Chapter Three

Strategic and Economic Role of Foreigners in Nguyen-Trinh War, 1613-1672

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

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and the Break with the North

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

allegiance to the Le Court. This was similar to the practice of leaving behind family members as a form of 'hostage' in state-to-state diplomacy in China, particularly during the Warring States period and also like 'Sankin Kotai' system in Japan[1] To his advantage, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was also the only son of Nguyen Hoang's first wife, Madam Nguyen Thi.[2] The *Tien Bien* also portrayed him as his father's favourite.

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

Though it was not the practice for the position of governorship to be succeeded hereditarily, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's succession to his father's position of Governor of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam received approval from the Le Court. *Tien Bien*, the Southern Annals, describes the arrival of an envoy from the Le Emperor to convey condolences to the family on the death of Nguyen Hoang. The same envoy also announced the appointment of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to the rank of Thai Bao Quan Cong (Commander with the rank of Quan Cong) and confirmed

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[1] For a brief biography of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's brothers, see *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien* (hereafter *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*), Vol. 2: 2-8.
[2] *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. I: 3.
[3] *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (hereafter *Tien Bien)*, Vol. 1: 24.
[4] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 13-14.

his appointment as governor for the two provinces.[5] However, the northern Annals of *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* is silent on his appointment and merely recorded the death of Nguyen Hoang.[6]

At the time of his ascension to power, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was already 51 years old. An experienced leader in both military and administrative matters, Phuc Nguyen had been the administrator of the strategically important Quang Nam province for ten years. Under his administration, the province prospered. The port of Hoi An which served as the major entrepôt on the Indochina peninsula during this period, attracted merchants from China, Japan and insular Southeast Asia. Apart from that, Quang Nam was also the richer of the two provinces under the Nguyen's control.[7]

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's first task upon succeeding his father was in re-organising the administration of the provinces. He noted that his father had governed the two provinces by concentrating power in his own hands, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen believed that such a personal style of administration had serious limitations. This style of governance was no longer suited to administer a large territory. Under Nguyen Hoang's personalised rule, many urgent matters were

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[5] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 2a.

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

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

neglected. Evidence of this is the lack of an up-to-date land-tax registry in 1586 for the two provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam.[8]

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

Since then, the Tam Ty became the standard administrative body in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. Even with these reforms in the administrative structure, Nguyen's rule was still very much militarily-oriented. Christoforo Borri, the Jesuit priest who was living in southern Vietnam from 1618 to 1621, commented that the Nguyen normally "dispatched all their affairs more readily, rather according to the martial law [sic]".[9] This view is also shared by Nola Cooke who commented that the early Nguyen ruled southern Vietnam in a military fashion.[10]

When Nguyen Phuc Nguyen succeeded his father as governor of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam, he inherited a territory of considerable size. The territory stretched from Quang Binh in the north down to Phu Yen in the south, covering a length of around 300 kilometres. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen also continued most of

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[8] See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 14a.

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

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

his father's policies. At the same time, he began to build up an effective military machinery.

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

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

As a provincial governor, it was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's duty to ensure that taxes were collected annually to be sent to the central government. When Nguyen Hoang was sent to govern Thuan Hoa in 1558, his responsibilities included the sending of taxes to the Le government.[11] The *Phu Bien Tap Luc* for instance, provided us with a picture of the amounts to be collected from each of the counties in Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. The taxes were generally divided into

[11] *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 6.

two main categories, namely the poll tax and income tax.[12] These taxes were collected based on a registry that was updated every three years.[13]Between the two provinces, Quang Nam contributed more largely because it had a larger population.

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

Northern sources including the *Phu Bien Tap Luc* placed the blame for the Nguyen's 'revolt' on Dao Duy Tu, one of those who came into Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's service. Tu was a failed candidate in the Le public examinations. He became later a social outcast. He had wandered to the south and offered his services to Nguyen Phuc Nguyen who took him into his employment.[15] Dao Duy Tu only entered Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's service in 1625 but his arrival was timely to the Nguyen. A native of Thanh Hoa, the same province as the Nguyen family, Tu was said to have a good knowledge concerning war strategies. He was also a master elephant trainer.[16] It was probably at his suggestion that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen moved his headquarters from Ai Tu slightly further south to Phuc An in

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

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

[14]See *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

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

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

Quang Dien in 1626.[17] The move was an attempt to shield the Nguyen family from any eventual attack of the Trinh as Ai Tu was too close to the north.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An examination of the rich resources amassed by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen since 1613 also demonstrates how he had harboured the desire to be free from Trinh control prior to 1627. A year after the restructuring of the Tam Ty, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen ordered his treasurer (Lenh Su Ty) to begin collecting various commodities and goods. Among other things, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen purchased and stockpiled large quantities of copper brought in by ships from Fujian, Guangdong and Japan.[21] At the same time, he also began to stockpile gold leaves. It was reported that at one point, there was as much as 90,000 leaves of gold being

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[19] "Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to the King of Japan", June, 1604, as cited in *Nam Phong Tap Chi*, No. 54, December 1921, p. 203. The letter is not included in the *Gaiban Tsuusho So Mokuroku* but is part of the collection in *Gu Shi Rei Wan*.
[20] "Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to Governor of Nagasaki", *Gaiban Tsuusho So Mokuroku*, Vol. 13: 119.
[21] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4.

made and stored in Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's warehouses.[22] Other goods that were also sought after by the Nguyen were silver, iron ore, bee wax, incense (fragrant) oil, elephant tusks, rattan mat, honey, olive, calambac and eaglewood. All these goods were important resources[23] that would allow him to (by hindsight but can plan to be more independent) take a stronger and more independent position vis-à-vis the Trinh.

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

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

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[22] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4b.

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

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

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

The threat of the Trinh materialised a year later when Trinh Tung supported Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's two younger brothers, Hiep and Trach to overthrow Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. The attempt was foiled but not before the two brothers had taken control of the granary at Ai Tu. The two brothers were persuaded to give up their fight against Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. Both died in prison soon after.[26] At the same time, Trinh Tung brought a force of 5,000 soldiers to the borders at Nhat Le River mouth.[27] It was after this episode that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen made the decision not to send tax returns to the Le government as he considered it hostile.

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

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

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[26] See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 5b. See also *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22. The incident however, is not recorded in the *Toan Thu*.
[27] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 5a.
[28] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 8a.
[29] *Tien Bien,* Vol. 2: 10.
[30] See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: and *PBTL,* Vol. 1: 22-23.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's open defiance against the Trinh coupled with the consolidation process undertaken by him in the region, both militarily and economically, made Trinh Trang suspicious of him. This prompted Trinh Trang to act and in 1627 issued an ultimatum to the Nguyen to pay taxes to the Le government in the form of goods for a tribute mission to China.[31] Trinh Trang had placed an army of 5,000 at the region bordering Thuan Hoa on ready alert and sent in his envoy to demand the taxes. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was also asked to present himself at the Le Court at Thang Long. In addition, the emissary brought a request from Ngoc Tu, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's sister who was married to Trinh Tung, asking for the children of Hiep and Trach, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's two brothers who had rebelled against him.[32] All these requests were rejected by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. He scorned at the idea of the Le court continued in sending a tribute to a Ming China that was weakened by internal strife and Manchu invasion.[33]

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rejection of Trinh Trang's ultimatum led to an attack from the Trinh in April of 1627. A battle broke out at Nhat Le. Although significantly superior to the Nguyen forces, the Trinh army was nevertheless forced to retreat on Trinh Trang's order. There were two reasons why the Trinh forces withdrew. One was that there were rumours of a conspiracy to oust Trinh

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

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

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

Trang in Thang Long.[34] The northern Annals of *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* however, reports that the Trinh forces suffered battle loses and were forced to retreat.[35] This second explanation is perhaps more probable.

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

Even though the decision to break with the North seems unavoidable, especially in the light of family feuds between the Nguyen and the Trinh, the Nguyen were actually in a disadvantaged position. The break brought with it a number of negative consequences. First, there was the problem of legitimising Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's act of defiance against the central government which was an act of treason against the Le Court. There is no reference in the northern annals branding Nguyen Phuc Nguyen as traitor. But a map, believed to be drawn in the north in 1645, marks out the 'grave of the treacherous Nguyen' or 'Binh Nguyen'. The map is part of the *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do* which was probably made for the Trinh's military campaigns against the Nguyen.[38] This condemnation was to

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[34] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 11b. Le Thanh Khoi subscribed to this argument of rumours of revolt in the Red River Delta which had prompted Trinh Trang to retreat. See Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Vietnam*, p. 247.
[35] *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.
[36] *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.
[37] In the words of the *Tien Bien*, what the Trinh did was an act of treason. The Nguyen used this as their justification in breaking with the Trinh.
[38] See *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do*, p. 73 in *Tien Dai Van Tam*, collection of the Societe Asiatique in Paris, MS SA 2123.

trouble the Nguyen for years to come. The question of loyalty had indeed affected many who were in the Nguyen's service. From the time of his succeeding to his father's position, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was already being challenged by some of his own family members, in particular by two of his brothers, Nguyen Phuc Hiep and Nguyen Phuc Trach. They contacted Trinh Tung offering to assist the Trinh army to enter Thuan Hoa in order to overthrow Nguyen Phuc Nguyen.

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

was 29,040 and 86,680 in 1777.[39] Around the same period, the estimated population of Trinh North stood at 4,769,050 in 1634 to 1643, and grew to around 6,471,300 in 1730s.[40]

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

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

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[39] Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 29.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 171.
[41] The incident is merely mentioned by *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6; while Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* provides more information including the name of the Nguyen officer in charge of the troops, see *PBTL*, Vol. 1:22. The fort is also named as Ba Huu Fort, guarding the approaches of the River Cam Lo. See *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do*, p. 63 in *Tien Dai Van Tam*, collection of the Societe Asiatique in Paris, MS SA 2123.

Quy Hop and other tribes. He decided to settle some people and left a garrison of troops at the place and called it Ai Lao dinh".[42]

With all these difficulties, it became necessary for Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to garner sufficient support from those in his service as well as those who dwelled within his jurisdiction in order to strengthen his hold on power. At the same time, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen also had to utilize the best possible means to extract benefits controlling the various groups of people including uplanders that he was in contact with. It is with these needs in mind that the Nguyen began to look to external relations as a means to overcome the three major difficulties mentioned above.

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

[42] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6.
[43] See previous chapter's discussion on Nguyen-Japan relations.

long. It is in this light that a new dimension emerged in the Nguyen's dealings with external factors, whereby the Nguyen began to take on the role thus far reserved for the Le Court.

The open conflict between the Nguyen and the Trinh had actually thrust Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and his successors into a situation where they had to develop policies that ensured their survival against the Trinh. These policies involved engaging with foreigners and foreign countries. The following three sections will examine the manner in which the Nguyen dealt with foreigners during the Nguyen-Trinh War period.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen: The Strengthening of Defence

Between 1627 and 1672, there were a total of seven major battles between the Nguyen and the Trinh and these took place in the following years: 1627, 1633, 1643, 1648, 1655, 1662, and 1672.[44] With the exception of the battles that took place in 1627 and 1648, the initiator of these wars was Trinh. Trinh regarded the Nguyen, a renegade group breaking away from central control. Successive Trinh Lords attacked the Nguyen to bring them back under control. Battles normally took place at the region of Nhat Le River which became the de facto demarcation line between the two sides.

The first attack launched by the Trinh against the Nguyen took place in 1627. The Trinh Lord, Trinh Trang led an army to the banks of the Nhat Le River, but after repeated attacks, the Trinh army still could not break through the

[44] *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22 & 23, see also *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (ed. Chen Chingho, hereafter *Toan Thu*), Vol. 18, p. 939.

Nguyen's defences. Logistical problems and the heavy toll exacted on his men forced Trinh Trang to withdraw his army.

Immediately after surviving the first attack, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen put his defensive plans into operation. Using the Nhat Le River as a natural barrier and the first line of defence, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen began to construct a fort in 1630 that would serve as a second defence line against Trinh attacks. The fortified line, named Truong Duc, was completed in 1631. It stretched from the sea at Nhat Le River mouth to the mountains on the west. In the later part of 1630, a force was sent to occupy Nam Bo Chinh Chau, the strip of land on the northern banks of Nhat Le River beyond the Truong Duc fort. From this newly occupied land Nguyen Phuc Nguyen took over the official granary, collected revenue and conscripted the people from that area for his army.

In 1631, he constructed another fortified line called Dong Khoi, by again linking the mountain range on the west down to Nhat Le River mouth. After the completion of these defence works, a census was taken in order to determine taxes and the resources available for conscription into the army.[45] The preparations reflected the grim reality of Nguyen's military strategy and his attempt to address his lack of soldiers by constructing fortifications. The security of these forts was very strictly enforced. In the preface to a map believed to have been drawn in 1645 in the north for the use of the Trinh against the Nguyen, it was reported that security was extremely tight on these fortifications. Passwords were issued and

[45] Most of the information regarding Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's defence preparation are found in *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 22-23, see also *Tien Bien*, Vol 2: 15-17. The war between the Trinh and the Nguyen is the subject of Leopald Cadiere's "Le Mur de Dong Hoi", *BEFEO*, 1905.

were changed every ten days.[46] Apart from serving as a bulwark against Trinh attacks, the two walls also effectively cut the Nguyen domains from the north. The Jesuit, Father Alexander de Rhodes related in his account how due to the 'great wall separating the two kingdoms' that he was not able to cross over into Tonkin in 1644.[47]

While defence works were being carried out, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen turned his attention to strengthening other aspects of his defence. For this, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen relied strongly on two aspects in foreign relations. The acquisition of arms and war technology was one aspect. The second was a renewed engagement in international trade. While the former was directly linked to the needs of the war, the latter was aimed at strengthening Nguyen's economic position. However, both were inextricably linked as trade was a channel to procure arms and ammunition.

Among other things, Nguyen Hoang and Nguyen Phuc Nguyen began to rely on their long standing relations with the Japanese Tokugawa Government. In 1628 he sent a series of letters to the Tokugawa Shogunate to implore the latter not to trade with the Trinh north. The Japanese responded immediately by imposing a ban on Japanese merchants dealing with the Trinh.[48] No reason was given as to why the Tokugawa Shogunate agreed to the Nguyen request. However, it is likely that the Japanese had probably favoured the Nguyen over the

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[46] Preface to *Thien Nam Thi Tu Lo Do* (MS SA 2123).
[47] Alexander de Rhodes, *Rhodes of Vietnam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes in China and Other Kingdoms of the Orient*, Solenge Hertz (trans.), Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1966, p. 119.
[48] Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 65.

Trinh. This is evident from the greater number of Japanese ships visiting Nguyen Southern Vietnam compared to those travelling to the Trinh north.[49]

From 1627 to the end of his rule in 1635, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen continued to remind the Japanese Government of this understanding. The year of his death coincided with the end of Japanese trade overseas after the Tokugawa Shogunate imposed a ban on such activities. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's calls to the Japanese Government to ban trading with Tongking reflected the pragmatism of the Nguyen in utilising foreign relations in order to ensure his own survival.

To better understand trade as a strategy in war, one must realise that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's preoccupation with trade had began long before the 1627 break with the north. As governor of Quang Nam since 1603, he developed the province through the promotion of overseas trade, especially via the port of Hoi An. The 1627 break and the subsequent Trinh military threat further encouraged Nguyen Phuc Nguyen in his engagement with foreign traders as a means to strengthen the Nguyen's economy as well as an avenue for the procurement of arms and ammunitions needed against the Trinh.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's preoccupation with the promotion of trade is evident from the manner he was personally involved in the trading activities. The Jesuit Christoforo Borri reported that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen held the monopoly for Calambac (Gaharu) wood trade in southern Vietnam.[50] In 1632, he added the

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[49] See Table 2 in Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 62 for the number of Red Seal ships travelling from Japan to Nguyen south or Trinh north. It is also necessary to point out that the Trinh only established relations with Japan in 1624, but the contact was abruptly terminated by the Japanese who felt slighted when in one of the Trinh letter sent in 1627, which betrayed a condescending attitude towards the Japanese King, "Ten bolts of silk granted to the Japanese King". See Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 61, fn. 11.

[50] Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. D2.

trading of pepper, sandalwood and birdnests to his monopoly by asking his officials to buy up the supply of these commodities in the markets.[51] For the militarily-weaker Nguyen, the only way to garner wealth and military technology was through trade and external contact. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen understood the situation, and participated whole heartedly in the promotion of this trade.

The promotion of trade owed much to a mechanism that was aimed at regulating it and to a system of collecting duties introduced by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen in 1603. According to Le Quy Don, when the trade season began during the first month of the year, the Harbour Master cum Treasurer would go to the port of Hoi An to have foreign language interpreters advise troops in order to guard the two entry points at Cu Lao Cham and Tourane.[52] On arrival, the captain and the supercargoes of foreign ships would go to Hoi An to present the list of cargo and to obtain the Nguyen's protection to bring ships into the harbour. Le Quy Don found out that the procedures were very strict as the Nguyen were very concerned about smuggling. Any omission from the lists was considered an offence. It was only after the lists had been approved that the ships were allowed to carry out trading activities at Hoi An.[53] Gifts were normally given by the captains to the officials who were involved in the inspection. For ships coming from China, for instance, the harbour master would receive three katies of tea,

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[51] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 22.
[52] *PBTL*, Vol. 4: 35; Christoforo Borri also mentioned the existence of these two entry points to Hoi An which were three or four leagues distance from one another. Borri used Pullu Chiampello for Cu Lao Cham. See Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. D2. See "Thomas Bowyear's Narrative", in A. Lamb, Mandarin Road to Old Hue, p. 46. Bowyear called the interpreters *Lingua*.
[53] *PBTL*, Vol. 4: 35.

with the lower ranking officials receiving one kati, and half a kati for those in the lowest category.[54]

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's southern Vietnam was especially blessed with commodities that generally commanded good prices and were very much in demand. The southern Vietnamese also had the important aloewood, much valued by Buddhist and Muslim communities in Southeast and East Asia for use in funeral ceremonies.[55]

Christoforo Borri, the Italian Jesuit who lived in southern Vietnam during Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's time, mentioned that southern Vietnamese were sending silk to Japan and the kingdom of Laos where they were being carried into Tibet. According to Borri, the silk were not so fine and delicate, yet it was stronger than that produced in China. At least five types of silk were produced in Nguyen Southern Vietnam, namely, yellow silk, spun silk fabric, damask silk, thin damask silk and ba xi silk.[56]

Apart from natural resources and jungle produce, the Nguyen domain also produced several types of cash crops. Among the specially cultivated crops grown for export were pepper, clove, cotton, sugar and benzoin. The latter is a type of resin of the styrax benzoin, used for making incense. During 1630, at least 270 tonnes of benzoin were exported after it was brought in from the Mekong Delta.

Even though Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's personal involvement in trading activities was important and subsequent Nguyen rulers also engaged in private

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[54] *PBTL*, Vol. 4: 36.
[55] Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. D2.
[56] Ibid., p. D. The silk were produced in the Quang Nam area, see *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi*, Quang Nam, Vol. 5: 58.

trade activities, the bulk of the state's income was actually derived from the imposition of import and export tariffs. In relation to this, Nguyen Southern Vietnam benefited from what is known as the 'Age of Commerce' that saw Southeast Asia becoming the hub for East-West international trading. Hoi An, Nguyen's principal port became an integral part of the shipping route linking East and West.[57]

Table 4: Commodities Traded at Hoi An and Nguyen Southern Vietnam with Countries of Origins

Country	Products
Japan	copper, petre, silk,
China	porcelain and ceramic wares, books, silk and clothing, tea.
Siam	Petre, sapan, lac, necarie, elephant tusk, tin, lead, rice
Cambodia	Bejamin, camboia, carldamons, wax, lac, necarie, coyalaca, sapanwood, dammar, buffalo's hides. deer skins and nerves, elephant tusks, rhinoceros' horns, rice
Batavia	Silver, brimstone, petre, coase bastaes, red and white, vermilion
Manila	Silver, brimstone, sapan, cowries, tobacco. Wax, deer nerves
Malacca and Malay Peninsula	Pepper, elephant tusks, lac, calambac,
Borneo	Elephant tusks, bird nests, sapanwood

Source: Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asian Studies, 1998, p. 77, *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 4: 33-35, Christoforo Borri, *Cochin China*, p.D

Under Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, Hoi An, the principal port became an entrepot for ships from various parts of the world. The prosperity of Quang Nam is attributed to the fact that Hoi An was a commercial centre favoured with close connections with the various ports in Southeast Asia. For instance, pepper came from Palembang, Pahang and its adjacent districts, camphor from Borneo, and

[57] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia During the Age of Commerce*, Vol. II, p. 1.

sapan wood, elephant tusks, birds nests, lacquer and calambac from other places. Malay traders had frequented the coast of Vietnam since the seventh century. They were the prime movers behind the Vietnam-Malay world trade given that the Vietnamese did not develop seagoing vessels until late 18th century.[58] Even though there is very little information available regarding Malay traders trading in Hoi An, the *Tien Bien* mentions the presence of traders from Malacca in the Nguyen ports. In 1630 the Nguyen envoy to the Le Court reported that the Nguyen domains was frequented by visitors from Macao and Malacca which he described as being the vassals of the western countries.[59]

Apart from the goods from abroad, ports like Hoi An were also well supplied by inland networks. Goods from the highlands were being brought into Cam Lo from places as far as Tran Ninh, Quy Hop, Luu Hoan and even Ban Thuong, all on the western part of the highlands beyond the Nguyen boundary. This was an old trade network that could be traced to as early as 1621. From Cam Lo, the goods were then brought to be sold at either Thanh Ha market near Phu Xuan or at Hoi An.[60]

It was during Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rule that Chinese traders were able to leave China and began to travel abroad in great numbers. This was following the lifting of the ban on overseas travel by Emperor Mu Tsung of the Ming

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[58] W. J. M. Buch, "La Compagnie des Indes Nederlandaise et l'In Indochine", *BEFEO*, Vol. XXXVII, 1937, p. 158. See also Nguyen The Anh, "Indochina and the Malay World: A Glimpse on Malay-Vietnamese Relations to the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *Asia Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, June 1996, pp. 105-131; and Danny Wong Tze Ken, "The Malay World and Indochina: Malay World as Seen from Vietnamese Source, Changing Perception", *Sejarah*, No. 9, 2001, pp.107-131.
[59] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 17. However, the actual origins of these traders from Malacca is not mentioned.
[60] Do Bang, "The Relations and Patterns of Trade between Hoi An and the Inland", *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p. 151.

Dynasty in China in 1567. According to Zhang Xie's *Dong Xi Yang Kao*, Chinese traders already frequented ports which were under the control of the Nguyen at the beginning of the 17th Century. The principal ports were Thuan Hoa (Dinh Cat), Quang Nam (Hoi An), Tan Chau (Qui Nhon) and De-Di (most likely at Binh Dinh).[61] The Chinese' trade in southern Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia was to acquire the much sought after spices such as pepper, sugar and other goods that were considered exotic by the Chinese. The Chinese were also interested to sell their porcelain and ceramic wares, books, silk and clothing.

As a result of their frequenting of the Nguyen domain, many Chinese also settled in various parts of Nguyen Southern Vietnam. They established settlements with their principal settlement called Dai Minh Khach Thuoc Thanh Ha Pho (The Town of Thanh Ha of the Chinese Residents of the Great Ming) at Huong Tra, on the bank of the Perfume River near Phu Xuan, commonly known as Ming Huong Xa.[62]

Apart from the Chinese, the Nguyen also continued to trade with Japan. Even though the ban on overseas trade was lifted in Japan in 1567, trading activities between China and Japan were still very small. Conscious of the outflow of silver and precious metal from China to Japan, the Chinese Government put this direct trade under close scrutiny. Likewise, the Japanese Government was also cautious about an all-out trade with China for the same reason, for fear of massive outflow of silver. Due to restrictions on the direct trade

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[61] See *Dong Xi Yang Kao*, Vol. 1: 19. See also Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi An (Faifo)*, Carbondale, Center for Vietnamese Studies, Southern Illinois University, 1974, p. 9.

[62] For a study on the establishment of Minh Huong Xa, see Nguyen Thien Lau, "La Formation et l'Evolution du Village de Minh-Huong (Faifo)", *BAVH*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1941, pp. 359-367. See also Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi An (Faifo)*, pp. 35-55.

link, Chinese and Japanese traders used Hoi An and possibly other Vietnamese ports as the points of exchange for acquiring each other's goods.[63]

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's administration of southern Vietnam also coincided with the height of the Japan Red Seal trade. Between 1613 and 1635, a total of 54 Red Seal ship came to Nguyen southern Vietnam. This figure is about one-third of the total 161 ships that came to trade in Southeast Asia.[64] Hoi An was the port opened to the Japanese ships in Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

Among other things, silk from Vietnam was the main product sought by the Japanese.[65] As the demand for silk increased, so did the prices. In 1633, silk produced in southern Vietnam was priced between 180 to 200 taels per-picul. The Japanese traders also wanted aloewood which was highly priced. The aloewood is a scented wood that was used by the Japanese for religious ceremonies. Nguyen Southern Vietnam was also the main exporter of sugar, after Taiwan, to Japan. Available information regarding sugar production in mainland Southeast Asia at that time noted that from Quang Nam, a total of 25 tons of sugar was exported to Japan in 1637, 21 tons in 1642 and 76 tons in 1663.[66] The Vietnamese had by then

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[63] For a study on the Japanese in Hoi An, see Vu Minh Giang, "The Japanese Presence in Hoi An", in Phan Huy Le, Yoshiaki Ishizawa, et al, *Ancient Town of Hoi An, International Symposium Held in Danang on 22-23 March 1990*, Hanoi: The Gioi Publisher, 1991, pp. 135-141. See also Kawamoto Kuniye, "The International Outlook of Quang Nam (Nguyen)Regime as Revealed in Gaiban Tsuusho", and Ogura Sadao, "About Two Japanese Scrolls – 'Sea Map-Trade with the State of Jiaozhi' and 'Avalokitesvara", both in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 109-116 and pp. 128-134 respectively.

[64] Iwao Seiichi, *Shuin-sen Boeki-shi no Kenkyu*, Tokyo: Ko Bun Do, p. 107 as cited in Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Ithaca: Cornell Unievrsity Southeast Asian Studies Program, 1998, p. 62. See also Kato Eiichi, "Shuinsen License Trade and the Dutch in Southeast Asia", *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 142-148.

[65] Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. D.

[66] See David Bulbeck et al (comp.), *Southeast Asian Exporst Since the 14th Century: Clove, Pepper, Coffee and Sugar*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies & KITLV Press, 1998, p. 112.

learnt the Chinese way of refining sugar. The bulk of this process was carried out in Quang Nam.

As there was much to gain from the presence of Japanese traders at Hoi An, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen gave his daughter's hand in marriage to a Japanese merchant, Araki Sataro in 1626.[67] For Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, both the China and Japan trade was crucial not only to the economic prosperity of Nguyen Southern Vietnam but was also of strategic importance. The Chinese and the Japanese traders provided the Nguyen with precious metal in the form of copper needed for the foundering of cannons. For this purpose, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen played a direct role by buying up the bulk of the copper and red bronze brought into his region by the Chinese and the Japanese.[68]

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[67] Alexander Woodside, "Central Vietnam's Trading World in the Eighteenth Century as Seen in Le Quy Don's "Frontier Chronicles"', *Essays into Vietnamese Past*, K. W. Taylor & John Whitmore (eds.), Ithaca: Southeast Asian Program, Cornell University, 1995, p. 162.
[68] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 46.

Table 5: Number of Shuin-Sen to Southeast Asian Destinations (1604-1635)

	Annam	Tongking	Cochin China	Champa	Cambodia	Siam	Luzon
1604	4	3		1	5	4	4
1605	3	2		1	5		4
1606	2	1		1	3	4	3
1607	1			1	4	4	4
1608	1			1	1	1	
1609		1	1		1	6	3
1610	1		3		1	3	2
1611	2		3			1	2
1612		1	3			2	1
1613		1	6		1	3	1
1614		1	7		2	3	4
1615			5		1	5	5
1616		1	4				1
1617		2	5			1	1
1618		3	7		2	1	3
1619		3	1				1
1620			5		1		2
1621		1	2		1		4
1622			1			2	2
1623		2	2		2	3	1
1624		2	2			1	2
1625		1			1	2	
1626						1	
1627			1		1	2	
1628		2	2		2	3	
1629			1		1	1	
1630						1	2
1631		1	1		1	1	
1632		2	3		4		2
1633		3	2		1	1	
1634		3	2		2		
1635			1		1		
Total	14	36	70	5	44	56	53

Source: Iwao Seiichi, *Shuin-Sen Boeki-shi no Kenkyu*, Tokyo: Ko Bun Do, 1958, p. 107 as cited in Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asian Studies Program, 1998, p. 62. Cochin China here refers to Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

Apart from being traders, leading Chinese and Japanese residents in Hoi An were also entrusted with the task of administrating part of the town by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. This had inevitably made the Nguyen dependent on these foreign traders in conducting foreign trade in southern Vietnam.[69] Even though the Nguyen were themselves involved in trading activities, and certainly looked at trading with foreigners as their own preserve, they also conducted business through their proxies of foreign traders. This is evident in the case of the Dutch Jeronimus Wonderaer's dealings with Nguyen Hoang who was engaged in the pepper trade through the principal traders of Thuan Hoa, most of whom were either Japanese or Chinese. In the same way, the Englishman Tempest Peacock dealt with the principal traders of Hoi An, who happened to be a Japanese.[70] The Japanese' special position as the principal trader at Hoi An is confirmed by the Jesuit, Father Alexander de Rhodes who was in Nguyen Southern Vietnam in 1625-27 and then from 1640 to 1645. According to De Rhodes, upon his return to Hoi An in 1640, he found that much of the trading at Hoi An was in the hands of Japanese traders, and that the governor of the trading town was also a Japanese.[71] It is possible that the Japanese governor mentioned by de Rhodes was only in charge of the Japanese side of the town. It is known that the Nguyen had allowed two separate settlements to be constructed in Hoi An, one for the Japanese and the

[69] A. Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 19.
[70] Ibid., p. 14.
[71] Alexander de Rhodes, *Rhodes of Vietnam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes in China and Other Kingdoms of the Orient*, p. 80.

other for the Chinese.[72] Nevertheless, it is evident that the Nguyen had relied on the services of these foreigners in administrating part of their town.

Both the *Tien Bien* and *Phu Bien Tap Luc* mentioned how external trade had brought about the prosperity experienced by the Nguyen during this period.[73] The *Tien Bien* noted that since Nguyen Hoang's rule, traders from abroad gathered at the ports of Nguyen Southern Vietnam, and that these ports, particularly Hoi An, had become cosmopolitan.[74] Nguyen Southern Vietnam also received western traders, especially the Portuguese from Macao and Malacca. Trade was also carried out with the uplanders in the interior as far as Ai Lao and Ban Thuong. The uplanders supplied the Nguyen with local produce that was keenly sought after by foreigner traders.[75]

The Nguyen's involvement in trade had indeed brought them large profits and wealth. According to Borri, "the king received a great revenue out of this faire (trading season at Hoi An), by his duties and imports, and the country an unspeakable gain".[76] Thus, since the beginning, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen saw the importance of maintaining an active involvement in the Asian trade as a means to bolster the security of Nguyen Southern Vietnam in the face of the military threat from the Trinh. In the case of the Nguyen's ties with Japan, there was also an attempt to purchase strategic materials. It was based on these same objectives in mind that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen conducted his ties with the West.

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[72] See Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p. 15. The use of foreigners as proxies by local rulers to trade on their behalf, or as Syahbandar was common in Southeast Asia, see Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680, Vol. II: Expansion and Crisis*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, pp. 114-123.
[73] See for instance, *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 12b, Vol. 2: 4b, Vol. 2: 17; *PBTL* Vol. 1: 20.
[74] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 12b.
[75] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4b, Vol. 2: 17; and *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 20.
[76] Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. I.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's Relations with the West

Despite many favourable reports by western traders of commerce in southern Vietnam during Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rule, there were some problems. This is evident by the unsolved murders of two Englishmen in 1613. The English were relatively late comers to Nguyen Southern Vietnam. The first recorded contact took place in 1613, shortly before Nguyen Hoang's death.[77] Richard Cocks, the chief of the English East India Company factory at Hirado, Japan, sent two of his colleagues, Tempest Peacock and Walter Cawarden, to Hoi An for the purpose of purchasing goods, especially spices that could fetch good prices in China. The venture was part of a move by the English East India Company in its efforts to find an intermediary port in its trade with China.[78]

The mission was a failure in so far as trade was concerned. Instead of getting the valuable spices, Peacock died just before the mission ended. As for Cawarden, he managed to sell some of the goods brought from Hirado in Hoi An. However, he too was believed to have been lost at sea shortly after his departure from Hoi An.[79]

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[77] "Richard Cocks' Diary", as cited in A. Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 14.

[78] Richard Cocks for instance, was said to have been influenced by one Will Adams, who had been living in Japan since 1600, and who had repeatedly pointed out to the East India Company at Bantam of the potential of getting specie to be invested in China. See A. Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 23.

[79] In his diary. Richard Cocks, the English factor at Nagasaki mentioned how he learned from a ship captain named Andrea Ditts that "the king denied that he never was consenting to the death of our people, neither knew of it till it was done, it being done by the Japons and not by his people, and that for the money he owed us for the goods he bought of Mr. Peacock he was willing to pay it, but non came to demand it,...". See "Entry of 1 August 1615", *Diary of Richard Cocks*, Vol. 1, London: Hankluyt Society, 1883.

Initial investigation by Richard Cocks through the sending of a second mission in 1617, discovered that Peacock had not drowned as earlier reported but was murdered by his Japanese host. Peacock and Cawarden's visit was apparently fruitful, having gained the trust and support of the Nguyen authority. A. Lamb suggested that the 'King of Cochinchina' mentioned by Cocks was merely the senior mandarin at Hoi-An. There is however, a strong likelihood that this senior mandarin was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen himself, having been appointed chief administrator of Quang Nam by Nguyen Hoang in 1603.[80] Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was reported to have granted the Englishmen "large privileges to trade in his dominions". Peacock later however, under the influence of alcohol, offended one of the dignitaries who had invited him to dinner. In retaliation, his host had him murdered.[81]As for Cawarden, though he managed to leave the Nguyen region, he was thought to have drowned.

After their failure to gain a footing in Nguyen Southern Vietnam, the English East India Company concentrated their efforts in Cambodia. A factory was opened there at the end of 1617. They obtained goods that were intended for the Japanese market, namely silk, deerskins, black varnish, elephant tusks, wax, eaglewood, bengamien and silk. At the same time, they also traded with Champa and Siam. The market in Champa was particularly valuable to the Englishmen as they were able to sell more than 16 tons of goods to the kingdom in that year

[80] See A. Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 13; see also *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 22.
[81] "Richard Cocks' Diary", as cited in A. Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 14; see also "Report from Richard Cocks to the East India Company", 1 and 14 January 1616.

alone.[82] Champa was also a supplier of goods which the Englishmen were particularly interested in for their lucrative trade with Japan, namely, fish skins, flax, silk, eaglewood, calambac (gharu), sandalwood, ebony and elephant tusks.[83]

The Englishmen's success at Cambodia and Champa however, was not to be matched by their venture in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. Another attempt by Edmund Sayers in 1617 returned in failure. Apart from the Nguyen bureaucracy, they were also hindered by a lack of goods to purchase. Sayers only managed to buy three piculs of silk. Neither were the English successful in retrieving the goods that Peacock had brought with him in 1613.[84]

In terms of the acquisition of arms and war technology, as early as 1617, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was already purchasing red copper to be used for casting brass cannons.[85] Apart from his decision to buy up all the bronze and copper supplies brought to the ports of Nguyen Southern Vietnam, he was also responsible in the setting up of the first gun foundry in southern Vietnam. The foundry was established at Phuong Luc, a trade village near Phu Xuan.[86] While little is known of the production of this foundry prior to the coming of the Portuguese founder, Joao da Cruz, the foundry's establishment was a major step toward the strengthening of the Nguyen's defence.

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[82] "William Eaton to Sir Thomas Smythe in Firado, Japan", 22 December 1617, in *Correspondence of the East India Company*, Vol. 6, ff. 258-259.
[83] Ibid., f. 259.
[84] Ibid., f. 259. No reason was given as to why there was a dire supply of silk. The three piculs that Sayers bought were purchased at 170 taels per picul and were sold for 230 taels in Hirado.
[85] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4b.
[86] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 22.

In this regard, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen turned to the Portuguese. While the Portuguese had visited southern Vietnam and Champa as early as 1516,[87] they only became frequent visitors to Hoi An after 1640.[88] According to the French scholar, Pierre Yves Manguin, there were already some Portuguese living in Hoi An since 1584.[89] While there is no mention of how the Portuguese were initially being treated by the Nguyen, it is likely that they were well-received.

The Portuguese began to gain the Nguyen's attention shortly after the Nguyen-Trinh War broke out. Faced with a more powerful enemy in the north, the Nguyen were in need of better military equipment, especially cannons. At that time, the most famous gun maker in Asia was Bocarro's gun foundry at Macao. According to C. B. Boxer, "Successive Nguyen rulers of Annam showed themselves very anxious to secure cannons from the Boracco's celebrated gun foundry at Macao, which functioned between 1627 and 1680 (or thereabouts) and produced what were acknowledged to be the finest bronze guns in the East. It was their superior artillery which enable the forces of the Nguyen to resist the more numerous armies of the Trinh for so long".[90]

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen turned to the Catholic missionaries who were working in Nguyen Southern Vietnam to act as intermediaries for arms purchases from Macao. There was a close link between the purchase of cannons and war materials from Macao and the position of Christian missionaries in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. According to Boxer again, "though fundamentally hostile to

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[87] Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais sur les Cotes*, p. 3.
[88] Alaister Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 175.
[89] Manguin, op.cit, p. 186.
[90] C. R. Boxer, "Asian Potentates and European Artillery", *JMBRAS*, Vol. 38, Part 2, 1965, p. 167.

the propagation of the Christian faith in their territory, the Nguyen more or less connived at the presence of Roman Catholic missionaries largely with the object of obtaining guns and gunners from Macao".[91] The dependency on these missionaries also led Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to be less vigilant to the missionary work that was being carried out by the missionaries. This allowed the religion to spread among the population of southern Vietnam.

One of the greatest difficulties in the study of the Nguyen's perception and treatment of Christian missionaries and their followers is paucity of material in the Nguyen records relating to the subject. Apart from several instances where Christianity and the Christian missionaries were banned, there is basically no further reference to the subject in Nguyen sources. Thus, information regarding the activities of the Christian missionaries and their converts are based almost solely on missionary and western sources.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's reign coincided with the arrival of many Catholic missionaries to Vietnam. In 1615, a new zeal in missionary work was detected with the emergence of the order of the Company of Jesus (Jesuits). Even though the activities of the Christian missionaries and the development of Christianity (Catholicism) in southern Vietnam are hardly mentioned in the Vietnamese sources, they however, remained an important component of the Nguyen's foreign relations.[92]

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[91] Ibid..

[92] Much of the information regarding early missionaries are found in the writing of Critoforo Borri and Alexander De Rhodes. See Christoforo Borri, Cochin China, Borri, Christoforo, *Cochin China: Containing Many Admirable Ranties and Singularities of that Countrey*, London: Robert Ashley for Richard Clutterbuck, 1633. Reprinted by Da Capo Press, Amsterdam, 1970 and Alexander De Rhodes, *Rhodes of Vietnam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes in China and Other Kingdoms of the Orient*, Solenge Hertz (trans.), Westminster,

Catholic missionaries were already visiting southern Vietnam during the last years of the sixteenth century. In 1584, a Spanish Franciscan priest, Bartolomeu Riuz arrived in Quang Nam. He was later joined by two more Franciscan priests Andre and Antonie de Madureira who arrived in 1586. Then, there was the Spanish priests Pedro Ordonez de Cevallas and C. A. Poncet who were likely to have been in Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam in 1591 to early 1592.[93]

In 1612, a group of Japanese Christians and the missionaries who were looking after them arrived in Hoi An. These were refugees following the Tokugawa Shogunate's decision to expel Christian missionaries from Japan. They were followed two years later by 400 Japanese Christians who were also expelled. The main reason behind the decision to expel the Christians was that the Shogun was in fear that some of the Daimyo might exploit the missionary links to acquire artillery pieces from the Portuguese.

In 1615, two Jesuits from Macao, Francesco Buzomi, a Napolitian and Diego Carvalho, a Portuguese arrived in Tourane (Danang). They were allowed to establish a church in the town before settling down in Hoi An where the colony of Catholic Japanese also lived. Carvalho left in 1618, but Buzomi stayed until 1639.

During his stay in Vietnam, Buzomi was assisted by Father Francois Barrett and Father Francois de Pina. From the beginning, the Jesuits continued to send their missionaries to southern Vietnam. During the first ten years after their

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Maryland: The Newman Press, 1966. For a further look at Alexander De Rhodes, see Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexander de Rhodes and Inculturation in Seventeenth Century Vietnam*, New York: Orbis Books, 1998.

[93] Roland Jacques, "De Castro Marim a Faifo: Naissance et Developpement du Padroado Portugais d'Orient des origines a 1659", Paris: Memoire de Diplome d'Etudes Approfondies, Universite de Paris- Sud XI, 1995, pp. 125-126.

arrival, another 21 Jesuits arrived in Nguyen Southern Vietnam, with the majority of them being Portuguese.[94] Their strong presence in southern Vietnam resulted in the conversion of many Vietnamese.

The Jesuits also started their mission in Tonkin with the arrival of Father Giuliano Baldinotti in 1626. He was said to have been well-received by Trinh Trang but left six months later. The mission at Tonkin was only opened when Alexander de Rhodes, who was banished from Nguyen Southern Vietnam in 1627 arrived there.

The missionaries were soon challenged by sections of the Vietnamese elite in the Court in 1618. This group incited non-Christians to attack the missionaries and the churches. This probably marked the first of many subsequent hostile attacks against Christians in Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

The hostile reaction against the missionaries and Christians did not reflect Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's official policy towards them. Based on recorded evidence, it is clear that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was fairly tolerant of the new religion. He did not have any strong views regarding Christianity, its missionaries and believers. This is evident from the lack of hostility towards the religion after the Catholic missionaries won over the Tran Duc Hoa, the Governor of Qui Nhon province at that time. At the suggestion of Hoa, who was favoured by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, the missionaries were allowed to stay on.[95] In addition, despite subsequent action against missionaries in 1625 when a proclamation was issued to order all the missionaries to Hoi An and to be banished from southern Vietnam,

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[94] Charles Maybon, *Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam*, pp. 29-30.
[95] Alexander De Rhodes, *Rhodes of Vietnam* ..., pp. 47-48.

this was not strictly implemented. A proclamation was issued to order all the missionaries to Hoi An, and to be banished from southern Vietnam.[96] Nonetheless, it was not strictly implemented. In fact, only two priests left the Nguyen domain as a result of this proclamation, whereas ten others stayed on.[97]

It would appear that some of the elite were not anti-Christian. This can be deduced from the following incident. The 1625 proclamation by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen against Christian missionaries took place at around the time of the death of the Jesuit Father Da Pina. Da Pina was drowned in a boating accident. As the missionaries were hoping to complete the funeral rites for him, a request was made to the eldest son of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, Nguyen Phuc Ky,[98] to allow the missionaries to stay for another 100 days. Ky was said to be sympathetic to the Christian missionaries and he agreed to this request. During the grace period, the missionaries tried to win back Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's favour.

The missionaries were also supported by a provincial governor (possibly Tran Duc Hoa), who warned the missionaries of the impending prosecution unleashed by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen at the instigation of the anti-Christian group.[99] It is not clear as to why Nguyen Phuc Ky and the unnamed provincial governor had shown sympathy to the missionaries. No information is available regarding the faith of these two persons, though Nguyen Phuc Ky was known to

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[96] Ibid.
[97] *Voyages et Travaux des Missionaries de la Compagnie de Jesus: Mission de la Cochinchine et du Tonkin*, Paris: Charles Douniol Editions, 1858, pp. 386-387.
[98] Nguyen Phuc Ky, or Ton That Ky as he is known in the Nguyen chronicles, died in 1631. See *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 8-9.
[99] *Voyages et Travaux des Missionaries de la Compagnie de Jesus*, pp. 386-387.

be a most well-liked person who was given the task of governing Quang Nam in 1613 till his death in 1631.

It is possible that Nguyen elites such as Nguyen Phuc Ky saw the link between missionaries and the acquisition of western strategic materials since the missionaries were the main intermediaries in the Nguyen's dealings with the Portuguese at Macao. Hence, when the missionaries were ordered to be expelled this group saw the danger of Nguyen Southern Vietnam losing the strategic link with Macao and was in favour of being more lenient towards them.

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's initial non-interference policy toward the activities of the missionaries is also evident in the manner in which some important figures from his court were converted to Christianity. Perhaps the most famous figure was a court lady named Marie, whom the missionary, De Rhodes described as "one of the foremost ladies of the kingdom, a close relative of the king". This was Duc Minh, the fourth and youngest concubine of Nguyen Hoang.[100]

This balance between the two factions remain a constant feature in determining Nguyen policies towards Christian missionaries and the spreading of the religion in Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

Nguyen Phuc Lan and Continued Survival

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen died in 1635 after ruling for 22 years. His death however, did not mark the end of the Nguyen-Trinh conflict. Instead, the war intensified and would last for another 37 years. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was succeeded by his

[100] Alexander De Rhodes, *Rhodes of Vietnam*...., pp. 51-52.

second son Nguyen Phuc Lan in 1635 whose rule lasted 13 years. Nguyen Phuc Lan faced some problems in trying to exert authority. Like his father before him, Phuc Lan's position was challenged by his younger brother, Phuc Anh, who was the governor of Quang Nam. The *Tien Bien* suggested that Anh was ambitious and talented.[101] Indeed, Anh, who was the third son of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, was chosen over Phuc Lan as Governor of Quang Nam after the death of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's eldest son Ky in 1633. It is likely that after being entrusted with the most important position in the Nguyen territory, Phuc Anh expected to succeed his father. But when he was not appointed heir, he rebelled and conspired with the Trinh family in order to challenge Nguyen Phuc Lan.[102] In 1635, the Trinh army, after getting wind of Phuc Anh's intention to defect, began to amass troops at the borders at Nhat Le River.

Nguyen Phuc Lan had to rely on his loyal officials, including his two uncles Nguyen Phuc Khe and Nguyen Phuc Tuyen, to crush Phuc Anh's revolt. The campaign against Anh was a success. Anh was arrested and executed.[103]

With his northern borders vulnerable to Trinh attacks, Nguyen Phuc Lan decided to move the main headquarters to Kim Long at Tra Huong, near Phu Xuan.[104] This move was important as the town was situated further south and was safe from Trinh attacks. Subsequent Nguyen rulers would base their headquarters around the area. The village of Phu Xuan, which later became the capital of the

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[101] See Le Thanh Khoi, *Histoire du Viet Nam*, pp. 247-248.
[102] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 24.
[103] For a biography of Anh, see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 30-33.
[104] See L. Cadiere, "Les Residents du Rois de Cochinchine Avant Gia Long", *Bulletin de la Commission Archaeology de l'Indochine*, 1913, pp. 132-148.

Nguyen rulers in 1689, and Hue, the capital of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), are located in this strategic area.

It is important to note that at the time when Nguyen Phuc Lan succeeded his father, the Nguyen were at war with the Trinh Lords. This however, did not prevent Nguyen Phuc Lan from sending a delegate to the Le Court informing the Emperor of his father's death. In return, the Le Court sent an emissary expressing condolences to Phuc Lan.[105] Nguyen Phuc Lan's action was consistent with the Nguyen's two-prong strategies of firstly, to build a separate power base in the south. The second strategy was maintaining ties with the Le Court with the hope of making a return to the Le Court in the future.This however, was the last time an exchange of emissaries took place between the Nguyen and the Le Court. Nguyen Phuc Lan's continued defiance against the Trinh actually brought Nguyen Southern Vietnam further away from central control and reinforced its sense of independence.

However, apart from having to face opposition from within his own family, Phuc Lan's personal indulgences had saw him neglecting the counsel of his advisors. Shortly after he took over, Nguyen Phuc Lan was embroiled in a scandal when he fell for the widow of his elder brother, Phuc Ky. The widow, Tong Thi had come to him for help and Phuc Lan took pity on her and granted her request. Nguyen Phuc Lan's advisors counselled him not to get involved with the woman but he ignored them. Phuc Lan continued his involvement Tong Thi until 1648. In that year, the latter tried to invite the Trinh army into Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

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[105] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 4.

Even though he was not known to be a great commander, Nguyen Phuc Lan's army managed to cross the Linh Giang River in 1640 and captured the northern part of the sub-prefecture of Bo Chinh (Chau). Nguyen Phuc Lan continued to maintain a strong defence including strengthening his artillery by conducting regular target shootings. Apart from artillery, he also had regular checks and improvements of his navy to make sure that they were in good fighting condition. The *Tien Bien* also tells us that he had intentions to conduct a northern expedition against the Trinh.[106] Perhaps Phuc Lan was encouraged by his 1640 success.

However, the plan was never put into practice. Instead, it was the Trinh who attacked first in 1643. This was later followed by the Dutch who were working in league with the Trinh to attack the Nguyen in 1644.

The Trinh campaign of 1643 was aimed at recapturing the northern part of the Bo Chinh sub-prefecture. The attack that began in March pushed the Nguyen back to the southern part of the Linh Giang River, a natural border between the northern and southern Bo Chinh sub-prefectures. Trinh Trang, the Trinh Lord even brought the emperor with him to legitimise his campaign to crush the rebellious Nguyen. The Trinh army however, still could not penetrate the Nguyen defence and had to withdraw two months later because of an outbreak of disease and of rumours of a revolt in the capital at Thang Long.[107]

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[106] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 1642.

[107] Both the *Tien Bien* and the *Toan Thu* again give different accounts as to what had transpired. *Tien Bien* mentioned of rumours of revolt in the North which had compelled Trinh Trang to withdraw. The *Toan Thu* however, attributed the withdrawal to the poor weather and diseases among troops that forced the Trinh to withdraw. See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: and also *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 949.

Despite the 1643 setback at the borders, Trinh Trang entered into a pact with the Dutch to try to dislodge the Nguyen from southern Vietnam. The beginning of the 17th century saw the Dutch overtaking the Portuguese in Southest Asian trade. Between 1600 and 1623, the Dutch ended English attempts to enter the spice trade in Amboyna. The English also abandoned a series of unprofitable ports including Patani, Ayudhya and Hirado in Japan, where the Dutch then went in with full force. The establishment of the Dutch factory at Hirado in 1609 was a landmark in their involvement in Asia as the factory became the main centre of Dutch shipping activities in East Asia. In 1641, the Dutch captured Malacca from the Portuguese. Two years later, they opened their factory in Cambodia.[108] Operating from Batavia in Java which they established in 1619, the Dutch East India Company also eyed the coast of Vietnam for potential trading stations to partake in the lucrative trade with China and Japan.

Unlike their amicable dealings with the Trinh, the Dutch were unable to establish firm relations with the Nguyen.[109] However, they attempted to court the Nguyen as early as 1601. That year, two merchants, Jeronimus Wonderaer and Albert Cornelis Ruyll were sent by the Dutch East India Company to Hoi An to purchase pepper. After spending two months there, they returned empty handed.[110] Between 1613 and 1617, four Dutch ships called at southern Vietnam, but failed to accomplish their mission. In between those years, the Dutch had also

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[108] See D. K. Bassett, "The Trade of the English East India Company in Cambodia, 1651-1656", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1962.

[109] For a study on the Dutch venture in Trinh north, see Buch, W.J.M., "La Compagnie des Indes Neelandaise et L'Indochine", *BEFEO*, Vol. XXXVI, 1936, pp. 97-196 and and Vol. XXXVII, 1977, pp.121-237.

[110] See "Letter by Jeronimus Wonderaer from Hoi An, 1602", in Li Tana and Anthony Reid, *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen*, Singapore: ASEAN Economic Research, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993, p. 6-26.

sent smaller trade missions on board Japanese, or Siamese or Chinese ships which had travelled to Hirado.

Initially, the Dutch eagerness to trade was welcomed by the Nguyen. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen even took the initiative of sending a message to the Dutch East India Company's representatives at Patani and Ligor, emphasizing the excellent bay of Quang Nam, and invited the Dutch to come to trade at Quang Nam.[111] In 1633, after almost two decades of contacts, the Dutch were finally allowed to set up a factory at Hoi An. Yet the Dutch were still unable to penetrate the market in the way they did at Pho Hien in the Trinh North.[112]

The failure of the Dutch to make inroads in the Hoi An trade was most likely due to two reasons. The first was the Dutch-Trinh connection and the second was the role of the Portuguese interpreters. The Trinh Lords had also turned to commerce in their efforts to strengthen their economy and to acquire military hardware. They gave the Dutch permission to open a factory at Pho Hien, which was the principal port in northern Vietnam.[113] The Dutch being so favoured by the Trinh displeased the Nguyen who questioned the sincerity of the Dutch when they came to trade in southern Vietnam.

Nguyen hesitation towards Dutch overtures to trade in southern Vietnam was also influenced by the Portuguese at Macao who sent an envoy to Nguyen Phuc Nguyen instigating him against the Dutch who were their enemies. The

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[111] Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi An (Faifo)*, p. 21; see also W. J. M. Buch, "La Compagnie des Indes Nederlandaise et l'Indochine", *BEFEO*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 18.
[112] W. J. M. Buch, "La Compagnie des Indes Nederlandaise...", p. 18. See also Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 73.
[113] See also Nguyen Quang Ngoc, "Some Features on the Dutch East India Company and Its Trade Office at Pho Hien", in *Pho Hien: The Centre of International Commerce in the XVIIth-XVIIIth centuries*, Hanoi: The Gioi, 1991, pp. 132-141.

envoy recommended that the Dutch be excluded from trading at Nguyen Southern Vietnam. Apparently, the envoy, Captain Ferdinand de Costa,[114] was able to get Nguyen Phuc Nguyen to issue a proclamation forbidding the Dutch from trading in his domain.[115] Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's suspicious attitude towards the Dutch was also due to the pro-Portuguese language interpreters who were not keen to see Portugal's main competitor gain a foothold in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. Since the setting up of the Dutch East India Company in 1602, Dutch ships had been involved in a series of naval attacks against the Portuguese and the Spanish with the aim of crippling the shipping activities of its rivals. In fact, the factory at Hirado, was used as a warehouse for goods captured from Portuguese ships and of vessels from other nations. These goods included arms and ammunition.[116]

Apart from that, there was also a religious dimension. There were already Catholic priests who were living in the Nguyen region and who also had strong followings. These Catholic priests and their followers had no sympathy towards the Dutch who were predominantly Protestants, especially during the height of the counter-Reformation in Europe. It is likely that these Portuguese missionaries and pro-Portuguese interpreters had advised Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and Nguyen Phuc Lan against allowing the Dutch to trade in southern Vietnam.

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[114] According to Father Alexander de Rhodes, Da Costa was a Portuguese aristocrat who was based in Macao. De Rhodes attributed the starting of the Catholic mission in Nguyen Southern Vietnam to Da Costa, see Alexander de Rhodes of Vietnam, *Rhodes of Vietnam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes ...*, p. 46.

[115] Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. 12.

[116] Kato Eiichi, "Shuinsen Licence Trade and the Dutch in Southeast Asia", *Vietnamese Studies*, No. 2, 1991, p. 57. (53-63)

The Nguyen's cool response to Dutch overtures for permission to trade changed after 1630. This is evident from the Nguyen's willingness to allow the Dutch to open a factory at Hoi An in 1636, a year after Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's death. The change of mind began in July 1633 after the visit of Paulus Traudenius, the Dutch factory chief at Formosa, who came to seek permission to trade in Hoi An. Through the Japanese chief merchant, Domingo, who interpreted for him, Traudenius presented some presents and expressed gratitude to Nguyen Phuc Nguyen for assisting some Dutch shipwrecked sailors.[117] These gestures probably prompted Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and later Nguyen Phuc Lan to alter their stand towards the Dutch. A Dutch factory was finally opened after the arrival of two Dutch vessels, the *Warmont* and the *Grol* in 1636.

The decision to allow the Dutch who at that time, still maintained a factory at Pho Hien in Tonkin, and who were known to be close to the Trinh to establish a factory, underlines the dilemma of the Nguyen at that time. By allowing the Dutch to open a factory, Nguyen Phuc Lan was taking a calculated risk, especially in the face of the possibility of the Dutch teaming up with the Trinh to launch a military attack as did transpire later in 1644. In weighing the pros and cons in allowing the Dutch to open the factory, the commercial factor outweighed the immediate potential military threat in the form of a Dutch-Trinh alliance.

The decision had also brought the Nguyen-Dutch relations in line with the Nguyen's broader policy of not refusing any nation from entering southern Vietnam to trade.[118] This fact was acknowledged by the Portuguese at Macao

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[117] Charles B. Maybon, *Les Marchands Europeens En Cochinchine et Au Tonkin, 1600-1775*, p. 8.
[118] Christoforo Borri, *Cochinchina*, p. 12.

even during the days when they were working to prevent the Dutch from coming to trade in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. According to the Portuguese, "the maxim of the Cochin-Chinois (Southern Vietnam) being, not to acknowledge ever any the least apprehension of any nation in the World". This means that the Portuguese' influence on the Nguyen's decisions against the Dutch was limited.

The decision to allow the Dutch to open a factory was probably also influenced by the changes that was taking place in the pattern of East Asian trade. By 1630, there were signs of Japanese withdrawal from active overseas trade. The number of Shuin (Red Seal) ships that came out to trade was declining in number. Between 1615 and 1625, a total of 34 Red Seal ships came to Nguyen Southern Vietnam, whereas in the following ten years, only 13 arrived. And there were several years when no Red Seal ship traveled to Hoi An.[119] By 1640, the Tokugawa Shogunate had imposed the isolationist policy and Japanese ships were no longer allowed abroad. Such developments must have affected Nguyen Phuc Lan's policy towards the Dutch.

In 1643, a fleet of Dutch ships sailed to the region off the coast of Quang Nam in order to attack the Nguyen. Despite having obtained permission to trade in Nguyen Southern Vietnam and having set up a factory at Hoi An, the Dutch entered into a pact with the Trinh to help the latter in a strike at the Nguyen. The Dutch's decision to attack stemmed probably from their intention to establish full control over the trading activities in Nguyen Southern Vietnam as they have done elsewhere, such as in the Indonesian Archipelago. The attack failed and the Dutch

[119] Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 62.

fleet was destroyed by the Vietnamese.[120] The Dutch factory was closed and its traders were evicted. They did not return again to trade in Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

This is evident from events that took place shortly after the defeat of the Dutch fleet. Fresh from the victory against the Dutch, Nguyen Phuc Lan launched a campaign against the Christians in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. The attack however, was directed against the Vietnamese who became Christians. No physical harm were inflicted against the western missionaries but they were asked to leave. Nguyen Phuc Lan was especially harsh against any Vietnamese who converted to Christianity. They were asked to renounce their religion or risk being executed.

Nguyen Phuc Lan's actions against the missionaries was the first of many instances where the Nguyen would act against the missionaries and their converts shortly before or after a major security scare. In this case, the sea battle against the Dutch had been the cause. Such reactions are regular throughout Nguyen rule. One plausible explanation to this is their continued apprehension and suspicion towards the Christian missionaries and their intentions. Though fully conscious of the missionaries' role in acting as intermediaries for procuring strategic materials from the West, the Nguyen also took cognisance of the links that existed among missionaries throughout the region, including those who had links with the Trinh.

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[120] Ibid., Appendix, pp. 176-179. In reflecting their losses to the Nguyen, the Dutch believed that their prestige in the eyes of the Japanese whom they were dealing with in Hirado had been greatly reduced. See "Report on the Incidents at Hirado, Japan", *Dagh Register Gehouden int Casteel Batavia Vant*, Chinese Translation, by Guo Hui and Cheng Da Xue, Vol. 2m Taipei: Taiwan Sheng Wen Xian Wei Yuan Hui, 1989, p. 398.

By 1635, the Nguyen had withstood three large scale military attacks from the Trinh (namely in 1627, 1631 and 1633), and the prospect of more attacks were clearly in sight as the Trinh were hoping to reestablish Le authority over Nguyen territories. For Nguyen Phuc Lan, the Nguyen's small army needed better equipment and greater firepower to withstand further Trinh attacks. And the best way to do so was to engage in the trading of strategic commodities and to earn more through customs duties.

In 1648, the Trinh launched an attack on the Nguyen. The attack was a result of conspiracy when Nguyen Phuc Lan's sister-in-law, Tong Thi, secretly sent a message to the Trinh offering to aid the Trinh attack on the Nguyen. She was working in league with her father, Tong Phuc Thong who was working for the Trinh. The Nguyen defence was a near disaster. During the initial stages of the war, the Nguyen defence crumbled. The Trinh army managed to cross the Nhat Le River and was threatening Quang Binh and the Truong Duc fortifications. It was this same fortifications with its European-made cannons that had helped the Nguyen withstand the Trinh onslaughts. Fortunately, Nguyen defence was reinforced by its 100 strong elephant troop. The elephant troops' counter attack surprised the Trinh army leading to its defeat. Some 30,000 prisoners were captured from that battle.[121]

The 1648 campaign was one occasion where Nguyen forces nearly lost the war. Several factors, including the existence of internal dissention in the Nguyen camp and poor military leadership saw the Nguyen army received a severe

[121] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 14. For a study on the use of elephants in warfare in Southeast Asia, see L. Cadiere, "Les Elephants Royaux", *BAVH*, Vol.9, No.1, 1922, pp.41-102 and Rita Ringis, *Elephants of Thailand in Myth, Art and Reality*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996.

beating from the Trinh army. The Trinh army was able to defeat the Nguyen garrison at Quang Binh and was threatening the Vu Xa garrison at Nam Bo Chinh Chau, before an able Nguyen commander, Truong Phuc Phan managed to halt the Trinh advance by putting up a strong defence at the Truong Duc fortification.[122] The Trinh army's advance was finally stopped when Truong Phuc Phan's elephant forces annihilated them.

The 1648 campaign was won also because of the superior European cannons used by the Nguyen. These cannons were far superior to the Vietnamese and Chinese cannons used by the Trinh. Even though there were not many instances of Nguyen ventures abroad to purchase arms and ammunition, it is believed that several trips were made to Macao for this purpose. The elephant force was another of the Nguyen's defence tools that had foreign origins. Vietnamese had been known to have used elephants in battles since early times. The Trung sisters for instance, rode on elephant backs to fight the Chinese army in 42 AD. Christoforo Borri recounted how the Nguyen had obtained their elephants from among the uplanders, Cambodia and other countries.[123] It is most likely that the elephants from these places were either purchased or given as gifts by the rulers and chieftains of the uplanders.

Among other measures to address defence concerns were the building of a foundry and the resettlement of prisoners captured in the 1648 campaign. Cadiere suggests that the Nguyen had started their own foundry at Phuong Luc (Quarter for Casting) as early as 1615, but were probably using the Chinese techniques of

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[122] For a biography of Phan see *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 15-16.
[123] Christoforo Borri, *Relations of Cochinchina*, p. D3.

casting cannons[124] However, the *Tien Bien* gives 1631 as the date the foundry was established.[125] The foundry's products were poorer in quality and would have little impact in resisting a larger army using similar guns. The secret of the Nguyen's artillery lies with the utilization of European-made guns. Contrary to earlier writings that linked the Nguyen artillery pieces to the Portuguese founder Joao Da Cruz from as early as the establishment of the foundry at Phuong Luc in 1615,[126] the bulk of the European-made Nguyen artillery pieces were actually obtained from other sources such as Macao. According to Christoforo Borri, the Nguyen's early European artillery pieces were gathered from wrecked European ships, particularly of Portuguese and Dutch origin.[127] The Portuguese connection in helping the Nguyen to cast their artillery pieces only started after Joao Da Cruz' arrival in 1658.[128]

In 1648, shortly after the Nguyen victory against another Trinh invasion, Phuc Lan decided to settle the newly captured 30,000 former Trinh soldiers in the region between Dien Ban and Tan Binh in Quang Nam and Phu Yen. Phuc Lan's rationale was,

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[124] L. Cadiere, "Le Mur De Dong Hoi: Etudes sur l'Etablissement des Nguyen en Indochine", *BEFEO*, 1906, p. 125.
[125] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 32.
[126] Both L. Cadiere and Charles Maybon accept 1615, the year when Phuong Luc was established as the year the Portuguese founder, Joao da Cruz started casting artillery pieces for the Nguyen. See L. Cadiere, "Le Mur de Dong Hoi", *BEFEO*, 1906, p. 125 & Charles B. Maybon, *Histoire Moderne du Pays d'Annam, 1592-1820*, Paris: Librarie Plon, 1920, p. 92, fn. 1.
[127] Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.
[128] Pierre Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais Sur les Cotes du Viet Nam et du Champa*, Paris: EFEO, 1972, p. 205. Many studies had been conducted on the life of Joao da Cruz. Out of these, Yves Manguin's is most authoritative. According to Manguin, Joao Da Cruz had arrived in Nguyen Southern Vietnam in only 1658, and not 1615 as suggested earlier by L. Cadiere. According to Manguin, before 1658, Da Cruz was making guns for the Cambodian King. Da Cruz also lived at Phuong Luc where he passed away in 1682. See Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais Sur le Cotes du Viet Nam at du Campa*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, 1972, pp. 205-206. See also L. Cadiere, "Le Mur De Dong Hoi", *BEFEO*, 1906, p. 125. For the Vietnamese version of the setting up of the Vietnamese foundary at Phuong Luc in 1631, see *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 32..

> The region to the south of Tan-Dien was formerly the land of the Cham barbarians. The area is vast yet scantily populated. If we resettle population there and provide land, cows and tools plus grains, there will be harvests and in a few years' time there will be tax returns from these lands for the use of the state. The descendants of the settlers will be old enough in twenty years' time to be used as soldiers".[129]

The programme was carried out and the northern soldiers were organised into fifty-men groups and supplied with half a year's supply of grains. The grains were provided by the well-to-do families in Nguyen Southern Vietnam. The settlers were also encouraged to hunt for resources of the mountains and the waterways.[130] It is interesting to note that since Emperor Le Thanh Tong defeated the Chams and extended the Vietnamese boundaries to Phu Yen, this was the first time that an attempt was made by a Vietnamese leader to fully exploit the new land and to people it. Such settlements however, also exerted pressure on the Chams and some form of hostile reactions was inevitable. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

At the time of his death in 1648, Nguyen Phuc Lan was only 48 years old. During his rule, the Nguyen almost suffered a great defeat by the Trinh had it not been for its elephant forces and superior cannons. By maintaining a profitable international trade as a key feature of Nguyen Phuc Lan's foreign relations, it enabled the acquisition of military supplies contributing to the continuation of Nguyen existence in the south.

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[129] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 15.
[130] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 16.

Nguyen Phuc Tan and Consolidation

Nguyen Phuc Tan was 29 when he succeeded his father. His rule of 39 years is only second in length to Nguyen Hoang's 55 years. Phuc Tan was an accomplished military commander, having proved his mettle by securing a big victory against the Dutch in a battle off the coast of Quang Nam in 1645.[131] By the time he became the Nguyen leader, the Nguyen were in the defensive against the Trinh. Nguyen Phuc Tan had to guide and lead his people against another four attempts by the Trinh army to dislodge his family from southern Vietnam. Despite this, there were still some form of relations between Nguyen and the Le Court. In 1649, a delegation was sent by Nguyen Phuc Tan to Thang Long to mourn the death of Emperor Le Tran Tong who had died. Trinh Trang, perhaps feeling sentimental about the family connection, rewarded the delegates in the usual manner with ceremonial gifts[132] Pleasantry aside however, the two families continued their clashes.

One of the first acts carried out by Nguyen Phuc Tan upon assuming power was to improve the security of the northern border. This was partly in response to the massing of a Trinh army at the borders of northern Bo Chanh Chau and also in reaction to the near disaster of 1648. He replaced his father's ineffective commander of Quang Binh Riverine force, Nguyen Trieu Van, with one of his family members, Nguyen Phuc Trang.[133] The latter immediately

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[131] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 3: 8.
[132] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 3.
[133] The *Tien Bien* gives Trang's name as Ton That Trang. The term 'Ton That' signifies honourable personage, a title normally reserved for immediate members of the royal family. In this regard, it is doubtful that it was actually used during this period. It is more likely to have been due to the compilers of the *Tien Bien*. Thus, Trang who was the brother of Nguyen Phuc Tan was probably known as Nguyen Phuc Trang. Do Van Ninh attributed the introduction of the term to

undertook to upgrade the security in the north. The efforts to beef up his forces continued through 1653 when Nguyen Phuc Tan inspected and reorganized his naval forces at An Chieu at Quang Binh.[134] In 1658, Joao da Cruz, a Portuguese national, was engaged to serve as the founder to cast better guns for the Nguyen at Phuong Luc Phong.[135] The guns that he produced gave the Nguyen the advantage over the Trinh who had inferior quality guns.

Throughout the Nguyen-Trinh conflict, the Nguyen continued to consolidate their hold on the southern territory. And during this period, the entire Nguyen machinery was focused on defending itself against the Trinh. However, there were some other developments. The Nguyen's international trade flourished, new ports were opened and old ones were dredged.[136] On the foreign front, one notable achievement of the Nguyen was the extension of Vietnamese territories into Champa far beyond the traditional boundary at Phu Yen in 1653 after which the Chams were forced to send tribute.[137] In 1658, the Vietnamese came into conflict with the Cambodians for the first time. The Nguyen defeated the Cambodians, and required the latter to send tribute to the Nguyen Court.[138] These developments will be discussed in the following chapter.

Between 1655 and 1658, as a retaliation against the Trinh, the Nguyen attacked the border region of Bac Bo Chinh Chau. By 1656, the Nguyen took seven huyen (districts) on the Bo Chinh Chau (in Nghe An) and set up a new

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Emperor Minh Menh in 1822. See Do Van Ninh, *Tu Dien Chuc Quan Viet Nam (Dictionary for Official Titles of Viet Nam)*, Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Thanh Nien, 2002, p. 736.

[134] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 4-5.

[135] Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais Sur les Cotes du Viet Nam et du Champa*, p. 205.

[136] In 1668 for instance, the port of Ho Xa at the Ho Xe river mouth at was dredged , *Tien Bien*, Vol. 5: 4b

[137] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 4

[138] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 22

garrison there.[139] Even though the newly gained territories were later lost in a major invasion from the Trinh in 1660, it demonstrated that the military might of the Nguyen army was almost equal to that of the Trinh.

Two important features can be observed regarding Nguyen Southern Vietnam during this period. First, due to the war, the south was cut off from the traditional heartland in the North in almost every aspect. The war had severed Nguyen Vietnam's cultural ties with the traditional North. Since 1627, the supply of officials trained in the Confucian classics from the north had stopped. This had unavoidably contributed to a gradual lessening of adherence to the traditional Vietnamese culture and learning, while at the same time, allowing the doors to be opened to the influx and acceptance of other cultures that Nguyen Vietnam came into contact with.[140]

The second characteristic as a result of the war was the increased level of contact between the Nguyen and foreigners, especially through trading activities. This development was paramount to the Nguyen's survival. Being provincial in nature, the Nguyen was weaker in both human and material resources when compared to the central government under the Trinh. Apart from that, the Nguyen also explored the economic resources available in the country.

The Nguyen also saw the need to revive the civil service examinations in order to recruit new administrators as well as to upgrade existing bureaucrats. Even though the examination requirements were much less stringent compared to the traditional public examination of the Le Court, it nevertheless, marked a

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[139] *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 15 & 22.
[140] Much of this is discussed by Li Tana in her *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 112-116.

significant step towards transforming a highly militarised administration to one where civilians had a larger role.[141] Indeed this shift toward more civilian-oriented concerns is reflected when Nguyen Phuc Tan restored and renovated the temple of Thien Mu.

The war between the Nguyen and the Trinh came to a stalemate in 1672 as neither side could overpower the other. This gave way to a truce. The military impasse of 1672 marks the beginning of a new phase in the Nguyen's history. Until then, the Nguyen had been on the receiving end of the conflict for most of the time so that the entire Nguyen machinery was focused on the war, leaving little room for other developments with the exception of international trade.

The Nguyen also traded with China. From a list compiled by Li Tana of Chinese junks from Southeast Asia travelling to trade in Japan between 1647-1720 (see Table 6 above), out of the eight places of origin, namely Tonkin, Quang Nam (southern Vietnam), Cambodia, Siam, Patani, Malacca, Jakarta (Batavia) and Bantam, Quang Nam came on top with 203 ships. The peak period was between 1651 and 1700.[142] It is important to point out that while the primary goals of these Chinese junks was to take part in the lucrative trade at Nagasaki, the ships had first travelled from China to exchange goods in the Southeast Asian ports including those at Quang Nam.

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[141] For a brief discussion on the Nguyen Mandarinate examination, see Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a L'Histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam Meridional (1600-1775)*, pp. 43-48.
[142] Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 68.

Table 6: Chinese Junks to Japan from Southeast Asian Countries (1647-1720)

	Quang Nam	Tongking	Cambodia	Siam	Patani	Malacca	Jakarta	Bantam
1647-1720	11	7	4		4		4	
1651-1660	40	15	37	28	20		2	1
1661-1670	43	43	24	26	9	2	12	
1671-1680	40	12	10	23	2		31	1
1681-1690	29	12	9	25	8	4	18	
1691-1700	30	6	22	20	7	2	16	
1701-1710	12	3	1	11	2	2		
1711-1720	8	2	1	5			5	
Total	203	63	109	138	49	8	90	3

Source: Adapted from Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asian Studies Program, 1998, p. 68.

The province of Quang Nam overshadowed every other region in the Nguyen domains in terms of its lion's share of the China trade. Thuan Hoa, the principal administrative region was reported to have supplied only pepper, whereas traders from China would leave Hoi An in Quang Nam with full cargoes. According to one Tran, a trader from Guangdong, the price of goods at Quang Nam were also cheaper.

Nguyen-China trade suffered slightly immediately after the fall of the Ming Dynasty. Between 1661 and 1683, the trade with China was restricted by a series of regulations imposed by the Manchu rulers. This was to curtail the remnant supporters of the Ming Dynasty from gaining resources and thus be able

to carry out their anti-Manchu activities. These regulations involved the banning of overseas trade and even travelling abroad for the Chinese from 1661. In order to ensure its successful implementation, the new Chinese government introduced a policy that removed coastal residents to several miles in-land in 1678. Despite these regulations, Nguyen-Chinese trade continued under the patronage of the anti-Manchu regimes, particularly, the Taiwan-based Zheng family.

The Zheng family, led by their leader, Zheng Chenggong, who was commonly known as Koxinga in western texts, captured Taiwan from the Dutch East India Company in 1662. Using the island as a base, Zheng was hoping to build up his forces and to continue his resistance against the Manchu. From there, junks were sent to Nguyen Southern Vietnam to procure supplies. Between 1662 and 1680, it was reported that two to four junks from Taiwan frequented the Nguyen's principal port of Hoi An.[143] However the trade volume contracted significantly by the end of the seventeenth century.[144]

According to Chen Chingho, the Nguyen-Chinese trade at Hoi An was important for the acquisition of arms and supplies for the anti-Manchu activities in Taiwan. At the same time, it was also a means for the Chinese to gain a profit.[145] The commodity traded remained the same as before, with Hoi An continuing its role as the exchange-centre for the larger Japan-China trade.

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[143] Lin Ren Chuan, *Ming Mo Qing Chu Si Ren Hai Shang Mao Yi* (Private Trade during the last years of Ming Dynasty and the Early Years of the Qing Dynasty), Shanghai: Hua Dong Press, 1987, p. 267. See also Ts'ao Yung-Ho, "Taiwan as an Entrepot in East India in the Seventeenth Century", *Itinerario*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, 1997, pp. 100-101.
[144] Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 89.
[145] Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi An (Faifo)*, p. 23.

Following the defeat of the anti-Manchu Zheng family in 1683, the Manchu Government lifted the ban on overseas trade. As a result of this, Nguyen-China trade greatly improved. The importance of the China trade to Nguyen Southern Vietnam was clear. This can be seen from the rates of entry and exit duties imposed by the Nguyen on foreign vessels trading in their ports. Apart from ships from Luzon and Siam, which were charged an entry duty of only 2,000 quan entry duty, Chinese ships from Guangdong and Fujian were charged 3,000 and 2,000 quan respectively. The rate was considerably lower than that which were levied on European ships. The lower rates helped to encourage Chinese shippers to continue to trade in Nguyen Southern Vietnam.

Table 7: Duties Charges in Nguyen Port (Per Ship)

Place of Origin	Entry Duties (Quan)	Exit Duties (Quan)
Guangdong	3,000	300
Fujian	2,000	200
Hainan	500	50
Westerners	8,000	800
Macao	4,000	400
Japan	4,000	400
Siam	2,000	200
Luzon	2,000	200

Source: *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 17 & *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, Vol. 4: 34.

From the data, it is evident that Chinese ships were welcomed by the Nguyen. By charging a much lower shipping duty for Chinese ships vis-à-vis ships from the West, the Nguyen were hoping to attract Chinese traders to Nguyen Vietnam. Even though Nguyen Vietnam's trade with China never took on an immediate strategic importance, such as the procuring of arms and ammunitions, the great number of Chinese ships that came to Nguyen Vietnam helped to ensure a large

income from the revenue collected through those visits. Apart from that, the coming of the Chinese ships also helped to draw in other traders who were keen to obtain goods from China.

Under Nguyen Phuc Tan, the Nguyen's position became more secure. This was especially so following Nguyen Phuc Tan's successful 1656 campaign that brought the war to the Trinh's doorsteps. The northern region that was captured in 1656, was lost to the Trinh again in 1660. After that, the military situation became bogged down and reached a stalemate where neither side was able to overcome the other.

The Trinh made one last attempt to defeat the Nguyen in 1672. The attack was nevertheless defeated by the Nguyen Army. With that last attack, the Trinh stopped trying to attack the Nguyen again. But the two sides remained in a state of hostility that would last until 1776. With the end of direct military threat from the Trinh, the Nguyen was able to devote greater attention to state-building and expansion to the South.

Conclusion

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rule was probably one of the most perilous periods of the Nguyen Lords' reign in southern Vietnam. His decision to openly defy the Trinh administration resulted in a protracted military threat posed by the latter on Nguyen rule, and formed the basis of his policies toward external trade and his dealings with the Europeans.

The wars that took place between 1627 and 1672 saw the Nguyen turning to foreign relations as a means to ensure its survival. In order to resist the Trinh's superior military machinery, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and his successors appealed to Japan's Tokugawa Shogunate to discourage its traders from trading in the Trinh north. At the same time, efforts were being stepped up to procure arms and ammunitions from abroad, particularly from the Portuguese in Macao.

The Trinh-Dutch alliance of the 1630s to the 1640s made the Nguyen wary of Dutch sincerity in trading with them. The attack by the Dutch fleet on Quang Nam in 1645 definitely made the Nguyen suspicious of foreigners, especially westerners. The contingency of the war however, compelled the Nguyen to strike a balance between xenophobia and pragmatism. The latter is evidence by Nguyen's encouragement of western trade and the tolerance of western missionaries in their domains. It was largely through the pragmatic employment of these channels of foreign relations that had ensured Nguyen's survival during the precarious years of 1627 and 1672 in the face of seven invasions by the Trinh.

The post-1672 period marked a major shift in the foreign relations of the Nguyen. It changed from one that was governed by the needs of the war to one that emerged from a time of relative peace. This is the focus of the next three chapters. Chapters Four and Five will be discussed in parallel, Nguyen's relations with Champa while Cambodia will be dealt with in Chapter Five and Six.