and barbarians). The former stresses the frontier’s role in servicing the centre, whose rhetorical expression was *wu fu* (五服) or *jiu fu* (九服). The ruler viewed his empire through the context of the Five Domains or Nine Domains, which was emulated even in his personal residence and as the ideal version of imperial administration. The ruler awarded land to all his subordinates according to their hierarchical rankings. Whatever *wu fu* or *jiu fu*, this meant two things. Firstly, the political centre in the capital applied to governed frontiers, from nearby to faraway regions. Secondly, marginal regions were composed of different

and independent political elements; the further a marginal region was situated, the weaker their obligation to the central government. Hua yi was not simple, but meshed with complicated nationalities, intricate frontiers, and colonies.⁷⁰

The frontier policy in China was mainly composed of *en wei bing shi* (恩威并施, kindness as well as force were used in frontier management) and *yi yi zhi yi* (以夷治夷, using barbarians to control barbarians). The tributary system, which had evolved from this normative and unique ideology that influenced the relations between the centre and periphery, was employed by China's rulers in relations with neighbouring countries. Therefore, the relations between China and frontier neighbours regularly overlapped with tributary relations; tribute trade was a means of kindness in frontier defence perspectives, military conquest was the use of force, and administrative management, among others.

4.2. 'War and peace': the evolution of the frontier in Sino-Vietnamese frontier

history

Jiao zhi was an internal part in China since the Qin authorities established the Nan Hai, Gui Lin and Xiang districts. The successive dynasties did not make great alterations to the administrative management of the southwest frontier. The An Nam protectorate (*an nan du hu fu* 安南都护府) was established in the southern frontier, and included

⁷⁰ Ma Dazheng ed. 马大正, *zhong guo bian jiang jing lue shi* 中国边疆经略史 [The history of frontiers in China]. zhong zhou gu ji chu ban she 中州古籍出版社. 2000, pp. 436–443.

present-day northern Vietnam in Tang China. Around the tenth century, Jiao zhi was separated from the centre and became one state near China.

The Song dynasty was a crucial period in Sino-Vietnamese relations. While the Song confronted the Liao and the Jin in the north, the southern territories acted as provision bases, and were vital to the Songs' reign in China. They expanded their borders to the southern frontier by direct military stationing as well as Wang Anshi's economic reforms. The Song induced considerable Han migration to the southern frontiers and levied taxes through new economic reforms in order to supplement the shortages caused by the wars with northern foes. The forced expansion and diluted political administration in the southern frontier indisputably gave rise to tension between local forces and the northern Vietnamese authorities. Furthermore, the Lý court implemented a frontier expansion policy after negotiating a period of autonomy up to the eleventh century. The Lý endeavoured to establish stable, lasting ties with local leaders along Vietnam's northern frontier, in order to increase its influence on the northern frontier. The presence of frontier chieftains on both sides (Vietnam and China) escalated frontier tensions rather than decreasing them, and these ultimately led to the Sino-Vietnam frontier war around 1075.⁷¹

Sino-Vietnamese frontier conflicts were intermittent. Vietnam invaded Qiuwen, Qingyuan, and five counties in the Siming prefecture at the end of the Yuan dynasty.⁷²

⁷¹ James Anderson, *The rebel den of Nung Tri Cao, loyal and identity along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), Chapters 3 and 4.

⁷² Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi, wai guo* (Beijing: zhong hua shu ju, 1974), p. 3812.

In 1426, 1436, and 1465, Vietnamese chieftains invaded and occupied many villages in Guangxi and Yunnan.⁷³ In short, Vietnamese authorities endeavoured to expand the Vietnamese northern frontier further. The Sino-Vietnamese border conflicts as internal conflicts between different ethnic groups did not cease even during the colonial era under the Ming dynasty. It is noteworthy that the northern frontier was a crucial key for Vietnam to expand its authority further. To some degree, Sino-Vietnamese frontier relations determined how much further Vietnam could expand its overland territory.

The Qing rulers, as a minority of China to manage the whole kingdom and the frontier, favoured pragmatic frontier policies. The Qing resorted to military force to subdue frontier unrest, such as in the northern and western frontiers, particularly Wu Sangui in southwest China and Zheng Chenggong in Taiwan. In other respects, China employed *yin su er zhi* (因俗而治, control according to local customs and culture) in minority regions. Whether it was direct military conquest or flexible control, it served a principal purpose, which was to increase the degree of governance of the empire as a whole. The Qian Long period culminated in strict and effective frontier management. However, China's frontier concerns centred not on the southern frontier but on Xinjiang (新疆) and Tibet (西藏), even during the nineteenth century. Up to the Jia Qing and Dao Guang periods, frontier management slackened due to stable administration and fiscal sufficiency.⁷⁴ In general, the issues and ideologies of the Qing's frontier

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 8322, 8326, 8328.

⁷⁴ Ma Ruheng 马汝珩 and Ma Dazheng 马大正, ed., *Qing Dai de bian jiang zheng ce* 清代的边疆政策 (zhong guo she hui ke xue chu ban she 中国社会科学出版社, 1994), pp. 57–69.

policy did not concern the southern frontier; nor was Vietnam considered a lost province to be regained even though the Qing invaded northern Vietnam in 1787.⁷⁵ However, Sino-Vietnamese disputes about frontier demarcation occurred intermittently in the nineteenth century. This fitful strife was attributed to the mildness of frontier policy in Qing and the persistent expansion of Vietnamese authority. Interestingly, the local chieftains in the Sino-Vietnamese overland frontier played major roles in these conflicts.

4.3. Boundary defence and conflicts

Due to its geographical juxtaposition with China, Vietnam had to manage Sino-Vietnamese border affairs carefully, especially if they involved rebellions, revolts, and other unrest in the Sino-Vietnamese borders. Compared with other eras in Vietnamese history, the Nguyễn were not only watchful of the potential menace from the northern giant, but also consolidated and expanded jurisdiction on new western and southern territories that had been obtained.

Consequently, the Huế authorities had to make some effort to fortify frontier defence, such as the establishment of posts at significant junctions, military deployment, the recruitment and allocation of officials, and the suppression of illicit activities.

Establishing customs and fortresses

⁷⁵ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: the politics of asymmetry* (Imprint Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 119.

Nguyễn Vietnam knew that a key tactic in boundary defence was to rigidly control isolated locations that made governmental surveillance difficult. Establishing customs or military fortresses in strategic spots such as bustling trade routes was also applied to defence policy. Some fortresses were located on the borders, which were covered in jungles and mountains, and others in detours, where merchants or smugglers held unauthorised commercial exchanges. In 1831, Minh Mạng approved a proposal, brought forth by Hoàng Văn Quyền (黃文權) regarding the affairs on Lang Son and Cao Bang, to establish fortresses and deploy troops in Đông Quan (东关) of Yên Bái (安博) prefecture, which was adjacent to Bắc Ninh and Quảng Yên and were filled with bumpy roads, jungles, and mountains.⁷⁶ Apart from security concerns, the establishment of ports contributed to the increase in the fiscal income of the central government, through the registration of locals, and the collection of poll taxes and other taxes. In 1840, Nguyễn established custom offices in Trung Thảng (中儻), Na Lan (那烂), Lệnh Cẩm (令禁) in Bôn Hà (贛河), and three fortresses in Cao Bằng, where Chinese merchants itinerated and avoided paying tax. Taking this into account, Vietnamese authority revised the taxes and certification for Chinese merchants.⁷⁷

Restraining alien comers and ‘illicit’ activities

Civilians, bandits and even merchants travelling along the Sino-Vietnamese overland borders were carefully watched by the Nguyễn court. To the Vietnamese authorities, all

⁷⁶ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 77, p. 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 5, p. 22.

of them were potential sources of unrest in the borderlands. Restricting their entry into Vietnam became an objective of overland frontier defence. In 1831, the Huế court captured six Chinese, including Xiao Sixin (萧思信), who had entered Vietnam illegally.⁷⁸ In 1836, 50 armed Chinese pillaged the inhabitants of Hưng Hóa. Minh Mạng stated that the authorities should remain watchful with regard to frontier defence, and avoid instigating border conflicts with the Qing court after the 50 Chinese were evicted by local Vietnamese authority.⁷⁹

In addition to the inhabitants, indigenes, and bandits, there were also arrogant Chinese officials who journeyed along the Sino-Vietnamese boundaries at will, and this compelled the Huế authorities to fortify frontier defence. In 1810, Chinese officials from the Kaihua prefecture (开化府) in Guangxi crossed the Sino-Vietnamese borderlines to pursue bandits without any official communication or diplomatic document. Vietnamese authorities assailed China over this event. Moreover, the Nguyễn issued a local decree that any Chinese crossing the Sino-Vietnamese borders without any documents would be punished by Vietnamese authorities.⁸⁰

Frequently, interlopers, usually Chinese officials, infuriated Minh Mạng, but he thought that this was a problem relevant to the state and should not be approached in a rash manner.⁸¹ In 1851, a Chinese soldier, Tian Wenzao (田文藻), crossed the Sino-Vietnamese border to capture bandits and was killed by the bandits in Vietnam. In

⁷⁸ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 3.

⁷⁹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 170, p. 5.

⁸⁰ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 1.

⁸¹ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 53, pp. 4–5.

the eyes of the Nguyễn authorities, Tian Wenzao's crossing the border to pursue bandits without an official document was no different from taking the road to his own doom.⁸²

Chinese inhabitants in the borderlands affected Huế's frontier defence. They were generally mining labourers, Chinese merchants, and even Chinese refugees. Chinese inhabitants in the Sino-Vietnamese overland borders contributed to the smoothing over of the insurgency in northern Vietnam. As spies or guides, they regularly gave crucial clues to the central authority that could be used for exterminating bandits such as Liang An'he (梁安和), Lu Gong'an (卢贡安), Huang Fuma (黄付马), Ma Jiji (麻几吉), and Ban Guangrun (班光润) during the quelling of the Nong Van Van rebellions.⁸³ Some Chinese, such as Wei Zhongxiu (韦忠秀), who led an official army to capture Li Khai Ba (李开巴), supported the bandits in northern Vietnam.⁸⁴

Recruiting soldiers, reclaiming and cultivating wastelands, and reforming the ways and manners of the people

The frontier demarcations between traditional Vietnam and its neighbours relied on natural barriers. Waterways, hills or mountains, and islands often formed the natural and visible boundaries of geographical units. When there were no natural features for this purpose, the authority established boundary units by actual governance. Humans naturally became a crucial element in accomplishing the actual governance. An

⁸² Ibid. Chính Biên IV, Vol. 7, p. 14.

⁸³ KĐTBBKNPCB, Vh.v.2701/19. Vol. 71, 26, 29; ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 136, p. 13.

⁸⁴ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 19, p. 9.

effective method of controlling human resources and then carrying out the actual governance was to recruit soldiers, reclaim and cultivate wastelands, and reform the ways and manners of the citizens.

Recruiting soldiers, reclaiming and cultivating wasteland, and reforming the ways and manners of the people were regular methods the government utilised in exploiting and defending frontiers. The government recruited Chinese, inhabitants, and merchants to exploit the border territories. Furthermore, the government also recruited soldiers to consolidate and develop the frontier.

Quảng Yên, a Sino-Vietnamese border region and a hotspot for smugglers such as pirates, was a significant place in northern Vietnam in terms of security. The government endeavoured to bring this region under its complete surveillance. Recruiting soldiers, and reclaiming and cultivating wasteland were important ways to attract Chinese merchants or fishermen to Nguyễn Vietnam. In 1838, Chinese fishermen and Chinese junks sparked unrest in the waters near Quảng Yên, and they gathered in Tràng Sơn. Nguyễn Vietnam assumed complete jurisdiction over Tràng Sơn. As there was a great number of immigrants living there, it was strange that so few of these were Vietnamese. Consequently, Nguyễn Công Trứ went to this place and conducted reconnaissance there. Soon afterwards, the court deployed troops, built fortresses, and emplacements for cannons there. Concurrently, they also organised Vietnamese to establish villages or towns that could look after one another.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 193, p. 15.

To Vietnam, recruiting soldiers, reclaiming and cultivating wasteland, and reforming the customs of the people were the most effective methods to develop and consolidate the frontier. The court consistently and thoroughly carried out these policies during the Nguyễn dynasty. In 1840, Điện Biên (奠边), which was inhabited by White and Black Thái and other upland groups, was set up as an administrative unit in northwest Vietnam by Huế in Ninh Biên. Prior to the Lê dynasty, the Điện Biên prefecture (奠边府) did not exist in Vietnamese administration. Hung Hóa was composed of three prefectures: Gia Hưng (嘉兴), Yên Tây (安西), and Quy Hóa (归化). By the Cảnh Hưng period, due to China's invasion and occupation of frontier territories, the territories of Yên Tây were left with only Chiêu Tấn (昭晋), Lai (莱), Quỳnh Nhai (琼崖), and Luân (伦).⁸⁶ In the first year of Thiệu Trị's rule, Vietnam designated the Điện Biên prefecture as an administrative unit based on the previous Yên Tây prefecture, which covered Ninh Viễn (宁远), Tuần Giáo (巡教) and Lai Châu (莱州). In 1850, the Huế court integrated Quỳnh Nhai and Luân into Điện Biên Prefecture. Ultimately, the Điện Biên prefecture was made up of five sub-administrative units and became an essential administrative unit on the frontier.⁸⁷ Establishing Điện Biên prefecture involved three fundamental issues. First, this area was surrounded by thirteen

⁸⁶ Đào Duy Anh 陶维英. Việt Nam Lịch Đại Cương Vực 越南历代疆域 [The boundary of successive dynasty in Vietnam]. Zhong Minyan Translated 钟民岩译 (Shang wu yin shu guan 商务印书馆, 1973), p. 245; Đại Nam Quốc Cương Giới Vực Biên 大南国疆界汇编[Collected accounts of the Great South's territory and borders]. Viện Hán Nôm . A748, Vol., Hung Hóa p. 6.

⁸⁷ ĐNNTC, Vol. Hung Hóa, p. 27.

prefectures in Da Bac. Second, the land was fertile but the population was sparse, making it susceptible to invasion on the northwest flank of the frontier. Third, local people impeded the move to station troops there. One factor was the prevalence of malaria in the local mountainous terrain. The other factor was the area's geographical characteristics, which hampered the transport of military materials. Therefore, the recruitment of soldiers and local people to reclaim and cultivate wastelands there brought about official management of the region. Moreover, the government also recruited Chinese merchants to develop markets for trade there.⁸⁸ In 1840, motivated by a desire to fortify border defence and protect the Chinese living in the borderlands, the government stationed troops there, and instituted a policy of reclaiming and cultivating wasteland in northern Vietnam.⁸⁹

Conflicts and tensions in the overland frontiers during the early nineteenth century (Điêu Doãn An (刁允安) event, and similar events)⁹⁰

In 1805, the officials in Hung Hóa in Vietnam circulated leaflets which claimed that Mengla (勐刺) and other places, namely the Yên Tây and Quảng Lăng areas in the

⁸⁸ ĐNTL, Chính Biên III, Vol. 8, pp. 22–23.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Chính Biên III, Vol. 8, p. 23.

⁹⁰ Here, the surname of the local official (tusi) in Mengsuo is Dao in Chinese archives but Đիêu in Vietnamese archives. Whether Dao or Đիêu, two characters were similar in both written Chinese and pronunciation. Therefore, Vietnamese and Chinese names will be noted in the following.

Lin'an Prefecture, belonged to Vietnam, and requested these chieftains to submit to the authority of Vietnam again. This event astonished the Qing authorities.⁹¹

Less than 20 years later, the *Điêu Quốc Lân* (刁国麟) and *Điêu Doãn Yên* incidents occurred in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. The key issue of the *Điêu Quốc Lân* incident was the jurisdiction over Phong Thu Village (丰收屯). Phong Thu Village (Fengshou, 丰收) was a sub-administrative division of Mengsuo (勐梭), or *Chiêu Tấn* (昭晋), as it was known in Vietnam. Phong Thu Village was a place in Mengsuo, which was in the Jianshui (建水) County of China.

In 1829, the Vietnamese authorities claimed that *Điêu Quốc Lân*, who was in charge of areas near Phong Thu Village in *Chiêu Tấn* prefecture in Hung Hoa, was captured illegally by Chinese officials across the Sino-Vietnamese border.⁹² After *Điêu Quốc Lân* was captured illegally by Chinese officials across the Sino-Vietnamese border, the Huế authority claimed that Chinese officials also arrested *Điêu Chính Định* (刁政定) and *Điêu Vĩnh Diễm* (刁永典) illegally.⁹³ However, Chinese authorities defied the statement made by the Vietnamese authorities, and vowed that *Điêu Quốc Lân* and *Điêu Chính Định* were not Vietnamese but Chinese.

Shortly afterwards, *Điêu Dãn An* deployed Chinese troops to lay siege to *Điêu Vĩnh Diễm* near the Sino-Vietnamese border. The presence of Chinese officials in Vietnam led to Vietnamese taking hostile action against China, which escalated into

⁹¹ Qing dai wai jiao shi liao jia qing chao (1968), pp. 92–93.

⁹² KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 4.

⁹³ Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录. Vol. 178, p. 16-17 in qing shi lu shi liao zhai chao, 1985, p. 297. ; KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p. 5.

violence. Soon afterward, Chinese officials in Yunnan province forced *Điêu Vĩnh Di ễn* to give the position in charge of taxation in Phong Thu (Fengshou) and Bình Lư (Pinglu, 平庐) villages to *Điêu Doãn An*.⁹⁴ The son of Dao Yunliang (刀允亮) was Dao Yun'an (刀允安, *Điêu Doãn An*). Dao Yun'an was supposed to succeed his father as brigand chef in Mengsuo. However, Dao Yun'an was too young when his father died. Consequently, another branch of the Dao family, Dao Yongdian (刀永典, *Điêu Vĩnh Di ễn*) took charge of business in Mengsuo. *Điêu Chính Định*, who was from Lai Châu, guarded Phong Thu (Fengshou) village.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Dao Yun'an (*Điêu Doãn An*) intended to seize the position of chieftain in Mengsuo after he grew up. He claimed to the Qing government that Dao Yongdian (*Điêu Vĩnh Di ễn*) had forcibly occupied his position as brigand chef in Mengsuo. Thereafter, Dao Yun'an (*Điêu Doãn An*) turned to his sister, who was an official in the Yunnan province of China, for help and allied with Dao Yunjian (刀允坚) and Dao Yunwu (刀允武) to lay siege to Dao Yongdian (*Điêu Vĩnh Di ễn*).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ The chieftain in Mengsuo was Dao Yunliang, who succeeded Dao Shiyong. As recorded in local gazettes in Yunnan, Dao Shiyong 刀世英 was father of Dao Yunliang 刀允亮. Fang Guoyu ed. 方国瑜. Yun nan shi liao cong kan 云南史料丛刊 [The collection on the historical materials on Yunnan] (Kun ming, yun nan ren min chu ban she 昆明: 云南人民出版社, 1998–2001), p. 588, Hung Hoa A610. In Vietnamese chronicles in the Nguyễn Dynasty, Dao Shiyong was *Điêu Quốc Thuyên* 刁国铨.

⁹⁵ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 67, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid.; Phan Thúc Trục, *Quốc Sử Di Biên*., p. 204, and note: As, *Quốc Sử Di Biên* Phong Thu Village belongs to Qing. Gia Long set the officials and station in this place for offering amnesty to Vietnam. The leader rebelled against Lý Khai Ba. Therefore, *Điêu Doãn An* (Dao Yun'an) was not allowed to succeed his father. *Điêu Doãn An* fled to Yunnan to look for his sister, who was leader of relevant official in Yunnan. Then he turned to Qing for help. Aftermath, Qing deployed troops ...

However, *Điêu Doãn An* did not withdraw the troops and continued to be stationed in *Mengsuo*.⁹⁷ Around 600 Chinese troops were stationed in *Phong Thu* (*Fengshou*) village and claimed that *Phong Thu Village* was a part of *Mengsuo* in *Qing* and therefore the troops of *Huế* should retreat. The *Huế* court dispatched *Nguyễn Đình Phổ* (阮廷普) and *Đặng Văn Thiêm* (邓文添) to gather around 2,000 soldiers and 10 elephants to march on the border.⁹⁸ Here, both *Nguyễn* and *Qing* found themselves at sword-point. Ultimately, the Chinese troops had to retreat due to the local climate and malaria at the Sino-Vietnamese frontiers.

It is worth examining why the *Điêu Doãn An* incident took place. There are two key questions that should be useful to explain this event. First, who owned *Phong Thu Village*, *Qing* or *Nguyễn*? Second, were *Điêu Chính Định* and *Điêu Vĩnh Diển* Chinese or Vietnamese?

With regards to *Phong Thu* and *Bình Lư Villages*, the Vietnamese government had different records in official archives. Based on *Nguyễn Văn Thành's* (阮文诚) report in 1806, Vietnam confirmed precisely that *Mengsuo* was *Mang Thu* (芒收) of *Chieu Tan Prefecture* and *Menglai* was *Mang Lạt* (芒刺) in *Lai Châu*. *Mang Thu* (that is, *Mengsuo*) and *Mang Lạt* (*Menglai*) were far from the central areas of *Chiêu Tấn* and *Lai Châu*. Moreover, ethnic groups of all sorts lived together in *Mang Thu* (*Mengsuo*) and *Mang Lạt* (*Menglai*). Furthermore, *Phong Thu* (*Fengshou*) and *Bình Lư* (*Pinglu*) in *Chiêu Tấn* and *Hoài Lai* (怀来) in *Lai Châu* cooperated with Chinese officials to levy tax, 220

⁹⁷ ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 74, p. 11

⁹⁸ KĐĐNHĐSL, Vol. 131, p.5; ĐNLT, Chính Biên II, Vol. 74, p.11–12.

liang silver every year.⁹⁹ As chronicled by the Nguyễn, Phong Thu and Bình L villages in Chiêu Tấn Prefecture in Vietnam, which annexed Menglai in the Qing period, were previously Vietnamese territories, but were occupied by Qing since Le Vietnam. Phong Thu and Bình L villages were called Mengsuo in Jianshui County in Qing since the Qing possessed both places.¹⁰⁰

As recorded in the official compendium of institutions and usages of Imperial Vietnam, Phong Thu and Bình L Villages pertained to Qing. However, in the same Volume, Phong Thu Village was a part of Hưng Hóa Town. When the Điều An incident provoked the Sino-Vietnamese border clash, Minh Mạng sent formal official communications to Qing and claimed that ‘Phong Thu Village was Vietnamese territory; the Sino-Vietnamese borderlines were clear; the areas called Mengsuo by you are possibly another place of which we have never heard...’.¹⁰¹

As for the second question, it is rooted in the delimiting of the borderlines in 1540, as a result of which the territories that came under the charge of the brigand chiefs in Mengsuo and Menglai fell in both China and Vietnam. Furthermore, whether it was Điều Vĩnh Diển or Điều Chính Định, they were both from another branch of the Điều clan. Trình Điều Vĩnh Diển and Điều Chính Định were a collateral consanguinity of Điều Dẫn Yên.¹⁰² Furthermore, their predecessor, Điều Quốc Tuyên, as the brigand chef in Mengsuo in China, accepted the title of headman of the local aboriginal office

⁹⁹ ĐNLT, Chính Biên I, Vol. 29, pp. 5–7.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Chính Biên II, Vol. 67, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Hưng Hóa, 兴化 [The gazetteer of Hưng Hóa]. Viện Hán Nôm A610.

not only from the Qing court, but also from the Nguyễn court. In 1821, the headmen of the local aboriginal office along the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands had an audience with Minh Mạng, including Điều Quốc Tuyên (that is, Điều Thế Yên), who was an official in Hung Hoa. They were bestowed official robes and silver by Minh Mạng. Điều Dẫn Lượng was the son of Điều Thế An (Điều Quốc Tuyên), and Điều Dẫn Yên (Diao Wan'an in Chinese archives) was the son of Điều Dẫn Lượng. Here, Điều Quốc Tuyên accepted his appointment as an aboriginal officer by the Vietnamese court. Moreover, he also accepted his appointment by the Qing court as the brigand chief in order to collect taxes from both sides, which was 50 liang silver per year.¹⁰³ Accordingly, whether Điều Vĩnh Diễm and Điều Chính Định were Chinese or Vietnamese is not clear but the fact is that the demarcation of the borderlines in 1540 fuelled the duplicate taxes collected by the brigand chief in Mengsuo and created Điều clan's jurisdiction in two states.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ ĐNTL, Chính Biên II, Vol. 67, pp. 6–7.

¹⁰⁴ The Liu Meng 六勦 problem can be traced back to the Ming dynasty in China. As Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cương Mục, Chính Biên recorded: 'In the fifth year of Cheng Hua Emperor in China, 1496, Lê Vietnam established twelve sub-administrative divisions in the whole Vietnam. Hung Hóa separated from three parts, Qui Thuận, Gia Hưng 嘉兴 and An Tây 安西. Furthermore, An Tây prefecture included ten subordinates, Lai Châu 莱州, Luân Châu 伦州, Quỳnh Nhai 琼崖, Chiêu Tấn 昭晋, Hợp Phi 合肥, Khiêm Châu 谦州, Tuy Phụ 绥阜, Hoàng Nham 黄山, Lễ Tuyền 禮泉 and Quảng Lăng 广陵. In 1758, Chiêu Tấn, Lai Châu, Quỳnh Nhai and Ninh Biên 宁边 were territories in Hung Hóa in Vietnam. Quảng Lăng and Hoàng Nham belonged to Yunnan. These ten prefectures were adjacent to Yunnan Province in China, now in the northern area of Điện Biên Phủ in Vietnam. VSTGCM, Chính Biên, Vol. 21, Vol. 43, p. 16; p. 45. Liu Meng was located in the southeast of Lin'an Prefecture in

In 1540, Mạc Đăng Dung (莫登庸) usurped the throne of the Lê Dynasty. The Ming dynasty intended to resort to military force and crusade against Mạc's usurpation. Mạc ended the tension with Ming by ceding Quảng Lăng (广陵) and six other prefectures to Ming.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, this cession became the root of Sino-Vietnamese territorial conflicts in the frontiers .

In terms of the delineation of borders in 1540, the areas on the northern bank of the Black River were under China's governance, while the areas on the southern bank of the Black River were under Vietnamese jurisdiction. Nonetheless, the minority hereditary headmen in Menglai managed both sides of the Black River before the demarcation. The headman in Menglai was reluctant to let go of his power on either side. Therefore, the minority hereditary headman in Menglai submitted the tax to central governments and accepted appointments or assignments from both sides even though the areas they managed were territories of two independent states. Concurrently, the Mengle River

Yunnan. The main minorities such as the Bai 白 minority (A Bo 阿樊 in Meng zi County and Jianshui County), Yi 彝, Ha Ni 哈尼, and Dai 傣 were composed of inhabitants in Liu Meng. You Zhong 尤中 (Zhong guo xi nan de gu dai min zu 中国西南的古代民族). Yun nan ren min chu ban she 云南人民出版社. 1979, p. 226, p. 245 ; da qing yi tong zhi, Vol. 479, pp. 3–4. The southwest frontier was regularly controlled by local minorities and even consecutive foreign forces such as Burma, Laos and Vietnam due to their same phylum and geographical juxtaposition even though they were a part of the Qing administration system. The Dao (Điêu) clan was a Dai minority located on the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. You Zhong 尤中 (Zhong guo xi nan de gu dai min zu 中国西南的古代民族, . 1979), p. 342.

¹⁰⁵ Yan Congjian 严从简, Shu yu zhou zi lu 殊域周咨录 [Record of extensive inquiries on distant territories] (Bei jing: zhong hua shu ju 北京, 中华书局 1993), Vol. 3, Annan.

was regarded as a natural barrier to separate the vested interests of Mengsuo's brigand chief into two parts belonging to separate states.

The principals of the local aboriginal system in Quảng Lăng and six other prefectures submitted to the authority of the Qing court, and together with the Qing verified its jurisdiction over Yunnan in the early period of the Qing dynasty. Mengding (勳丁), Mengla (勳刺), Mengsuo (勳梭) and Menglai (勳萊) covered Quảng Lăng and six other prefectures. Apart from these four Meng areas, the southern areas of Lin'an prefecture were also composed of two other Meng regions, and as a whole, these regions were called Liu Meng (six Meng places) since their names included the same Chinese character, Meng. (This word also represents the Tai word *Muang*, which was a small polity.) Among Liu Meng, Mengla and Mengding were located in Jinping (金平) county in present-day Yunnan, Mengnong (勳弄) in the southern areas of Yuanyang (元阳) county, and Mengbeng (勳蚌) on the north-western side of the Black River in present-day Lai Châu in Vietnam. Menglai, Mengding, Mengnong and Mengbeng did not annex to Vietnam indirectly, geographically, during the nineteenth century. Only Mengsuo and Menglai were adjacent to Vietnam.¹⁰⁶

Prior to the Tây Sơn period in Vietnam, Vietnamese authority requested China to re-demarcate their mutual frontiers, intending to take back territories that had been lost since 1540. Lê Duy Kỳ (黎维祁) requested re-demarcation again in 1781 and 1792.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ You zhong 尤中. Zhong guo xi nan bian jing bian qian shi 中国西南边疆变迁史 [The history of southwest frontier of China]. Yun nan jiao yu chu ban she 云南教育出版社 1987, p. 211.

¹⁰⁷ jun ji chu lu fu zou zhe 军机处录副奏折 in Zhong guo she hui ke xue yuan li shi yan jiu suo 中国

However, civil disorder and the instability of rule in Vietnam hampered these requests and the achievements of border re-demarcation at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth century. The *Điêu Doãn An* incidents culminated in Sino-Vietnamese border conflicts along with the growth of the Nguyễn dynasty in Vietnam.

In summary, incorporating local regimes or indigenous forces in frontier, overland or offshore territories was crucial for Nguyễn's northward territorial extension. Intensive frontier defence and tension in frontier affairs originated from efforts to expand central authority to peripheral regions, coupled with the gaining of strength during the Nguyễn era.

5. Conclusion

The Nguyễn consolidated its control of the whole of Vietnam by national security defence. This defence extended from sea to land. Specifically, Huế undertook sea defence from coast regions to the sea. The establishment of naval fleets, regular patrols at sea and the occupation of islands located at sea enhanced the surveillance and control of Nguyễn Vietnam. Besides, the central government used seafaring communities such as Chinese fishermen, to help them to defend the Sino-Vietnamese borders. Furthermore, the Chinese merchants, fishermen and even government vessels became the force used to pacify the Sino-Vietnamese water borders and Vietnamese waters. As for the

社会科学院历史研究所, *Gu dai zhong yue guan xi shi zi liao xuan bian* 古代中越关系史资料选编 [The compilation on the ancient Sino-Vietnamese relations] (Bei jing zhong guo she hui ke xue chu ban she 北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 1982), p. 567.

overland borders, the establishment of fortresses in crucial passes and transportation knots, the curbing and investigation of suspicious persons along the borders and the organisation of merchants or people to establish border towns or villages were the main methods used by Vietnam to control the overland borders as tightly as possible. It was the expansion of the power of the central government to the periphery that lay behind the intensified national security measures.

The expansion is reflected in two aspects. One was to consolidate central power in the whole kingdom by lessening local powers. Actions such as the annihilation of rebellions and pirates, bandits, etc. using indigenous forces and the strengthening of frontier defence by all means were taken with the purpose of concentrating the court's power.

The other aspect was the emergence of political and diplomatic tensions in Sino-Vietnamese relations in border areas. Vietnamese territory advanced northwards via negotiation and compromise under China's frontier policy and the normative tributary system. The Huế court's reinforced jurisdictions on peripheral regions in the frontiers sparked alarm in the Qing even though it continued to maintain normal Sino-Vietnamese tributary relations. The presence of the Nguyễn court in northern Vietnam, especially in Sino-Vietnamese border regions, was the result of the expansion of central power to the periphery.

The consolidation of frontier defence, which utilised local forces in frontier conflicts, was a sign of Vietnam's challenge to China's territorial claims and its attempts to assert

its status as a regional power in overland Southeast Asia and later to expand its influence outside the region as much as possible.

Figure 7: The map of Phong Thu Village



Source from Đại Nam Nhất Thống Dư Đồ 大南一統輿圖 [The atlas of Đại Nam]. Viện Hán Nôm. A.3142

Chapter 7: Conclusion

By the nineteenth century, Sino-Vietnamese relations had experienced an impressive variety of forms. Grounded in different strategies of administration and diplomacy, the distinction between the two countries was manifested in their respective concern for Sino-Vietnamese relations. China's world order fuelled the effort to realise the cosmology rooted in *the Ritual of Zhou*, including the ritual responsibilities of neighbouring kingdoms. However, for Vietnam, how to survive in the shadow of its northern giant, China, how to sustain itself, and how to promote stable development were the principal and essential strategy concerns since Vietnam's territorial separation from China and its establishment of individual administrative domains around the tenth century. Correspondingly, Sino-Vietnamese relations were indispensably marked on both sides by the focus on amalgamation by concession and negotiation until the earlier part of the nineteenth century.

With economic and population growth, a new round of Chinese commercial expansion in Southeast Asia emerged in the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Coupled with Nguyễn's uniting of northern and southern Vietnam, Vietnam played a significant role in the commercial contacts between China and Southeast Asia. The fine-tuning of traditional Sino-Vietnamese relations and a stable administration in the northern regions as a primary part of Vietnam were indispensable ingredients of the trade boom with the Chinese in northern Vietnam in 1802. The tribute trade together

with the tributary system was revived from 1802. The Sino-Vietnamese trade of all sorts pertaining to tributary regulations, and commercial communications facilitated tributary responsibilities such as rescuing wrecked crews, repatriation and extradition of people, and even direct missions to Guangdong on official business. All these were signs of the recovery and promotion of government-to-government commercial contacts between China and Vietnam. By the nineteenth century, the Nguyễn government played an active role in commercial contacts at the government level.

In accordance with active governmental commercial contact, authorised private trade was ebullient in northern Vietnam. Private trade included overland trade across the Sino-Vietnamese frontier, trade further south in Vietnam, and Sino-Vietnamese maritime regions, in the Gulf of Tonkin and further south. Itinerant petty merchants or enterprises, and plying junks were dynamic commercial elements in Vietnam's northern land and sea frontiers. The cross-border or ocean-going trade with the Chinese moving back and forth between China and northern Vietnam acted as an external component of this integrated trade system between northern Vietnam, central Vietnam, and even southern Vietnam. Concurrently, the vitality of Sino-Vietnamese commercial communications in northern Vietnam introduced a new impetus to the Nguyễn kingdom.

The surreptitious commercial network formed by unauthorised traders developed alongside the blossoming of the Huế Court's authorised trade. Assorted smuggling traders who benefited from this bustling Asian commerce became the economic

pioneers who constructed new opportunities or facilities in some regions not easily reached by legitimate trade networks. Large-scale Chinese migration and intermittent bans on maritime trade resulted in the flourishing of smuggling activities. These smugglers were usually pirates, fishermen, or merchants who engaged in unauthorised deals by fraudulent means such as avoiding tax and so on. They became active commercial elements as well as forces that shared in the profits with Vietnam's central government in the waters of south-eastern China and northern Vietnam. Concurrently, by the middle of the nineteenth century, bandits, secret society members and rebels were engaged in smuggling in northern Vietnam. However, the flourishing of commercial trends, such as the overwhelming success of opium in China and Southeast Asia, the outflow of precious metals, and illegal human movement, had changed by the 1830s. It was in this historical context that Vietnam's identity evolved in the eyes of China and Southeast Asia. This process was punctuated by intermittent wrangling and conflicts, and even wars.

The challenges the Nguyễn faced in the process of developing one polity included how to confront unprecedented frontier commercial success and security problems with China, and how to achieve a status that had evolved under the traditional framework of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Internally, it had to establish and differentiate itself as a new dynasty from the south, unlike the former traditional regime that had maintained a northern stronghold.

Huế Vietnam, originating in the south, facilitated the emergence of a national identity that evolved with some new dynamic elements. This meant that Huế had to adopt and adapt, and even improve the previous traditional framework of the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship so as to handle the previous unprecedented problems before Nguyễn Phúc Ánh established the Nguyễn Dynasty in Huế in 1802. Grounded in the practice and experience of coexisting with China, and sustaining the unbalanced relationship with China over several hundred years, Huế chose the more pragmatic and flexible way of endeavouring to obtain more chances such as commerce in inter-governmental contacts with China. It is worth noting that this did not mean the same thing for both sides: for China, Vietnam's deference was the sign of a ritual responsibility; while Vietnam saw the submission or subordination as a means to an end.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Nguyễn actively promoted the tributary Sino-Vietnamese relationship in order to accomplish the dynasty's legitimacy in Vietnam and reorganise commercial communications at the governmental level. The subtext behind the active tributary practice was not only sincere servitude but also commercial demand. The era that exerted the most Chinese influence in Nguyễn Vietnam, cultural or otherwise, was not the most submissive period. The most aberrant events occurred in the 'most Chinese' period under Emperor Minh Mạng, such as Vietnam's criticism of the Opium War in China, the extradition and repatriation of criminals, and even the payment of tribute by sea and so on. The criticism of the Opium

War in China can be attributed to the blocking of the regular Sino-Vietnamese trade routes. The purpose of changing the route for extraditing and repatriating criminals was to create better opportunities for Sino-Vietnamese official trade.

These ‘exceptions’ were due to two factors. On one hand, the Nguyễn endeavoured to reshape the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship by enhancing Vietnamese influence in China’s tributary system. A more stable diplomatic Sino-Vietnamese relationship would offer greater trade opportunities for Vietnam due to Qing’s frontier concerns shifting from the south to middle Asia. On the other hand, the challenge was to find new trade opportunities from the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship to satisfy increasing trade demands. Apart from these exceptions fostered by the Nguyễn, *Như Đông Công Vụ* (going to Guangdong for official business) became a regular activity. *Như Đông Công Vụ* was not explicitly mentioned in Vietnam’s major historical records in Vietnam before the Nguyễn Dynasty was founded. However, it appears frequently in the records of the Nguyễn Dynasty. *Như Đông Công Vụ* definitely included trade in Guangzhou, even though its other purposes or detailed activities were not clearly recorded in Nguyễn dynastic records. These events and activities demonstrated that commercial elements in traditional relationships were not neglected in the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, in terms of Sino-Vietnamese relations, the Nguyễn reign in Vietnam not only obtained the acknowledgment of China, but also more commercial opportunities under China’s tributary system, which was evolving into the

treaty system. Furthermore, Vietnam contributed to the enlargement of Sino-Vietnamese contacts by using tributary obligations as commercial opportunities, since Qing China did not allow direct trade. This paved the way for the transformation from tribute trade to maritime trade and even openly foreign trade, and from a tributary system to a system of equal inter-state relations with the outside world in the colonial era.

In addition, the friendship in the tributary system helped to consolidate Vietnam's legitimacy in China's eyes. Sino-Vietnamese cooperation in exterminating bandits or pirates, routing rebels, extraditing criminals, and rescuing shipwrecks and the like helped to defend militarily and diplomatically the legitimacy of Vietnam's throne as an autonomous state. As for commercial communications, Vietnam obtained more from tribute trade. From the perspective of the Nguyễn, it contributed to the facilitation of normal trade between southeast China and northern Vietnam.

In accordance with diplomatic reform during the reshaping of Vietnam's identity, Huế also endeavoured to reorganise certain domestic elements. Nguyễn regulated authorised trade. Furthermore, the Huế court grasped the most effective tool, the Chinese community in Vietnam, and succeeded in integrating domestic commercial resources. Chinese travelling merchants amassed wealth, and exploited more commercial opportunities in northern Vietnam.

The growing power of the state in Vietnam created both geographical and political changes in Sino-Vietnamese relations, resulting in pressure on the previous local power

groups on the northern frontiers . Coupled with this increasing pressure, smuggling, as defined by the government of Huế, was rampant, particularly on the northern border. Explicit mentions in the Nguyễn official archives demonstrated the solidifying of governance and the growth of commercial resources at the frontier during Vietnam's national emergence. Hand in hand with Chinese commercial developments in Southeast Asia, trade trends shifted in Asia and were followed by the introduction of trade with the West. Forbidden item policies were a sign that the Nguyễn court attempted to maintain and continue its dominant position in domestic commercial resources, and solve its economic problems, such as the shortage of silver and other items, which emerged from the rapid commercial changes in Asia. As for forbidden items, they were not contraband in the strict sense. National demand determined when or to what degree certain goods became a forbidden item. In general, some goods were forbidden either for export or import. Some goods were used to exchange other vital merchandise from foreign merchants. Others could neither be imported nor exported. Also, some goods were not always forbidden goods in certain periods, but were labelled as such in other periods. They also evolved in accordance with Huế's commercial policy and demands.

With regards to Nguyễn's economic responses to the outside world, Chinese traders played an important role in the illegal trade contacts between Vietnam, China and even other regions in Asia for the smuggling of crucial goods such as opium, copper and rice into or out of Vietnam. In this respect, Chinese merchants became the vital bridge in trade that connected Vietnam and China, and even regions in Southeast Asia. Moreover,

Chinese smugglers were a driving force behind the opium deals that engulfed Vietnam and shifts in trade trends as well as the outflow and dearth of precious metals, especially Vietnam's silver and copper. Concurrently, as far as the Nguyễn government was concerned, the Chinese merchants also became a kind of tool to accomplish its political and economic goal of exchanging other important items such as military resources or copper and to solve domestic commercial problems using the contraband policy. Be it the Chinese merchants or the contraband policy, both completed the profit monopolisation of the Nguyễn rulers, and enhanced their expansion of power to some degree. However, the Huế court was incapable of resolving problems that were a result of global commercial expansion. Therefore, the 'forbidden item policy' neither mitigated the impact that the Eurasian commercial exchanges exerted on Vietnam, nor did it provide the Huế Court with a normative way to respond to the world outside Vietnam.

Security was consistently intertwined with commercial development in Vietnam. Security defence on the northern border interacted with commercial activities in Vietnam. Huế was adept in utilising local forces to defend the frontier. The local forces, comprising people such as local fishermen, sojourning Chinese and the like, were the defence force for the government on the northern frontier. However, Vietnam's expansion on the frontier unavoidably created conflicts under the regulations stipulated by the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship. The *Điêu Lộ* An incident is an example of this. Here, we borrow the term 'Sino-Vietnamese asymmetry' from Brantly

Womack's work.¹ Huế indeed applied 'Sino-Vietnamese asymmetry' to serve a purpose, that of enhancing its strength. Qing China's concerns about its internal problems and the inner Asian frontier problem created this opportunity. Vietnam not only seized the opportunity to expand under the Sino-Vietnamese 'politics of asymmetry,' but also changed Nguyễn's frontier ideas on how to review and expand the southern frontier. Vietnam marched into Cambodia and pushed the frontier line further south during the Minh Mạng era. This event made the best footnote even though the march into Cambodia was temporary and Vietnam withdrew its troops in Thiệu Trị.

In earlier periods of the Nguyễn dynasty, the evolution of the identity of Huế Vietnam culminated in the high point of Vietnamese history. It not only gained far more commercial profit than would have been possible in the traditional Sino-Vietnamese relationship, but also succeeded in integrating domestic commercial resources and achieved both a planned and actualised frontier, before the arrival of the French smashed the imperial system.

¹ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam : the politics of asymmetry* (Imprint Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Appendix:

1: *Như Đông Công Vụ* (Going to Guangdong for official business) in the Nguyễn Dynasty

Time	Place	Officials	Vessels	Remarks	Reference
1755	From Guangdong		by Siamese commercial ships		ĐNTL, Chí nh Biên I, Vol. 1, p.10
1789	Guangdong	Trần Thụy Quan 陈瑞观, Chu Văn Yén 朱文燕		Buy something	ĐNTL, Chí nh Biên I Vol. 4, p.14
1796	China	Chu Văn Yén 朱文燕 and others		Buy books and other items	ĐNTL, Chí nh Biên I Vol. 8, p.21
1798	Guangdong		Chinese commercial ships	Inquire about the Le emperor and got the news which Le emperor died and go back	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 10, p.10
1803	China	Lê Quang Định 黎光定		Back from China	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 22, p.25
1805				Send the book to China	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 26, p.22
1805				Buy the marble of Yunnan	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 27, p.6
1806	China	Lương Chân Quan 梁真观 Trương Bảo Thiện 张宝善		Take 3000,000 strings of coppers to buy cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 28, p.11
1808	China		Common commercial	Chinese runners and	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I

			ships	bailiffs go back China by Vietnamese commercial ships	Vol. 34, p. 2
1810	Guangdong	Trương Bảo Thiện 张宝 善, Lữ Hữu Định 吕有定		Took 20,000 <i>liang</i> silver to buy cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 40, p.14
1810	China	Nguyễn Hữu Thận 阮有慎		Come back from China	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 40, p.20
1812	China			Learn Chinese calendar system	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 44, p.1
1812	Guangdong	Trần Chấn 陈震 Nguyễn Hạo 阮皓		Purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 45, p.6
1814	Guangdong	Tạ Bằng Chu 谢鹏周 周泗记 Chu Tứ Kí		Be commissioned to take 10,000 <i>liang</i> silver to purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên I Vol. 48, p.19
1820	China	Quan Vĩnh Phát 关永发		Purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên II Vol. 2, p.3
1820	China	Trần Vĩnh Hữu 陈永 佑, Phan Khắc Kí 潘 克己, Lương Phúc Đông 梁福 全, Vũ Hữu Lễ 武有礼		Purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên II Vol. 3, p.10
1823	Guangdong	Trần Đức Suát 陈德 帅, and Trần		For official business	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên II Vol. 21,

		Chấn Như 陈震如,			p.14
1822	Guangdong	Hồ Văn Khuê 胡文奎, Lê Nguyên Đạm 黎元覃, Hoàng Á Hắc 黄亚黑	Huge and medium “precious junks” 大中宝船	Purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 16, p.1
1827	Guangdong	Lê Nguyên Đạm 黎元覃	“green wave” junks 青波号	For official business	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 46,p.17
1831	Yunnan		By land	Purchase the good horse of Yunnan and gems	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 73, p.5
1832	Guangdong	Nguyễn Đình Khuê 阮廷圭, Đặng Á Dưỡng 邓亚养	No.2 “peace” junks 平字二号	for official business	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 81,p.14
1836	Guangdong	Lý Văn Phúc 李文馥		Return	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 167,p.3
1837	Guangdong	Lê Quang Phúc 黎光馥	“sailing southward” Junks 南行船	for official business	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 181,p.20
1837	Guangdong	Lý Văn Phúc 李文馥	Showed the Chinese officials only the trade certification not official documents	Search the Vietnamese official wrecked ships (floating in Qiongya in Guangdong province).	Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦定大清汇典事例, Vol. 512, p.152 Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 295, p.13-14.

					*p.315 ĐNTL, Chí nh Biên II, Vol. 170, p.24
1839	China	Trương Hào Hợp 张好合 Nguyễn Văn Công 阮文 功 Phan Hiễn Đạt 潘显达		for official business	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên II Vol. 202, p.24
1840	Guangdong	Trương Hào Hợp 张好合 Nguyễn Văn Công 阮文 功		Return	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên II Vol. 214, p.3
1844	Guangdong	Trương Hào Hợp 张好合		Return	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên III Vol. 37, p.13
1844	Guangdong	Đỗ Tuấn Đại 杜峻大	auspicious phoenix 灵 凤 junks	Return	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên III Vol. 45, p.12
1846	Guangdong	Ngô Kim Thanh 吴金 声 and other five officials	Sailed on the Chinese commercial ships	Purchase the cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên III Vol. 58, p.1
1847	Guangdong	Li Tailu, 李 泰陆 and Chinese merchants in Quảng Nam of Vietnam		Be commissioned by the Nguyễn court to Purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên III Vol. 64, p.12
1847	Guangdong	Đỗ Văn Hải 杜文海 Hồ Đức Tuyên 胡得宣	Carried cargos and sailed on the Chinese commercial	Purchase cargos	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên III Vol. 68, p.25

Year	Place	Name	Event	Reference	
1856	China		ships	Be commissioned the Chinese commercial ships to buy cargos (including Chinese goods and western goods)	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên IV Vol. 14, p.40
1863	Guangdong	Trần Như Sơn 陈如山		For official business	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên IV Vol. 28, p.33
1864	Guangdong	Trần Như Sơn 陈如山	Sailed on the Chinese ships	Return	ĐNTL Chí nh Biên IV Vol. 30,p. 5

*:Yun nan sheng li shi yan jiu suo 云南历史研究所. ‘Qing shi lu’ yue nan mian dian tai guo lao wo shi liao zhai chao,《清实录》越南缅甸泰国老挝史料摘抄[The collection of materials related to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma in the veritable records of Qing dynasty]. Yun nan ren min chu ban she 云南人民出版社,1985.

Source from Source from 清实录 qing shi lu, 钦定大清汇典事例 qin ding da qing hui dian shi li, Đại Nam Thực Lục.

2: Extraditing and repatriating criminals

Time	Place	Pirates and bandits	Original place	Officials in charge of sending back	Largess and trade	Reference
1802	Vietnamese waters	Mo Guanfu 莫观扶 and other pirates	China	The officials sent by Nguyễn Phúc Ánh 阮福映	By land	Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, Vol. 102, p.8-11, *p.281

						ĐNTL, Chí nh Bi ên I, Vol. 13, p.1
1802		Zhang Yalu 张亚禄 and other ten pirates; killed Zhengqi 郑七	China		Qinzhou	ĐNTL, Chí nh Bi ên I, Vol. 18, p.5
1802		Yang Qiyuan 杨 七元 and Wu Santong 吴三仝 and other five			Qinzhou	ĐNTL, Chí nh Bi ên I, Vol. 18, p.28
1808	Vietnamese waters	Zhang Ya'er 张 亚二 and Meng Jiansheng 蒙见生 and other thirty five Chinese pirates	China	Tổng Phúc Luong 宋 福梁	Qinzhou	ĐNTL, Chí nh Bi ên I, Vol. 36, p.1
1810	Vietnamese waters	Li Yaqi 李 亚七 and his followers, around 20	China		Qinzhou	ĐNTL, Chí nh Bi ên I, Vol. 40, p.24
1829	Vietnamese waters	Zhong Suhe 钟苏 合 and other five Chinese		Sent back Qinzhou and transferred to Guangzhou		KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.16
1835	Vietnamese waters	Liang Kaifa 梁开 发 and other two	China		Allowed Vietnamese trade in Guangdong	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实 录, Vol.

		pirates		(buy things and sell the ballast)	272, p.5-6. *p.314 Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦定大清汇典事例, Vol. 512, p.151	
1843	Vietnamese waters	Jin Erji 金二纪, Mei Maochun 枚茂春, Pang Longxiu, 庞龙秀 Zhang Shisheng 张石生, Liang Guochao 梁国超, Yan Zhizhong 颜志忠, Xie Yasan 谢亚三, and Kong Fu 孔傅		Truong Hảo Hợp 张好合 and Nguyễn Cư Sĩ 阮居仕 and other Vietnamese officials	Allowed Vietnamese trade in Guangdong (buy things and sell the ballast) without tax	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 395, p.32. *p.321 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.17
1844	Quảng Yên in Vietnam	Huang Yayi, 黄亚裔 Xu Yasi 徐亚四 and Su Bilan 苏笔烂	Guangdong		Sent back Qinzhou in China	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.18
1844	Quảng Yên in Vietnam	Huang Qi, 黄七 Huang Qiyi 黄其益, Li	China			KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.19

		Guang 李 广, Lin, Ya Dai 林亚 带, Yang Wan 杨晚, Xie Yasan, 谢亚三 Su Fa 苏发, Li Yali 黎 亚利, Li Yahua, 李 亚化 Huang Jinwan 黄 进晚, Ya Lin, 亚林 Li Yuanrong 黎元戎				
1845	Tonkin waters in Vietnam	Two Chinese pirates, Chen Yasi 陈亚四 and Wu Yaer 吴亚 二	China , Guangdong	Đỗ Tuấn Đại 杜峻 大, Mai Đ ức Thường 枚德常	sell the ballast by Vietnamese ships without tax	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实 录, Vol. 421, p.5. *p.324 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.19;qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦定大清 汇典事 例, Vol. 513, p.169 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.19
1845	Cao Bằng in Vietnam	Guo Da, 郭 大 Chinese criminal	Longzhou in China		Sent back Taiping Prefecture in China	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.19
1845	Vạn Ninh in Vietnam	Huang Jinxiu 黄进	China		Sent them back	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol.

		秀 and Xu Yasan 许 亚三 and four Chinese pirates' ships		Qinzhou in China	131, p.20
1848	Quảng Yên in Vietnam	Chen Wan, 陈晚 Cao Er 曹二, Peng Yafu 彭亚福, Lin Faxing, 林发兴 Huang Ya'er, 黄 亚二 Huang Jingfu, 黄 敬福 Wu Yaxi, 吴亚 喜 Liang Dong 梁东, Zhang Funing 张 复宁 and other guns, military materials	China	Sent back Qinzhou in China	KĐĐNHD SL, Vol. 131, p.20
1848	Quảng Yên in Vietnam	Ye Yawu 叶亚五 and Yan Yayang 严 亚养 and other one hundred and thirty nine pirates including westerners		Sent back to Qinzhou in China	KĐĐNHD SL, Vol. 131, p.20
1848	Hải Dương in Vietnam	Fifty Chinese pirates		Sent back	KĐĐNHD SL, Vol. 131, p.20

*: Yun nan sheng li shi yan jiu suo 云南历史研究所. ‘Qing shi lu’ yue nan mian dian tai guo lao wo shi liao zhai chao, 《清实录》越南缅甸泰国老挝史料摘抄 [The collection of materials related to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma in the veritable records of Qing dynasty]. Yun nan ren min chu ban she 云南人民出版社, 1985.

Source from 清实录 qing shi lu, 钦定大清汇典事例 qin ding da qing hui dian shi li, Đại Nam Thực Lục, Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điển Sự Lệ.

3: rescuing Chinese shipwrecks

Time	Place	Wrecks name	Wrecks Original place	officials	Largess and commercial activities	Reference
1796	Guangdong in China	Vietnamese who sold rice	Vietnam		Rescued and sent back	Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦定大清汇典事例, Vol. 513, p.164
1798	Guangdong in China		Vietnam	Chinese officials	Rescued by General Governor of Laingguang	ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 10, p.23
1801		Zhao Dashi 赵大仕	Guangdong			ĐNTL, Chính Biên I, Vol. 14, p.36 Ren zong shi lu 仁宗实录, Vol. 88, p.17-18. *p.278
1804	Guangdong in China	Nguyễn Văn Niên 阮文年 and fifty five Vietnamese	Vietnam		Rescued and sent back	Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦

						定大清汇 典事例, Vol. 513, p.165
1804	Quảng Trị and Bình Định in Vietnam	ten Chinese including some merchants	China		Sent back by land	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.9
1804	Quảng Nam, Vietnam	One Chinese commercial ship, thirty four Chinese	Chen Sheng Tai <i>Hang</i> (陈升泰)in Fujian		Sent back by land	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.9
1805	Qinzhou	Khamer: Camboja(真腊)		Chinese officials		ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 27,p.18
1806	Vietnam	Chinese fishermen	Chinese			ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 30,p.9
1806	Vietnam	Chinese fishermen	Chinese	Vietnamese officials	Sent back	ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 30,p.11
1807	Quảng Nghi in Vietnam	One Small official ship and twelve Chinese	Fujian province in China		Sent back by land	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.10
1807	Vietnam	Siamese envoys on the way to pay tribute to China	Siamese	Vietnamese officials	Rescued by Vietnamese officials	ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 31,p.2
1808	Beach near Vietnam's seaport	Nine Chinese. Li Qianzong 李 千总 and Xiao Yuanhou, 萧 元侯 Chinese officials in Taiwan of Fujian province	Chinese		Rescued and sent back China	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.10

1810	Vietnam	Xiao Yuanhou 萧元侯	Chinese , Fujian province	Vietnamese officials		ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 40,p.14
1810	Vietnam		Chinese commercial ships, Haikou			ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 41,p.2
1810	Vietnam	refugee	Chinese		Rescued and sent them back Qinzhou of China	ĐNTL Chính Biên I, Vol. 41,p.13
1814	Phú An	Xu Ningang,许 宁安 Chinese official and his underlying around one hundred and ninety two	Fujian province		Rescued and sent back China by land	KĐĐNHD SL, Vol. 131, p.10
1815	Phú An, Vietnam	Xu Ningang 许 宁安 and Li Zhenshi 李振 示	Chinese, Fujian province			ĐNTL Chính Biên I Vol. 50, p.1
1815	Vietnam	Siamese envoys' ship on the way to pay tribute to China	Siamese			ĐNTL Chính Biên I Vol. 50, p.11
1815	Yazhou, Guangdong province, China	Nguyễn Văn Mân 阮文缙 and other fifty Vietnamese	Vietnamese		Suffered in wrecks When Nguyễn Van Man sent the timbers of Gai Dinh	ĐNTL Chính Biên I Vol. 51, p.13
1816	Hainan , China	Soldiers around ten Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Huang Xingbao 黄 兴宝,	Sent Vietnamese back Bình	ĐNTL Chính Biên I

				Chinese fisherman, Hainan	Họa.	Vol. 52, p.1
1817	Vietnam	Siamese envoys' ship to pay tribute to China	Siamese			ĐNTL Chính Biên I Vol. 55, p.20
1817	Japan	Vietnamese officials	Officials and soldiers	By Japanese merchant ships to China and Chinese officials sent back		Châu Bản Australia National Univesity Reel 3
1817	Phú An, Vietnam	Chinese	Official ships from Fujian		Sent back	Châu Bản Australia National Univesity , Reel 3
1818	Phú An, Vietnam	Weapons of Xu Ning'an 许宁安 and Li Zhenshi, 李振示	Weapons	Trần Chân 陈震, Nguyễn Hữu Nhân 阮佑仁	Sent weapons back China	ĐNTL Chính Biên I Vol. 57, p.12
1820	Nhật Lệ seaport in Vietnam	Li Shengli 黎胜利 For official business	Chinese		Sent back China	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 5, p.7
1820	Xin'ning County in Guangzhou Province in China	Hồ Văn Lộc 胡文禄 and other Vietnamese	Vietnamese soldiers		Rescued and sent back	Châu Bản Australia National Univesity , Reel 6
1821	China		Vietnamese		Rescued	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 27, p.11. *p.294
1821	Vietnam	Yu Xingfa 于	Fishermen	Lê Văn	Rescued	Châu

		兴发 and other fifteen Chinese	in Dan Zhou in Qiong Zhou Prefecture in Guangzhou province	Nhân 黎文仁	and sent back	Bản, Austral ia National Univesity , Reel 9
1822	China	Vietnamese refugee	Vietnamese		Rescued	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 32, p.44. *p.294
1822	Đà Nẵng Vietnam	Wang Kunyuan 王坤元 (go to Taiwan for taking examination)	Chinese, Fujian province		Sent back China and gave him 100 <i>liang</i> silver and other necessities	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 13, p.9
1822	Vietnam	Siam ships	Siamese			ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 13, p.19
1822	Vietnam	Siamese refugee ships	Siamese			ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 14, p.2
1822	Khôi Bích seaport, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam	Lin Changsheng 林长盛	Chinese commercial ship			ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 16, p.27
1822	Khôi Bích seaport, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam	One Chinese ship and five Chinese	Chinese who were suspected to be illegal ship without certification	Nguyễn Văn Vận 阮文运 and Lê Văn Khanh 黎文铿	Rescued	Châu Bản, Austral ia National Univesity , Reel 6
1826	Bình Thuận, Vietnam	British wrecked ships			Sent them to	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol.

					Singapore and returned	48, p.43
1829	Vietnam	Chinese	Guangdong		Approved Vietnamese trade in Guangdong	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 156, p.39-41. *p.295
1829	Vietnam	Fu Fudai 符傅岱	Chinese refugee	Nguyễn Tri Phương 阮知方, Nguyễn Đắc Suất 阮得帅	Sent back and gave him around 140 <i>liang</i> silver	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 57, p.35; Minh Mệnh Chính YếuA57/ 11 ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 63, p.11
1829	Hà Hiên	Huang Daotai 黄道泰 (Chinese official ship to transport the rice to Taiwan)				ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 63, p.11
1831	Bình Định	Chen Qi 陈棨 and others	Fujian province of China		Rescued and sent back China	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131,p.11 ĐNTL
1831	Bình Định, Vietnam	Li Zhenqing 李振青 and forty persons	Chinese former official (had removed from the post)	Lý Văn Phúc 李文馥, Trần Văn Trung 陈文忠, Cao Hữu Dực 高有翼 took “auspicious bird” big junks (瑞鹏大船)	Rescued and sent them back China. Chinese court gave Vietnamese largess and allowed them to sell ballast in Fujian	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 71, p.18-19 xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 197, p.14-17. *p.298 Qin ding

						da qing hui dian shi li 钦 定大清汇 典事例, Vol. 513, p.167
1831	Dian Bai county in Guangdong province , China	Vietnamese raft	Vietnamese		Sent back Vietnam by Chinese officials	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 73, p.21
1833	Trà Sơn waters in Vietnam	Chinese officials and soldiers around seventy (Liang Guodong 梁国 栋 died)	Guangdong in China	Lê Văn Khiêm 黎 文谦 and other Vietnamese officials	Sent back China. Chinese court gave Vietnamese largess and allowed them to sell ballast in Guangdong	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实 录, Vol. 238, p.18-20. *p.305 Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦 定大清汇 典事例, Vol. 513, p.168
1834	Vĩnh Long seaport , Vietnam	Chinese merchant around one hundred	Chinese commercial ships which went to Siam			ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 119,p.20
1834	Khôi Bích seaport, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam	Chen Zilong 陈子龙 and other twenty seven Chinese	Chinese official of Guangdong province	Lý Văn Phúc 李文 馥, Lê Bá Tú 黎伯秀 took “peace” junk (平字号)	Sent back China . Vietnam can trade in Guangdong without tax(sell ballast and buy goods)	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 124,p.24 Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实 录, Vol. 255,

						p.32-33. *p.311 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.11 Qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦 定大清汇 典事例, Vol. 513, p.168
1834	Vietnam	Chinese	Refugee of Guangdong	Lý Văn Phúc 李文 馥, Lê Bá Tú 黎伯秀	Sent back China	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 136,p.21- 22.
1835	Quảng Nghi Vietnam	Cai Tingxiang 蔡廷香 and other passengers	Chinese commercial ship from Fujian province to Taiwan		Sent back China	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 160,p.36, p.37
1836	Bình Định , Vietnam	British around ninety	Westerners	Nguyễn Tri Phuong 阮 知方, Vũ Văn Giải 武文解	Took them to Ha Chau(regio ns near Batavia) and let them go back	ĐNTL Chính Biên II Vol. 176,p.1 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 48, p.44
1837	China		Vietnamese wrecked ships		Rescued and sent back	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实 录,Vol. 294, p.21. *p.314
1841	China		Vietnamese wrecked ships		Rescued and sent back	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实

1843	China		Vietnamese wrecked ships		Rescued and sent back	录, Vol. 348, p.28, *p.318 Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 389, p.35. *p.320
1843	Quảng Nam , Vietnam	Chinese around two hundred	Chinese wrecked ships			ĐNTL Chính Biên III Vol. 27, p.28
1843	Biện Sơn waters, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam	Li Maojie 李茂阶	Chinese warship of Qiongzhou in Guangdong province	Nguyễn Nhược 阮若山	Sent them back Allowed Vietnamese trade in Guangdong without tax (purchase goods and sell the ballast) in 1844	ĐNTL Chính Biên III Vol. 34, p.4 Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 408, p.30-31. *p.323 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.14
1844	Khôi Bích seaport, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam	Seven Chinese ships and one Chinese pirates' ship. Around more than three hundred and fifty			Rescued in Vietnam	KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.14
1844	China		Vietnamese wrecks		Rescued and sent back	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 400, p.19. *p.321

1844	Khôi Bích seaport, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam	seven wrecked patrolling ships	Chinese warship of Qiongzhou in Guangdong province		ĐNTL Chính Biên III Vol. 41, p.15
1845	Tonkin waters in Vietnam	Chinese		Rescued and send back. Vietnam got largess	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 412, p.2-3 *p.324
1847	China	Ryukyu and Vietnamese		Rescued	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 447, p.45. *p.325
1847	Gia Định, Vietnam	Chinese refugee	Chinese from Fujian province	Rescued Chinese and gave them necessities	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 2, p.6
1847	Quảng Bình, Vietnam	One Westerner and Chinese merchants	Guangdong commercial ship		ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 2, p.7
1847	Nghệ An, Vietnam	Chinese	Chinese ships from Guangdong	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 2, p.29
1848	China	Vietnamese wrecked ships		Rescued	Xuan zong shi lu 宣宗实录, Vol. 457, p.7. *p.325
1848	Quảng Bình, Vietnam	Two Chinese ships	Chinese ships from Guangdong	Rescued and bestowed	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV

1849	Wen Chang County of Guangdong, China	Vietnamese	Ship from Bình Thuận		100 <i>string</i> of copper Sent back Vietnam by Chinese	Vol. 4, p.42 ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 5, p.36 ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 5, p.45 Wen zong shi lu 文宗实 录, Vol. 40, p.10-11. *p.327 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.15
1849	Thuận An , Vietnam	Wu Huilin 吴 会麟 and nine followers	Chinese ships	Lê Bá Đĩnh 黎伯挺 and Ngô Văn Ngọ 吴文 午 and other Vietnamese officials by “auspicious swan goose” junk(瑞鸿 大船)	Sent back China. Chinese court gave Vietnamese largess and allowed them to trade inGuangdo ng without tax (purchase cargos and sell the ballast in 1851)	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 5, p.45 Wen zong shi lu 文宗实 录, Vol. 40, p.10-11. *p.327 KĐĐNHĐ SL, Vol. 131, p.15
1850	Thuận An, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	Chinese commercial ships from Guangdong		Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 7, p.33 Wen zong shi lu 文宗实 录, Vol. 39, p.9. *p.327
1851	China	Vietnamese wrecked ships			Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 10, p.4 ĐNTL Chính
1853	Quảng Nam, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	Chinese commercial ships from Fujian		Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 10, p.4 ĐNTL Chính
1854	Thị Nại, Vietnam	Chong Duan 崇端 and	Chinese official	Phan Huy Vĩnh 潘辉	Sent back China	ĐNTL Chính

		Chinese soldiers around two hundred		永		Biên IV Vol. 12, p.30
1855	Phú An , Vietnam	Chinese merchants	One ship from Fujian		Rescued Chinese court rewarded Vietnam in1857	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 14, p.2 Wen zong shi lu 文宗实 录, Vol. 228, p.15.*p.3 29qin ding da qing hui dian shi li 钦定大清 汇典事 例, Vol. 513, p.169
1855	Bình Thuận, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	One ship from Guangdong		Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 14, p.2
1855	Thuận An , Vietnam	Chinese official ship	Intend to go to Qiongzhou		Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 14, p.14
1855	Thị Nại, Vietnam	Chinese official ship	For official business		Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 14, p.14
1855	Quảng Nam, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	Two Chinese commercial ships		Rescued and gave them necessities	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 14, p.24

1856	Vĩnh Long, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	One Chinese commercial ship from Guangdong	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 16,p. 7
1856	Hong Kong , China	six Vietnamese refugee	Gia Định of Vietnam	Send back Vietnam	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 16, p.31
1856	Bình Định, Vietnam	Chinese merchant	Yu Qing 裕庆 Ship	Exemption of tax	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 17, p.16
1856	Phú An , Vietnam	Twenty Chinese merchants	From Qiongzhou	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 17, p.17
1856	Hà Tĩnh, Vietnam	Chinese Fishermen	Chinese fishermen	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 17, p.31
1856	Qianzhou, China	Nguyễn Văn Thành 阮文诚 and other seven Vietnamese	From Bình Thuận	Send back Vietnam	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 17, p.33
1856	Quảng Nam, Vietnam	Eight westerners and eight Chinese			ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 17, p.40
1856	Đại Chiêm waters , Quảng Nam Vietnam	Chinese merchants	Chinese commercial ship	Exemption of tax	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 17, p.43
1856	Quảng Nam, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	From Guangdong	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV

1857	Quảng Nam, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	One ship From Chaozhou	Rescued	Vol. 17, p.45 ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 18, p.5
1857	Nghệ An, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	Ship from Chaozhou	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 18, p.5
1858	Thừa Thiên waters, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	From Fujian	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 20, p.4
1858	Quảng Nghi , Vietnam	Chinese merchants	From Guangdong	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 20, p.4
1858	Quảng Trị, Vietnam	Chinese merchants	Fujian	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 20, p.44
1863?	Bình Định, Vietnam	Western merchants	Western	Rescued and arranged them to take Chinese ships back	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 28, p.5
1863	Bình Định, Vietnam	Huang Tingguang 黄廷光	Chinese patrolling ships	Rescued	ĐNTL Chính Biên IV Vol. 29,p. 48

*: Yun nan sheng li shi yan jiu suo 云南历史研究所. 'Qing shi lu' yue nan mian dian tai guo lao wo shi liao zhai chao, 《清实录》越南缅甸泰国老挝史料摘抄 [The collection of

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4: Natural disaster in Bắc Kỳ

	HURRI-CANE	FLOOD	DROUGHT	EARTHQUAKE	FAMINE	GRASSHOPPER	HAILSTONE	PLAGUE AND OTHERS	REFERENCE /PAGE
1803			√						QSDB. P.26
1804		√		√			SEVERE FROST		QSDB. P.38,P.46
1806						√			
1807			√						QSDB. P.60
1809					√				QSDB. P.66
1811			√						QSDB. P.72
1812			√						QSDB. P.76,P.78
1813	√								QSDB. P.84
1814		HEAVY RAIN							QSDB. P.86
1816			√	√	T				QSDB.

					H A N H H Ó A				P.88,P.91, P.92
1819	√	HEA VY RAIN							QSDB. P.100 ĐNTL, I,VOL.39 P.10
1820					√				QSDB. P.108, QSDB. P.110
1823			√						QSDB. P.139,ĐNTL II,VOL.23 P.12
1824			√						QSDB. P.144
1827					√				QSDB. P.170
1828							FIRE AND BANK COLLAP SE		QSDB. P.178
1829	THA NH HÓA								ĐNTL,II VOL.61 P.19
1830		√					√		QSDB. P.194, ĐNTL II,VOL. 68 P.31

1831			√			√		FIRE	QSDB P.203,P. 206, P. 207
1832			√			√			QSDB. P.217,P.223
1833		SEVE RE	√		√				QSDB. P.230, P.234.ĐNTL, II,VOL.100 P.17, VOL.101 P.6; VOL.106 P.18, VOL.110,P3-4
1834		√							ĐNTL, II VOL.126 P.2
1835				√	√				QSDB. P.274,P.276
1838	THA NH HÓA	HEA VY RAIN	HÀ TĨNH	BẮC NINH				HEAVY PLAGUE	QSDB. P.278,P.280 ,P.281 P.284,P.288
1840	√	HEA VY RAIN	NGH Ệ AN					BANK COLLAP SE	291,ĐNTL II,VOL.218 P.30
1841	√	√	√			√			QSDB. P.354,P. 356

									P. 358,P.362
1844	BẮC NINH						BẮC NINH		QSDB. P.371,P.373
1846			√				BẮC NINH	√	QSDB. P.378,P.380 P.381
1847	√	HEA VY RAIN							QSDB. P.387,P.390
1848							BẮC NINH AND HÀ NỘI		ĐNTL, IV VOL.2 P.14,24
1848		HEA VY RAIN					FIRE IN HƯNG AN, THANH HÓA		ĐNTL, IV,VOL.12 P.3,7
1850		√							ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 5, P.27
1852	HÀ TỈNH						FIRE IN NGHỆ AN AND HÀ NỘI		ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 8, P.18 P.30
1854	LẠNG SƠN	HEA VY RAIN	SƠN TÂY			BẮC NINH,			ĐNTL, IV,VOL.10 P.19-20 VOL.11

						C A O B Ã N G			P.5-6, P.14
1855		HEA VY RAIN	LẠ N G SƠN			L Ạ N G SƠN			ĐNTL, IV,VOL.12 P.38 ĐNTL, IV,VOL.13 P.14
1856		√							ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 15,P.2
1857	HẢI DƯƠNG	HƯ NG HÓA	√						ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 17 P.13, 17,18, 26
1859								FIRE IN QUẢNG BÌNH, THANH HÓA	ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 21, P.17
1860	BÌNH ĐỊNH								ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 22,P.25
1861	THA								ĐNTL,

	NH HÓA, HÀ TỈNH AND NAM ĐỊNH							IV,VOL. 25, P. 7,9
1862	THA NH HÓA							ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 27, P.16
1863		√						ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 28,P.39
1864	√	√			√			ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 29,30 P.7, 22, P.14
1865		QUẢ NG BÌNH				K H A N H H Ó A		ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 32,33 P.25,31
1866	QUẢ NG NAM					√		ĐNTL, IV,VOL. 34, P.24

									VOL.35, P P.2
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Source from Phan Thúc Trực 潘叔直. Quốc Sử Di Biên 国史遗编 [A transmitted compilation of the dynasty's history]. Xiang gang zhong wen da xue wen hua yan jiu suo 香港中文大学新亚研究所.Hong Kong New Asia Institute, 1965. Trương Đăng Quế 张登桂. Đại Nam Thực Lục 大南实录[Primary compilation of the Veritable Records of Imperial Vietnam]. Tokyo, 1963. Chính Biên

5: Weighted provincial distribution of floods in different dynasty(Only provinces having recorded floods are mentioned Note: N=Number WP=Weighted percentage)

Yuan Dynasty

PROVINCE	N	WP
TOTAL	57	9.75
SOUTH		
KIANG SI	16	2.86
HUNAN	13	1.96
FUKIAN	9	2.02
KWANGTUNG	7	1.15
KWANGSI	8	1.31
YUNNAN	4	4.5

Ming Dynasty

PROVINCE	N	WP
TOTAL	182	21.71
SOUTH		

KIANG SI	30	3.83
HUNAN	27	2.91
FUKIAN	27	4.34
KWANGTUNG	29	3.41
KWANGSI	29	3.40
YUNNAN	30	42.40

Qing Dynasty

PROVINCE	N	WP
TOTAL	145	12.93
SOUTH		
KIANG SI	52	4.93
HUNAN	3	0.24
FUKIAN	0	
KWANGTUNG	50	4.37
KWANGSI	30	2.61
YUNNAN	6	0.36

Weighted provincial distribution of droughts in different dynasty
(Only provinces having recorded droughts are mentioned
Note: N=Number WP=Weighted percentage)

Yuan Dynasty

PROVINCE	N	WP
TOTAL	34	10.75
SOUTH		
KIANG SI	5	1.86

HUNAN	9	1.97
FUKIAN	3	1.41
KWANGTUNG	6	2.06
KWANGSI	8	2.72
YUNNAN	3	0.70
KWEICHOW	0	

Ming Dynasty

PROVINCE	N	WP
TOTAL	115	25.23
SOUTH		
KIANG SI	20	4.65
HUNAN	23	4.51
FUKIAN	27	7.89
KWANGTUNG	8	1.71
KWANGSI	11	2.35
YUNNAN	23	3.34
KWEICHOW	3	0.78

Qing Dynasty

PROVINCE	N	WP
TOTAL	88	31.13
SOUTH		
KIANG SI	18	1.69
HUNAN	2	15.88

FUKIAN	0	
KWANGTUNG	44	3.82
KWANGSI	15	9.07
YUNNAN	6	0.35
KWEICHOW	3	0.32

Resource from: Yao Shan-Yu: The Geographical Distribution of Floods and Droughts in Chinese History, 206B.C.-A.D.1911 in *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.4.(August.,1943), Table IV and V. Southern part.

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