

Chapter Six

Southward Expansion: Contest for the Mekong Delta, 1698-1738

Among the most significant achievements of Nguyen Phuc Chu's (1691-1725) reign was the annexation of Champa and the conquest of Cambodian territories in the Mekong Delta. In the case of Champa, this annexation was the culmination of previous attempts to expand Nguyen territories.

Nguyen forward movement in Cambodia was however checked by an emerging Siam that was gaining stature and power in mainland Southeast Asia. The Nguyen responded with greater commitment in the affairs in the south in order to ensure that its position in the Mekong Delta would not be jeopardized by Siamese intervention in Cambodia. This chapter will investigate Nguyen's aggressive foreign policy towards its two southern neighbours, Champa and Cambodia. Closely linked to this dimension of foreign relations was the Nguyen's ties with the uplanders and other domestic developments.

Relations with the Uplanders

The *Tien Bien* records a category of tax-paying uplanders during the reign of Nguyen Phuc Chu (1691-1725). This practice started from an incident that took place in 1697 when five *sach* (tribes) of tax-paying uplanders from the two districts of Hoa Chinh and Hung Chinh in Phu Yen, started to carry out marauding activities on newly arrived Vietnamese people and disrupted trade. No explanation is offered in the Nguyen sources as to the reason behind the

marauding activities of the uplanders. It is likely that it was a response to the increasing pressure on the uplanders brought about by the influx of Vietnamese settlers into the area. The raiding uplanders were identified as from the *sach* (tribe) of A-La, A-Sach, A-Luc, A-Menh and A-Hsu. To overcome the marauding tribes, Nguyen Phuc Chu sent seven boats of troops against them, led by a commander named Dang. The five tribes were defeated and were compelled to pay taxes to the Nguyen.¹

The admission of the uplanders into the Nguyen taxation system was an effective method employed by the Nguyen to exert control over all uplanders living in its territories. This meant more effective collection of revenue. Taxes collected were generally in kind, especially jungle produce. However, this system of revenue collection was only as effective as its military reach.

In 1705, the region on the northwestern part of the Nguyen domain was attacked by uplanders from Luu Huan and Chao Vui. These two tribes were known to the Nguyen to be under the jurisdiction of the kingdom of Ai Lao or Lan Xang. The *Tien Bien* reported that, the king of Ai Lao, Don La had passed away.² The *Tien Bien's* report however, differs from other reports, both Vietnamese and those by later writers. It was reported that the situation in the kingdom of Ai Lao became chaotic after the death of King Surinyavongsa (r. 1637-1695). The old king had no heir and the kingdom suffered from struggles for succession. The situation resulted in the disintegration of the kingdom into three

¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7, 12. The boat troop is probably equivalent to a company of soldiers as in doi (company), see Yang Baoyun, *Contribution a l'histoire de la Principaute des Nguyen au Vietnam Meridional, 1600-1775*, Geneva: editions Olizane, 1992, p. 241.

² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 24.

separate ones.³ It is likely that Luu Huan was taking the opportunity offered by Ai Lao's internal political strife to break away from Ai Lao, and in the process, these activities spilled over into the Nguyen boundary.

The *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* reported Surinyavongsa's death in the entries of 1696.⁴ Succeeding Surinyavongsa was Thrieu Phuc who was reported to have been appointed by the Le court as the new king of Ai Lao. Thus, it is likely that the identity of Don La who is mentioned in the *Tien Bien* entry of 1705 as the King of Ai Lao (Ai Lao Vuong) who passed away in 1705 was the same person as King Surinyavongsa who had actually passed away in 1695.

Initially, Nguyen Phuc Chu dispatched a military detachment to overcome the chaotic situation in Ai Lao in order to prevent the situation from further spilling over into Nguyen areas but the mission failed after the two troop commanders died a few months after arriving in Ai Lao.⁵ Little is known of what happened in Ai Lao. The *Tien Bien* gives the impression that the two commanders were overcome by the hardship of the journey, became ill and died. The situation at Ai Lao was also of strategic importance as the tribal 'states' were a natural buffer with the Trinh. It was crucial that diplomacy should win them over or at least secure their neutrality at this point.

For Nguyen Phuc Chu, the main Vietnamese centre which bordered Ai Lao was the fortress of Tran Ninh, set up in 1701. Even though the fortress had

³ See Martin Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 13-14.

⁴ *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu Thuc Bien* (hereafter *Toan Thu*), Vol. 1: 1024.

⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 25.

guns emplacements,⁶ nonetheless, it was meant for guarding against any possible attacks from the Trinh, and not so much against the uplanders who were not the major security concern during the war between the Nguyen and the Trinh in 1627 to 1672. It was precisely because of its proximity with the Trinh borders that Nguyen Phuc Chu had to pay close attention to the situation in Ai Lao. Nguyen Phuc Chu's concern with the disturbances caused by these Lao tribes was real as he needed to protect his subjects from being attacked. More importantly, it was due to the fact that Ai Lao had continued tributary relations with the Le Dynasty since the days of the Le restoration movement. To Nguyen Phuc Chu, the Ai Lao tribes could be used by the Trinh as a means to infiltrate the Nguyen domain. The fact remains that it was the Le Court which had accorded recognition in 1696 to the ascension of Trieu Phuc as the king of Ai Lao and extended protection to him.⁷ Until 1699, Ai Lao continued to maintain relations with the Le Court. Faced with a rising by the Luu Huan tribe, the ruler of Ai Lao, Trieu Phuc sent a tribute emissary to the Le Court seeking intervention. The Le Court under the Trinh, managed to control the situation by asking Ai Lao to live peacefully with the Luu Huan tribe.⁸

Nguyen Phuc Chu's reading of the situation was correct as even though tribes such as Luu Hoan, those from Ai Lao and even as far as Nam Ban were in contact with the Nguyen, they continued their tributary relations with the Le Court. In 1714, the Le Emperor even sent a noble woman to wed the king of Ai Lao Trieu Phuc. This reflected the closeness of the relationship between the Le

⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 24.

⁷ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 1: 1024.

⁸ *Toan Thu*, Vol. 1: 1028.

Court and Ai Lao. Hence, any mishandling of the situation by the Nguyen could very well set the Trinh to launch an attack against the Nguyen under the pretext of protecting its vassal states.

In the south, Nguyen-uplanders relations appears to be influenced by the opportunity to be gained from instituting tributary relations. In August 1708, another incident involving uplanders took place near Quang Nam, the southern province of Nguyen Southern Vietnam. The tribe of Lu Ba in Baria, Nam Ban, conducted raids into the region near Phu Yen and Binh Dinh. A punitive force from Quang Nam was sent by the Nguyen to curb this insurrection. In another incident, also during the reign of Nguyen Phuc Chu, uplanders raided the Vietnamese settlements at the Cam Lo Region. This time, Nguyen Phuc Chu sent out five boats of troops from the Ai Tu garrison. They captured the leader of the group and his followers.⁹ As the incident again took place in the area of Cam Lo, it is likely that these uplanders could also have originated from Luu Huan.

It is interesting to note what eventually happened to the uplanders who were pacified by Nguyen Phuc Chu. Take the Nam Ban uplanders for instance, three years after they were defeated by the Nguyen Army at Phu Yen and Binh Dinh, they became a trusted ally of the Nguyen.¹⁰ In 1711, the ruler of Nam Ban, identified as King Ton in the *Tien Bien* and King Nga of Tra Loi, sent gifts to the Nguyen court at Phu Xuan. While they were there, the envoys of the two rulers requested Nguyen Phuc Chu to intervene on their behalf in their countries where the population had refused to pay taxes. According to the envoy, as a result of

⁹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 17.

¹⁰ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 10.

this, both tribes were unable to send proper tribute to the Nguyen Court. The two rulers also requested a Nguyen army to be sent as a show of force. Instead, Nguyen Phuc Chu sent a tax official by the name of Khiam Duc to investigate the situation. Later, a letter was sent to the two rulers who were given some clothes and official robes, along with bronze and ceramics wares. Nguyen Phuc Chu was also reported to have sent letters to the two tribes informing them about the tax rates and exhorted them to pay accordingly.¹¹ It is likely that such was the method employed by the Nguyen to incorporate the uplanders into its taxation system.

It is important at this juncture to observe that the Nguyen's relations with the uplanders did not immediately take on the form of tributary relations. To a great extent, uplander tribes which sent tribute lived beyond the Nguyen's perceived boundaries. Even though most of them constituted no more than a tribe, the Nguyen preferred to regard these tribes as separate independent entities. By according these tribes with the status of tribute-sending entities, this would provide the Nguyen the elevated status of being sovereign to a range of kingdoms and tribes. Again, the case of Nguyen Phuc Chu's treatment of Nam Ban and Tra Loi in 1711 and Nguyen Phuc Khoat's treatment of Hoa Xa and Thuy Xa in 1755 clearly demonstrates this point.

The two Nguyen deliberately elevated the positions of the chieftains of these people (Nam Ban, Hoa Xa and Thuy Xa) to that of *vuong* (king). The granting of official robes and valuable gifts to these 'kings' undoubtedly projected Nguyen overlordship over them. At the same time this elevated the Nguyen to the status of royalty. The accordance of status of 'king'(*vuong*) and 'kingdom'

¹¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 10.

(Quoc) to these uplanders also had strong economic and strategic dimensions. The 19th century Court Geographer, Phan Huy Hao described how in the northern part of Thuan Hoa:

Through the Viet Hai River Mouth linking up to Ai Lao, the various tribes also used this route, and there are routes linking various tribes in places as far as Luu Hoan, Ban Thuong, Tran Ninh and Que Hop. Traders from various *xa* (commune) also used this route to bring salt, dried salted ginger, iron, bronze, silver and tin wares to the land of the *man* (barbarians) people in exchange for rice, chicken, cows, jute, wax, rattan and all sorts of goods produced by the barbarians, and brought them back using rented elephants...¹²

As the Nguyen had set up a series of tributary ties with these uplanders, they also determined the value and items to be included as part of the tributes. The author of the *Nam Ha Tiep Luc*, Le Duy Dan, described items sent annually to the Nguyen Court by uplanders from various parts of southern Vietnam:¹³

¹² *Lich Trieu Hien Cuong Loai Chi*, Vol. 5: Geography.

¹³ *NHTL*, Vol. 4: pp. 36a-37a.

Table 9: Uplander Tribes and Tribute Taxes to the Nguyen

Name/ Location of Uplanders	Tribute Contents	Frequency of Tribute
Thuan Hoa: Two Mang (tribes) of To Bun and Thon Xo from Tay Truyen Xa Bun Chau:	One male elephant (five feet five inches tall), two sets of ceremonial clothes, 20 sets of fire-knife, two baskets of firestones/flints (each weight 15 catties), 20 sets of white linen, three sets of rhinoceros horns and 100 baskets of glutinous rice.	N.A.
Qing An Chau: The tribes of Xin Ban and Huong Can:	Every year a male elephant, 20 sets of white linen, rhinoceros horns 2 sets, and 100 baskets of rice.	Annual
Luong Tran Sach (tribe):	A male elephant annually.	Annual
Mang Vinh Dao: Huan Huan Mang (tribe):	One Male elephant and one set of ceremonial cloth.	N. A.
Duy Vui Hoa Long Sach (tribe):	Glutinous rice eight baskets.	N. A.
Lang Truong Sach:	Every Fifth Lunar month of the year to send 600 dates.	Annually
Lang Am La Mat:	To send 6 baskets of glutinous rice.	N. A.
Quang Nam : To La Phong Tay Thu Ban:	Gold	N. A.
Quang Nam: Tra Van Khiam Ho :	Gold	N. A.
Quang Nam: Tran Tan Phuc Khanh	Pepper	N. A.
Quang Nam: Bich Tan Chau	Olive	N. A.

Sources: *Nam Ha Tiep Luc*, Vol. 4: 36b-37a.

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

For other items such as pepper, olive, scented wood such as calambac and eaglewood, rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks, and rattan received were sold to Europeans and Chinese traders who frequented Nguyen ports.¹⁷ All these items fetched good prices when traded in the international market at Hoi An and other places.

Three observations can be made from the Nguyen-uplanders relations. Firstly, The complexity of Ngyen-uplander relations is captured in the confusion of the *Tien Bien* in its attempt to define the tributary system prevailing in the 18th century. The compilers of the *Tien Bien* were unsure of several issues while reconstructing the events, which they acknowledged in a note in the *Tien Bien*.¹⁸ For example, the compilers admitted their failure to establish if the two uplanders tribes were actually located in the borders of Phu Yen and Binh Dinh, or from

¹⁷ These items were among those offered for sale in the Nguyen domains, see Pierre Poivre, "Voyage de Pierre Poivre en Cochinchine, Description de la Cochinchine (1749-1750), *Revue de l'Extreme-Orient*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1885, pp. 81-121, cited in Li Tana and Anthony Reid (eds.), *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen*, p. 92-94.

¹⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 10.

'Hoa Quoc', which means the kingdom of Hoa Xa, a major Jarai tribe.¹⁹ This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Secondly, Nguyen Phuc Chu's action in rewarding the tribal chiefs with official robes and other goods can be seen as an attempt to use the tributary protocol normally practised by the Chinese and the Le. The granting of gifts, normally several times greater in value than the actual tribute sent was regarded as essential in demonstrating the benevolent and greatness of the tribute-receiving court, in this case, the Nguyen. Another occasion where a similar scenario took place was in 1712 when the king of Nga Ban Quoc²⁰ sent a tribute emissary to the Nguyen Court.²¹

Thirdly, the Court historians who compiled the *Tien Bien* had used the term 'King' to denote the status of the tribal chieftains. On one hand, it may seem that the Court historians were influenced by the 19th century type of relations between the later Nguyen Dynasty with its neighbours where a clearly defined tributary relations actually existed.²² Such practices of according kingship status to tribal chiefs could have been started during this time as it was clearly consistent with the thinking of Nguyen Phuc Chu regarding his authority.

The uplanders were among the first to come under Nguyen's sphere of influence. If in the past it was satisfied with trading with these tribes,

¹⁹ Hickey suggests 1751 as the year when a tributary relations was started between the Nguyen with the Thuy Xa and Hoa Xa, Hickey, *Sons of the Mountain*, p. 159; For a Vietnamese perspective of this, see Nguyen Tham, "Tim Hieu Dong Bao Thuong"(Understanding the Highland Comrades), *Que Huong*, No. 31, 1962, p. 137.

²⁰ Unable to establish the origins of this group of Uplanders. But it is interesting to note that it was accorded the status of a kingdom, or Quoc by the Nguyen. Thus, it can be speculate that the 'Kingdom' of Nga Pan was a large tribe that was probably the Banhnar tribe.

²¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8, p.14.

²² Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, pp. 234-246.

subsequently the Nguyen decided to control them directly thus securing jungle produce, its main commodity of exchange with international traders.

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

The Victory in Gia Dinh 1698

The Nguyen's concern over the potential security threat that might be posed by the Ming Chinese refugee military force that arrived in 1677, became a reality in 1688. This was the result of the Chinese refugees becoming involved in Cambodian politics by taking sides with rival Cambodian princes vying for the throne. This eventually compelled Nguyen to intervene in Cambodia for ten years resulting in the annexation of Gia Dinh, which was part of the Cambodian territory in the Mekong Delta.

There are different accounts on why the Nguyen got involved in Cambodia in 1688. According to the *Tien Bien*, it started when Huang Jing, a sub-commander of Yang Yandi, killed his commander and rebelled Nguyen rule.²³

²³ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 6. See also "Report from Ship No. 52 (5-7 No. 52)", 26 July 1689, in Yoneo Ishii (ed.), *Junk Trade in Southeast Asia*, p. 163. Yang Yandi was one of the two principal Chinese officers who had in 1679, brought 3,000 troops to join the Nguyen. They belonged to the remnants of the Ming Dynasty forces who fought under the flag of Koxinga in Taiwan.

When Huang Jing' began to blockade the river and to plunder Cambodian territories, Ang Sur (This was Chei Chettha III, r. 1677-1695, 1696-1700, 1701-1702 and 1704-1707; who is different from an earlier Ang Sur, r. 1659-1672), the Cambodian King refused to continue sending tribute to the Nguyen, purportedly in belief of the possibility of shaking off the Vietnamese influence by joining force with Huang Jing.

Ang Sur was not the only Cambodian king at that time. Foreign sources tell of the existence of first and second kings in Cambodia. This situation was the result of the first Nguyen intervention in Cambodia in 1658 when the Nguyen managed to exert some form of control over Cambodian court affairs by sponsoring one of the princes to become king at Gia Dinh. At the same time, as the Nguyen were unable to exert control over the entire country, another Cambodian king, purportedly pro-Siam had his seat of government at Oudong. Thus when Ang Sur began to join hands with Huang Jin, Ang Non (r. 1674-1691), the other king, or second king as he was known in foreign sources sought the help of Nguyen Phuc Tran (1687-1691).²⁴

Another account relating to the event is that by Chinese traders who were travelling from Cambodia to Japan. These traders arrived in Cambodia in December 1688. According to them, the Nguyen army intervened after receiving a letter from the governor of Guangdong asking the King of Guangnan (Quang Nam, the Nguyen) to punish Huang Jing. The Nguyen army entered Cambodia disguised as reinforcement troops for Huang Jing. The Chinese traders' account

²⁴ The joint-kings situation has been discussed in the previous Chapter Five.

also named Huang Jing as a pirate chief with 500 men and five ships.²⁵ No other sources corroborate this account.

The Nguyen account however, differs. According to the *Tien Bien*, the initial pretext given by the Nguyen army to intervene in Cambodia was actually as a punitive expedition against Ang Sur who had refused to pay tribute. In the punitive expedition, Huang Jing was named as the commander of the vanguard troop.²⁶ The Nguyen Army that entered Cambodia was reported to be 6,000 strong and travelled in 70 galleys. What transpired after the arrival of the Nguyen army demonstrated to some degree the conflict between the of tribute collection and pragmatism. The Nguyen army first defeated Huang Jing after he refused to submit to its general, Mai Van Long. After that the Nguyen army attacked a retreating Cambodian army at Oudong. A Cambodian delegation led by a lady presented itself at Mai Van Long's camp, bearing gifts to sue for peace. When asked by Van Long the reason why Cambodia refused to send tribute, Huang Jing was blamed for siphoning off the tribute. The Cambodians then promised to resume sending tribute.

According to the *Tien Bien*, the Cambodian delegation was allowed to return by Van Long, but not before it bribed the Vietnamese officers by giving them gold pieces.²⁷ The *Tien Bien*'s assertion on such incident was clearly a means to discredit Van Long and his troops for failing to press on for the total subjugation of the Cambodians. As the Cambodians did not come back with the

²⁵ "Report from Ship No. 52 (5-7 No. 52), 26 July 1689, in Yoneo Ishii (ed.), *Junk Trade in Southeast Asia*, p. 164.

²⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 6.

²⁷ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 10.

promised tribute, Van Long was pestered by Phu Xuan to act against the Cambodians. Van Long however, was trying to adopt the classic posture of a victorious army against a vassal state by stating that, “instead of using military might and killing, I can adopt a policy of trust and magnanimity to pacify the barbarian, it is one of the military strategy”. Thus, he ordered his army to turn to agriculture work on the occupied Cambodian land. Van Long miscalculated and paid heavily for a policy contradicting to Nguyen Phuc Tran’s wishes as the ruler was trying to secure a quick military victory in his first major military campaign as a ruler. Van Long was demoted from his position to that of a foot soldier in 1690 and Nguyen Huu Hao replaced him at the head of the army in Cambodia.

Nguyen Huu Hao was given the task for demanding from the Cambodians, among other things, 50 male elephants, 500 taels of gold, 2,000 taels of silver and 50 pieces of rhinoceros horn.²⁸ Hao was given the order to bring back these goods as tribute as well as to extract an apology from the Cambodians. Anything less than that would warrant military action against the Cambodians. When the message was conveyed to Ang Sur, he sent some cattle and livestock together with some gold and silver pieces. Only when threatened by Hao did Ang Sur send a more respectable tribute of 20 young elephants, 100 taels of gold and 500 taels of silver. The tribute was accepted by Hao, but it did not meet the demands of Nguyen Phuc Tran. This resulted in disagreement among the ranks of the Nguyen commanders on whether to press on with an attack as the Cambodians had clearly failed to fulfil the request of the Vietnamese. Shortly after that, another batch of gifts was sent by Ang Sur to the Vietnamese camp. This time, it consisted of 10

²⁸ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 6:14.

young elephants, 50 taels of gold and 100 taels of silver. Once again, Huu Hao accepted the gifts. This did not satisfy the warring camp but Huu Hao decided that the tribute was sufficient and retreated to Bien Hoa.

Like Van Long, Huu Hao was punished by Nguyen Phuc Tran for failing to secure the complete subjugation of the Cambodians, and for accepting the tribute despite it not fulfilling the demands of Nguyen Phuc Tran. And like his predecessor, Hao was stripped of his command and reduced to being a common citizen. However, by then, Nguyen Phuc Tran was approaching the end of his life and was too ill to launch another campaign against the Cambodians. Thus Ang Sur's Cambodia was spared from further threats by the Nguyen.

It is interesting to note at this point of the Cambodian tactics in delaying payment of tribute to the Nguyen. Li Tana is of the opinion that the Cambodians had bribed the two Nguyen commanders. The long distance that separated Phu Xuan and the Nguyen troops in the Mekong Delta had inevitably forced the commanders in the field to make decisions without the benefit of directly in consultation with the ruler at Phu Xuan. This inevitably made them vulnerable to the bribery of the Cambodians.²⁹

One dimension omitted in the Nguyen sources regarding the 1689-1690 Nguyen campaign in Cambodia was the question of Siamese involvement that came at the end of the campaign when Nguyen Huu Hao withdrew his forces in the sixth month of 1690. According to contemporary Chinese reports, Ang Sur was attacked by a combined Khmer-Chinese force led by Ang Non and Chen

²⁹Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 143-144.

Shangchuan, the Chinese superior of Huang Jing.³⁰ Ang Sur fled to Siam in the face of this attack, but was reported to have returned with a Siamese army to retake his city. Ang Non fled to Gia Dinh, and Chen withdrew his forces to the Vietnamese sphere of influence. This incident is not reported in the *Tien Bien* nor any of the Vietnamese sources. It is doubtful if the Siamese had actually intervened in Cambodia at this stage considering the fact that Siam was engulfed in a civil war between the pro-King Narai fraction and the party of King P'etraja who had usurped the throne in 1688. Thus, the Chinese account of Siamese involvement has to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, Cambodia did send a white elephant to King P'etraja of Siam in 1697.³¹

Subsequent to this, Nguyen Phuc Chu initiated a large resettlement programme aimed at peopling the vast former Cambodian territories that covers the area of Dong Phu (Phuc Long), Bien Hoa (Tran Bien), Saigon (Tan Binh) and Gia Dinh (Phien Tran), and to develop its economic potential in 1698. Apart from establishing permanent garrisons at these places, he also set up civil administrative units including the offices of Cai Pha (magistrate) and Khi Luoc (Registrar). Soldiers were mobilised to open up new land, and 40,000 households were recruited from the region south of Bo Chinh region at the Trinh-Nguyen borders to be resettled in the newly opened region. The region was placed under the administration of the Gia Dinh prefecture.³² However, no information is available as to how long it took for this relocation of settlers to be completed.

³⁰ See "Report from Ship No. 75 (5-9)", 6 August 1690, in Yoneo Ishii (ed.), *Junk Trade in Southeast Asia*, p. 166.

³¹ Ronald Bishop Smith, *Siam or History of the Thais from 1569 AD to 1824 AD*, Bethesda (Maryland): Decatur Press, 1967, p. 75.

³² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 14a.

With this relocation of settlers, new Vietnamese settlements were opened in the Khmer lands, taxes and rental were fixed. Nguyen Phuc Chu also allowed the Chinese merchants to set up a settlement of their own at Tran Bien, called Thanh Ha Xa, after the Qing Dynasty, opposite to the Minh Huong Xa (Ming Dynasty) at Phien Tran.³³

The Vietnamese resettlement programme took place along some interesting development in Cambodia. As a sign of trying to placate the anger of the Vietnamese and to settle the quarrel between the two Cambodian sides, the Cambodian king Ang Sur sent a delegation to Phu Xuan in 1696 suing for peace and promised to pay tribute to the Nguyen. Ang Im, who was the son of Ang Non and a Nguyen nominee to the Cambodian throne, was finally persuaded to return to Cambodia. And as a further sign of amity, Ang Sur married his daughter to Ang Im in 1697.³⁴

Two years later, another conflict broke out between the Nguyen and the Cambodian court. The *Tien Bien* attributed the root cause of the issue to the Cambodian King Ang Sur's action in disrupting trading activities in the Mekong Delta. But, it was more a question of Ang Sur's refusal to pay tribute that brought about the Nguyen's intervention in Cambodia. In March 1698, Nguyen Phuc Chu sent an envoy to Cambodia accompanied by 300 men on four ships to remind the Cambodians of their negligence in fulfilling their tributary obligations.³⁵ The Nguyen threatened to use force should the Cambodians fail to comply with the

³³ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 14b.

³⁴ Khin Sok, *Le Cambodge entre le Siam et le Vietnam*, Paris: EFEO, 1991, p. 36.

³⁵ See "Report from Ship No. 38 (5-27)", 30 July 1698, in Yoneo Ishii (ed.), *Junk Trade in Southeast Asia*, p. 175.

demand. After waiting for two months, the Nguyen delegation returned without success, and war broke out.

In November 1699, the Nguyen army entered Cambodia. But the main campaign only started in the second month of 1700. The Nguyen force under Nguyen Huu Khanh was joined by a Chinese force, remnants of the Ming forces.³⁶ The initial attack was led by Chen Shangchuan, the Chinese commander who managed to break the Cambodian resistance with their cannons. Ang Sur was forced to flee and Ang Im surrendered in Oudong. Two months later, Ang Sur's resistance came to an end when he sued for peace and promised to resume the tributary relationship with the Nguyen.³⁷ By then, Gia Dinh had fallen into Nguyen control. The Gia Dinh incident shows that Nguyen foreign policy was shaped by its need to secure more resources for state expansion. Here as in the conquest of Champa, formerly a buffer with Cambodia, also reveals a policy built on superior military capability vis-a-vis its immediate neighbours.

The Case of the English on Pulo Condore, 1702-1705

The Nguyen were conscious of the West's advance in technology and ability to project their power as evidenced from the manner they gave preference to European arms and ammunition especially during the Nguyen-Trinh war of 1627-1672. Nonetheless, such consciousness did not prevent the Nguyen from acting against the Westerners as demonstrated in the case of the destruction of the

³⁶ The Ming forces came to Nguyen Southern Vietnam in 1679. See discussion in Chapter Four.

³⁷ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 15.

Dutch fleet in 1644 in defence of Nguyen interest. In 1705, the Nguyen once again demonstrated its boldness in preserving its interests by acting against the English settlement on Condore Islands. The Pulo Condore incident is particularly interesting for the conflicting reasons provided by the Tien Bien and East India Company Records. The *Tien Bien* claims that Nguyen Phuc Chu indicated his wish to be rid of the English while the East India Company sources says that it was a Makasarese rebellion. The Tien Bien further claims that a Nguyen official bribed the Makasarese to rebel. Whatever the account, this throw interesting light on Nguyen's mercurial relations with western traders.

In 1702, Allen Catchpoole, the president of the English East India Company factory at Ningpo decided to close his factory at Chusan and withdraw to the islands of Pulo Condore, off the coast of southern Vietnam. The decision was mainly spurred by the increasingly unprofitable trade on the Chinese coast where the Company was engaged in the silk trade.³⁸ Prior to the English attempt in establishing their settlement on Pulo Condore, several European powers had also indicated interests in making the islands their strategic port. The French East India Company had expressed interest in occupying the islands in 1686. They requested that the French priest in Ayudhya, Bishop Laneau, to investigate the suitability of the island. Laneau then instructed one of his priests, Father Charmot to seek information on the geography and commerce of Pulo Condore and the nearby coast with relations to the island.³⁹

³⁸ Alastair Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1970, p. 39.

³⁹ "Instructions from Bishop Laneau to Father Charmot", December 1686, AMEP: Siam, Vol. 859, f. 503.

When Allen Catchpoole set up his factory on Pulo Condore, he did not send any delegation to the Nguyen Court. He only did so after being asked by the Governor of Tran Bien (Baria), Truong Phuc Phan who had learned of the English's presence through reports received from the local populace of Pulo Condore.⁴⁰ In his letter to Catchpoole, Nguyen Phuc Chu welcomed the English's presence on the islands. He also sought the Englishman's help in countering piracy in the vicinity of the islands and was exploring the possibilities of forming a strategic alliance with the English. As sign of good faith, Nguyen Phuc Chu exempted the English on Pulo Condore Islands from paying taxes and duties, something a privilege he hoped to impress upon the English that even the locals on the islands were not exempted. He also sent some local produce to Catchpoole which included five pieces of silk, two fans, 30 painted canes and 30 clouded ones.

For Catchpoole, the occupation of the island was a follow up to the permission granted to Thomas Bowyear by Nguyen Phuc Chu in 1696 to open a factory in the Nguyen domain, though the permission never stipulated the actual location.⁴¹ According to Bowyear,

“The answer was that in case of a settlement the proposal should be granted, and if I would right make them choice of grand for a factory; and Ung Coy Backe Lorke was ordered to show me the guns about the palace, to know if his honour (Nathaniel Higginson) could send the king such guns”⁴²

⁴⁰ “Letter from Chua Minh to Catchpoole”, 2 August 1703, India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, Vol. 628, f. 469. The letter consulted here is written in English. It is not known if it is an original from the Nguyen court or a translated version.

⁴¹ See “Thomas Bowyear’s Narrative”, 30 April 1696, in Alastair Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1970, pp. 50-51.

⁴² Thomas Bowyear’s Narrative in A. Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 51.

Nevertheless, for a time, Nguyen Phuc Chu was patient with the English settlement on the Pulo Condore. Thus, no action was taken until August 1703 when Nguyen Phuc Chu replied Catchpoole's letter to him sent through a delegation of Vietnamese who lived on the main island of Condore.⁴³ In his letter, Nguyen Phuc Chu reiterated his permission to the English to set up their factory.⁴⁴

The *Tien Bien* however, recorded a slightly different account. The chronicle actually refers to Catchpoole as a pirate who had illegally occupied Pulo Condore. But the actual situation was very different from the way it was described in the chronicles.

Nguyen Phuc Chu's decision to allow the Englishmen to stay on the island was most likely to have been governed by the Nguyen's desire to have the English on their side. During this time, the Nguyen were recovering from their war against the Cambodians, and were definitely desirous of better trade and to acquire better weapons. Thus permission was granted to the English. In his letter to Catchpoole, Nguyen Phuc Chu made no secret of his desire to have the English assisting the Nguyen in overcoming "robbers" and pirates. He also hoped the English would help him in defence against any eventualities.⁴⁵

As for trading arrangements, Nguyen Phuc Chu agreed to allow the English to trade in Nguyen ports and waters with three conditions: First, to assist

⁴³ There is no trace of Catchpoole's letter, but Nguyen Phuc Chu's opening statement in his letter suggested the existence of such letter: "The King of Cochin China gives this answer to the great general in pullo condore his letter, and to those of his council. "Letter from Chua Minh to Catchpoole", 2 August 1703, India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, Vol. 628, f. 469.

⁴⁴ "Letter from Chua Minh to Catchpoole", 2 August 1703, India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, Vol. 628, f. 469.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 474.

the Nguyen in fighting piracy; second, to behave civilly and to be properly attired when conducting affairs with the Vietnamese Court; and third, that the English will allow their ships to be boarded and examined by Vietnamese officials.⁴⁶

Two interesting point stands out in the conditions set by Phuc Chu. First, the Nguyen were hoping for English help in defence. “We are confident ye’ll exert your teeth and hoofs against our enemies and on this account you will do considerable piece of service and worth of you...”⁴⁷ Second, Phuc Chu had commented on the attire of the English delegation for the need to “be apparelled with your cloaths...”, thus the second condition of behaving civilly and be properly attired. A report by James Cunningham, the 5th member of Catchpoole’s five-men council of Pulo Condore reveals that no Englishmen were included in the envoy to the court of Phu Xuan. The presents were sent on their behalf by a certain ‘Chinese captain’ named Swee Qua.⁴⁸ Thus, in many ways, Catchpoole and his council had not observed the proper channel of conducting affairs with the Nguyen, especially by not having any member of the council presenting himself at the Nguyen Court.

All the conditions demonstrate the pragmatism of the Nguyen in conducting their foreign relations with the English. One of the most consistent features in the Nguyen’s foreign policy vis-à-vis the Westerners was the willingness to establish trade relations with the West, while at the same time, to further develop the relationship into attempts to acquire military technology or

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “Chua Minh to Catchpoole”, 2 August 1703, *Home Miscellaneous*, Vol. 628, f. 477.

⁴⁸ “James Cunningham to Baldwyn & Wingate”, 4 May 1705, *MS Bradley 24* (Bodleian Library), f. 162. Cunningham was later executed by the Nguyen in Phu Xuan.

establish an alliance as clearly shown by Nguyen Phuc Chu's efforts in soliciting the English into a defence pact. In pursuing such a line of policy, Nguyen Phuc Chu was willing to compromise by granting exemption of trade tariffs for the English should they enter into a defence pact with the Nguyen.

As there was no answer from Catchpoole and his council to Phuc Chu's letter, it is conceivable that the Nguyen's offer was either accepted without further debate or simply ignored by Catchpoole. However, two years later, the English factory on Pulo Condore was abandoned after Catchpoole and members of his council were massacred. Many different explanations are offered about the incident of March 1705. The most common answer provided by Western sources was that Catchpoole and members of his council were killed by a group of Makasar lascars who were detained by Catchpoole beyond their term of service of three years. These soldiers were recruited from Macassar by the East India Company to serve as guards. Apparently, their dissatisfaction was already known to the council.⁴⁹ On the other hand *Tien Bien* offers a different view altogether. According to the chronicle the English had stayed on Condore Islands for several years without ever reporting to the governorship at Tran Bien (present day Bien Hoa).⁵⁰ Truong Phuc Phan, the governor then directed 15 men from 'Java'⁵¹ to set fire to the factory and to help the Vietnamese rid the island of the Englishmen who were termed as pirates. Li Tana is of the opinion that the *Tien Bien* was

⁴⁹ See *MS Bradley 24*.

⁵⁰ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 21.

⁵¹ The term Java need not necessarily mean the island of Java per se. The term was commonly used by indigenous people of Indochina when referring to people from insular. In the case of the Cham, the term Jawa refers to Malay speakers and those from the maritime Malay world, see Po Dharma (comp.), *Quatre Lexiques Malais-Cam Anciens, rédigés au Campā*, Paris: Ecole Française D'Extrême-Orient, 1999, p. 323. See also "Dr. James Pound to Court of Managers, East India Company", 3 May 1705, *MS Bradley 24*, f. 8.

correct in most instances except for the year of the incident. The *Tien Bien* places the incident in 1703 but survivors say it happened in 1705.⁵²

After the massacre, Truong Phuc Phan was reported to have rewarded the Makasarese who took part in the massacre. He also brought back prisoners and booty from the islands. The accounts of the English survivors also confirm some of the events described in the *Tien Bien*. But no satisfying answer can be found on the sudden change of heart of the Nguyen to hostility vis-à-vis the English factory on Pulo Condore. The letter of the Nguyen clearly demonstrated the willingness of the Nguyen to engage the English in trade, and could hardly suggest otherwise.

The most likely explanation for Nguyen Phuc Chu's action with regard to the massacre is found in Reverend Dr. James Pound's account of the incident to the East India Company. Rev. Pound was the chaplain to the English factory. According to him, in January 1704, the king of Cambodia sent a vessel with a mandarin (official) with some presents, including cattle, to Catchpoole, and a letter to invite the English to trade and settle in Cambodia.⁵³ When the massacre took place, there were 38 Cambodians staying in the settlement, the same Cambodians who came bearing gifts. Dr. Pound mentioned how these Cambodians had sided with the Englishmen during the fight, but were annihilated by the Makasarese and the 200 odd Vietnamese who lived on the islands. Pound also noticed how these Cambodians were not in good relations with the

⁵² Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 75-76. Among the survivors were Dr. James Pound and James Cunningham. See "James Cunningham to Baldwyn & Wingate", 4 May 1705, *MS Bradley 24* (Bodleian Library) and Dr. James Pound to Court of Managers for the East India Company", 3 May 1705, *MS Bradley 24*.

⁵³ "Dr. James Pound to Court of Managers for the East India Company", 3 May 1705, *MS Bradley 24*, f. 1-2.

Vietnamese and the two sides were mutually suspicious of one another. "It was not to be doubted but that the Cochinchina Quansy [official], who was on the island sent from the governor of Barea (or Dingamoy) would also be bold of this opportunity of exerting himself in cutting off the Cambojas, by which he would certainly gain much honour...."⁵⁴ Hence the *Tien Bien*'s assertion of a conspiracy is partly true as the Vietnamese were clearly wary of the presence of the Cambodian embassy on Condore Islands. The thought of allowing the Cambodians, a vassal state of the Nguyen to form a military alliance with the English on Condore Islands was probably the chief reason for Nguyen Phuc Chu and Truong Phuc Phan to act against the Englishmen.

The unfortunate James Cunningham's letter helps to confirm the Cambodian factor. Cunningham, a member of Catchpoole's council at Pulo Condore was captured by the Makasarese, turned over to the Vietnamese and was brought back to Phu Xuan along with the loot from the factory. There, he was interrogated before being executed. In a farewell letter to his colleagues Baldwin and Wingate who managed to escape to Cambodia after the massacre, Cunningham outlined three reasons, as to why the massacre took place. According to him, first, the English were arrogant for failing to inform the Nguyen authority prior to their occupation of the islands. Second, Nguyen Phuc Chu was upset that no representative of the council was present when Catchpoole's delegation arrived at the Nguyen Court, insulted that they sent a

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 6

third party. Third, Catchpoole had failed to inform the governor of Tran Bien of having sent a ship to Cambodia.⁵⁵

The Cambodian factor was clearly the chief reason for the Nguyen's harsh decision to turn against the Englishmen. Cunningham related how he was asked by Truong Phuc Phan upon his arrival in Tran Bien as to why he (Cunningham) had sent two Englishmen to Cambodia, and how much money had been given to them.⁵⁶

Nguyen Phuc Chu's decision to destroy the English settlement on Pulo Condore is consistent with Nguyen policy in dealing with foreigners who are perceived to be in league with enemies, in this case, the Cambodians. Earlier, Nguyen action against the Dutch in 1643 when it conspired with the Trinh, as well as its treatment of Christian missionaries who were in contact with missionaries working in Trinh north, as discussed in Chapter Two are only two examples of the Nguyen preparedness to act in order to ensure its security. It is possible that had Catchpoole and his council refrained from dealing with the Cambodians, the massacre might not have taken place. The Nguyen's sensitivity towards the presence of an official Cambodian delegation on Pulo Condore was reflected in the timing of the massacre, which coincided with the visit of the Cambodian delegation to Catchpoole. Nguyen Phuc Chu was clearly wary of the Englishmen's behaviour in opening up trade with Cambodia, a country which was only recently at war with the Nguyen. He had every reason to promote trade with the Englishmen as well as to acquire military support. In fact, the Nguyen concern

⁵⁵ "James Cunningham to Baldwyn & Wingate", 4 May 1705, *MS Bradley* 24, f. 162.

⁵⁶ See *Ibid.*, f. 163 & "Diary of Ambrose Baldwyn Relating to the Transactions at Condore", 24 August 1705, *MS Bradley* 24, f. 153.

over the English-Cambodian relations came barely four months after the Vietnamese attack on Cambodia August 1705,⁵⁷ launched from Gia Dinh in order to install a Nguyen nominee on the Cambodian throne.⁵⁸

The Nguyen's action on Pulo Condore resembled their action in 1645 when they defeated a Dutch naval force who were collaborating with the Trinh. Even though the Dutch did return to trade in Nguyen Vietnam, the relationship was never the same again. In the case of the Englishmen, there were no more attempts to trade in Nguyen Vietnam until the Chapman mission of 1778. By then however, southern Vietnam was under another regime.

Nguyen treatment of the foreign elements in Pulo Condore reveals its consistent attitude towards what it perceived as dangerous elements. It realised that the westerners could turn against it and support Cambodia.

Further Tussles with Siam Over Cambodia

The next Nguyen intervention in Cambodia came in 1705 when Nguyen Phuc Chu decided to send Ang Im (Kev Fa III), who was the son of Ang Non (r. 1674-1691), the pro-Nguyen King, back to Cambodia. The pro-Vietnam Cambodian king had been living in Gia Dinh since 1697. An army under Nguyen Huu Van attacked Cambodia with the intention of installing Ang Im as the rightful ruler of the Cambodians. The event marked Vietnam's first direct military confrontation with Siam over Cambodia. Thus far, the two sides only met once when Chinese troops from Nguyen territories fought Siamese troops in Cambodia in 1689.

⁵⁷ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 24b.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Upon learning of the arrival of the Nguyen army, Ang Sur (Chey Chettha III), the other contending Cambodian prince, requested the Siamese to intervene on his behalf. A battle took place between the Nguyen army and the pro-Siamese Ang Sur forces, and culminated in the defeat of the Ang Sur's forces which consisted of Cambodians and Siamese troops. With that, Ang Im was installed as the sole King of Cambodia.⁵⁹ Nguyen Phuc Chu's decision to act so swiftly against Ang Sur was most likely due to fear that the latter might attempt to solicit help from the English factory on Condore Islands. As discussed in the preceding section, a Cambodian official delegation was on the island at the beginning of 1705, inviting the Englishmen to trade in Cambodia.⁶⁰

With Ang Sur having escaped to Siam, Nguyen's control over Cambodia was complete, albeit via the proxy rule of Ang Im. This gave the Nguyen an unbroken ten years of dominance over Cambodia from 1705 to 1715. During this period, the Vietnamese, under the Nguyen had moved further into the heart of the Mekong Delta by taking up land and opening new settlements in areas such as Vinh Long, An Giang, and Dinh Tuong.⁶¹

Uncontrolled Vietnamese influx into the Mekong Delta and Cambodia began to worry Nguyen Phuc Chu. For it was apparent that without proper control, Vietnamese immigrants would be nothing more than vagabonds and drifters who would not be under the jurisdiction of any ruler. This would mean a

⁵⁹ There are some discrepancies regarding Ang Im's reign years. Mak Phoeun gives the period of the reign of Ang Im as 1701 to 1702. However, *Tien Bien* mentioned how he was installed in 1705. See Mak Phouen, Mak Phoeun, *Histoire du Cambodge, de la fin du XVI Siecle au debut du XVIII*, Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, 1995, p. 427. See also *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 25.

⁶⁰ "Diary of Ambrose Baldwyn Relating to the Transactions at Condore", 24 August 1705, *MS Bradley* 24, f. 153.

⁶¹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 26.

possible loss of potential revenue in the form of poll-tax as well as potential corvee labour and military recruits. In September 1711, Nguyen Phuc Chu ordered one of his officials from the Tam Ty system, Thuan Duc, to go to Cambodia to gather the Vietnamese who had moved there.⁶² He also gathered people to be resettled in the two frontier areas of Tran Bien and Phien Tran. Apart from allocating land to these people for them to set up settlements and villages, Nguyen Phuc Chu also allowed them to be exempted from paying tax and military service for three years.⁶³

Tributary relationship between the Nguyen and the Cambodians during this period were peaceful. Unlike the Chinese court or the later Nguyen Dynasty where tributary ceremonies were described in detail, there are not many sources which can provide us with details of the tribute sending process of the Cambodian or Champa. Nevertheless, the following information gives us some idea that the Nguyen Lords had established certain routes for the tributary missions from both Cambodia and Champa enroute to Phu Xuan. In describing the various temples found in Khanh Hoa province, the gazetteer mentions one Gua-Quan Tu (Temple of Crossing Boundaries), situated along the 'quan lo'(official/Mandarin route) at the village of An Loc in Phuoc Dien district as one of the stops for tribute delegations from Thuan Thanh (Champa) and Cambodia before continuing on their journeys to Phu Xuan in the following day.⁶⁴ The establishment of such route was important as it helped to institutionalise the entire tribute-sending

⁶² Nguyen Phuc Chu also reprimanded Nguyen Cuu Van for neglecting the welfare of the Vietnamese who had moved there, see *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 10.

⁶³ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 10.

⁶⁴ *DNNTC*, Vol. 10: Khanh Hoa, pp. 20-21.

the latter had traditionally been a vassal state of Siam even before the Nguyen came into the picture.

Siamese effort to subjugate the Cambodians can be traced to the 13th century when the Tais under the Sukhothai began to challenge the Cambodian Angkor Empire and established a Tai political entity. Under the Court of Ayudhya, the Tai sought to reverse Cambodian control over the Menam Chao Phraya valley and invaded Cambodia. In the attack which took place in 1431, the Tais sacked Angkor, forcing the Cambodians to shift their capital to Oudong and Phnom Penh.⁶⁶ Since then, the Siamese, as the Tais were later known, maintained a form of suzerainty over Cambodia. In return, the Cambodians were obliged to send tribute to the Siamese Court.⁶⁷ Thus, when the Nguyen began to intervene in Cambodia, they became contenders with the Siamese.⁶⁸

Over the next 60 years, the Nguyen fought with Siamese on eight occasions over Cambodia - in 1711, 1715, 1739, 1748-1750, 1757, 1766-1767, 1768-1769 and finally in 1770-1772. In between, the two sides also fought over Ha Tien.

⁶⁶ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993, p. 79.

⁶⁷ For a discussion on the early Cambodian-Siamese tributary relations, see David P. Chandler, "Cambodia Before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794-1848", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973, pp. 60-63.

⁶⁸ Siam however, did not feature in the Nguyen chronicles until 1702 when Nguyen Phuc Chu sent his tribute mission to China on board a Siamese tribute ship, see *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 20.

The Ha Tien Factor in Nguyen's Cambodian Venture, 1711

Nguyen Phuc Tran's method in capitalizing on the Chinese presence in the Mekong Delta to expand Nguyen power into Cambodia was simply employed by Nguyen Phuc Chu. Under Nguyen Phuc Tran, the Chinese were settled on contested territories in the Mekong Delta. Apart from developing these areas, the Chinese also provided military service to the Nguyen in defending these areas. On several occasions, as in 1689 and 1705, they also played pivotal roles in assisting Nguyen forces in attacking Cambodia. In 1711, Nguyen Phuc Chu faced another situation in which Nguyen power was extended into Ha Tien through the involvement of a Chinese refugee named Mac Cuu.⁶⁹

The position and the roles played by the Mac family of Ha Tien in furthering Nguyen interests is one of the most curious situations in Vietnam-Cambodia relations as the Mac family actually presented the Nguyen with a piece of territory that was situated far beyond the Nguyen-Cambodian borders. Peam or Panthaimas as it was called in the Khmer language, Ha Tien was traditionally a part of the Khmer kingdom. It was merely a fishing village and one of Cambodia's minor sea ports in the Gulf of Siam. In 1681, the town received a new governor by the name of Mac Cuu.

⁶⁹ The subject of the Mac family and their endeavour has been the subject of several studies. First, Paul Boudet, "La Conquete de la Cochinchine par les Nguyen et le role des emigres Chinois", *BEFEO*, Vol. 43, 1942, pp. 115-132. This was followed by Emile Gaspardone in 1952, "Une Chinois des Mers de sud, le fondateur de Ha Tien", *Journal Asiatique*, Vol. 240, 1952, pp. 363-385. Chen Chingho, "He Xian Zhen Ye Zhen Mo Shi Jia Pu Zhi Shi (Notes on the Genealogy of the Mac Family from Ha Tien)", *Wen Shi Zhe Xue Bao (Bulletin of the College of Arts of Taiwan National University)*, No. 7, 1956, pp. 77-140. In 1983, Nicholas Sellers wrote *The Princes of Ha Tien (1682-1887)*, Brussels: Edition Thanh Long, 1983. A more recent effort is Liam C. Kelley's "Thoughts on a Chinese Diaspora: The Case of Macs of Ha Tien", *Crossroad*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2000, pp. 71-98.

Unlike Yang Yandi and Chen Shang Chuan, discussed in the previous chapter, who were direct remnants of anti-Manchu military forces, Mac Cuu was a Cantonese from Lui Zhou who left China in 1671 to venture in trade in Southeast Asia. From a family of considerable means, he traded in the Philippines and Batavia before arriving at Oudong, the capital of Cambodia at that time.⁷⁰ In Oudong, he was well received by King Chey Chetta III (or Ang Sur in Vietnamese. This was during the first time of Ang Sur's reign in 1677-1695) who took him into his service. In 1681, King Ang Sur granted Mac Cuu the governorship of Panthaimas,⁷¹ the Cambodian territory that corresponded with present day Ha Tien. Panthaimas was at that time mainly an unsettled waste of shifting swamps and tangled mangroves with a small port called Mang Kham.⁷² Mac Cuu renamed the place Ha Tien or Fairy of River. Mac Cuu started gambling dens and began to amass great wealth, and Ha Tien prospered as Mac Cuu was able to attract traders and new settlers to the place.⁷³

Mac Cuu was made an official with the rank of an *Oc Nha*. After twenty years of his governorship, Ha Tien grew from a sleepy backwater to become an attractive trading port for the gulf of Siam. Ha Tien also attracted many traders

⁷⁰ There is no record in Chinese nor Vietnamese sources that mention Mac Cuu having traded in the Philippines and Java before coming to Ha Tien. This is mentioned by Pierre Poivre who visited Nguyen southern Vietnam in 1749-1750. See Pierre Poivre, *Voyage d'un Philosophe, par Pierre Poivre*, Yerdon, 1768, pp. 67-78.

⁷¹ Also known as Bantaey M'eas in Thai. It was also known as Mang Kham.

⁷² Mang Kham was also used by the Siamese during their attack on Chey Chetta II's Cambodia in 1623. See Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, p. 19.

⁷³ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 8: 4.

and settlers, especially Chinese political refugees from the former Ming Dynasty who were attracted by the offer of free land and unlimited trading opportunities.⁷⁴

In 1706, Mac Cuu's governorship was threatened by a Siamese army under King P'rachao Sua (r. 1703-1709). The army was part of an intervening force in Cambodia following a succession dispute in that kingdom.⁷⁵ Ha Tien was used by the Siamese troops as an entry point. The Siamese plundered Ha Tien. Mac Cuu and his family were carried off to the Siam Court at Ayudhya. After living in Siam for two years, he managed to escape and returned to Ha Tien.⁷⁶ Mac Cuu was advised by one of his subordinates, To Quan (Su Jiun), to seek the Nguyen's protection against the Siamese.⁷⁷ According to To Quan, "The Khmers are poor in character and prone to cheating, and least loyal, thus we cannot rely on them. But if we submit to Dai Viet, it would be more secure as military aid would be more readily available in any eventuality. It is advisable that you should bring gifts and your subordinates to indicate your submission".⁷⁸ The advice was followed by Mac Cuu who sent two of his kinsmen, Zhang Jiu and Li She to submit to the Nguyen on his behalf in 1711.

⁷⁴ Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, p. 16. It is interesting to note that the area around Ha Tien was formerly under the Funan Kingdom in the Second century AD where trade also thrived.

⁷⁵ According to the chronology provided by Bowring, the 1706 Siam attack was led by the son of P'chao Sua who drove the Vietnamese out from Cambodia, whereas Ronald Bishop Smith's account of P'rachao Sua (r. 1703-1709) does not provide information on the 1706 invasion of Cambodia. See John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam Vol. I*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 58; see also Ronald Bishop Smith, *Siam or the History of the Thais from 1569 AD to 1824 AD*, 1967, pp.76-77.

⁷⁶ This information is not provided in the Vietnamese sources, but found in the genealogy of the Mac family. See *Ha Tien Mac Thi Gia Pha* (The Genealogy of the Mac Family of Ha Tien), MS A. 1321 in the Institute of Han-Nom Collection, p. 2; See also Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, pp. 19-20.

⁷⁷ *Mac Thi Gia Pha*, p. 3; *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 2. The *Tien Bien* does not mention the role of To Quan (Su Jiun), but only about Mac Cuu's emissaries Zhang Jiu and Li She who came to Phu Xuan submitting to Nguyen Phuc Chu on behalf of Mac Cuu, and requesting Mac Cuu to be appointed the chief of Ha Tien, see *Tien Bien*, Vol. 7: 4.

⁷⁸ *Mac Thi Gia Pha*, p. 3.

The delegation was received by Nguyen Phuc Chu who favoured the overtures made by Mac Cuu. At this time, the Nguyen had already encroached deep into Cambodian territories, having absorbed King Ang Sur's (r. 1696-1700) territories including Phuoc Long (Bien Hoa) and Tan Binh (Saigon) in 1698. However, the extent of the Nguyen encroachment in Cambodian territories was confined to the region east of River Bassac (or Cambodian River), a tributary of the Mekong. Through Mac Cuu's submission, Nguyen Phuc Chu was able to further Vietnamese influence into Cambodian territories on the western part of the Bassac River without much strife.

In 1714, Mac Cuu went to Phu Xuan to pay homage to Nguyen Phuc Chu. Mac Cuu was well-received by Nguyen Phuc Chu who was impressed with him. More importantly, Mac Cuu's submission to the Nguyen court presented the Nguyen with an attractive proposition. Mac Cuu was given the appointment of Tong Binh, or military commander, and was asked to govern Ha Tien on behalf of the Nguyen with the rank of Do Doc (Governor).⁷⁹

The granting of a mandarin rank signified the beginning of a tributary relationship where rulers of lesser entities would receive such an appointment in return for tribute. In the case of Mac Cuu's position vis-à-vis the Nguyen, the Vietnamese chronicles give the impression that with Mac Cuu's visit of 1714, Ha Tien immediately came under the Nguyen's jurisdiction. Nonetheless, the actual relationship may prove to be different if one were to look at Mac Cuu's

⁷⁹ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 1-2. There are differences in the date Mac Cuu submitted to the Nguyen. Both the *Tien Bien* and the *Liet Truyen Tien Bien* concur on 1708 being the year Mac Cuu sent two of his subordinates to submit to Nguyen Phuc Chu, and 1711 as the year Mac Cuu visited Phu Xuan. However, the *Mac Thi Gia Pha* mentions 1714 as the year Mac Cuu submitted to the Nguyen, see *Mac Thi Gia Pha*, p. 3.

perception of his position vis-à-vis the powers that surrounded Ha Tien. It is known that even though Mac Cuu had submitted to the Nguyen Court, and to a certain extent, accepting a tribute-tax relationship, Mac Cuu also at the same time, sent tribute to the Cambodian court at Lovek.⁸⁰

The move by Mac Cuu in simultaneously sending tribute to the Nguyen and the Cambodian courts is a strategic move unique to Southeast Asian politics then. For Mac Cuu, an acknowledgement of vassalage, an oath of loyalty, or the payment of tribute were the practical realities, playing his two patrons against one and other. Further more, the most abject declaration of submission and self abnegation were performed by envoys at no cost to personal prestige. The subject state could continue to enjoy the most complete independence from his nominal overlords. This was the situation as the Cambodians were militarily weak and the elites preoccupied with power struggles. The Nguyen, though militarily more powerful, could not project itself too far from its furthest outpost at Gia Dinh, some 200 km away from Ha Tien. But Mac Cuu also would not want to take the risk. Thus, the case of Mac Cuu and his relations with the Nguyen and the Cambodian court fell into this pattern of traditional diplomacy in the region. However, it is most likely that Mac Cuu stopped sending tribute to the Cambodians some time after 1714. Since then, his allegiance was to the Nguyen.

In relation to Mac Cuu and Ha Tien's position under Nguyen rule, it is interesting to note that the Mac family and their followers considered Ha Tien as a *thuoc quoc* or vassal state of the Nguyen.⁸¹ To the Nguyen however, Ha Tien was

⁸⁰ Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, p. 23.

⁸¹ *Mac Thi Gia Pha*, p. 3.

considered as part of Nguyen domain as Mac Cuu presented it to the Nguyen and not a tributary state.

Subsequent events had actually reinforced the notion that until the Tay Son rebellion, Ha Tien was very much an autonomous entity though under the influence or protection of the Nguyen. With the protection of the Nguyen secured, Mac Cuu went about the business of rebuilding Ha Tien.

In 1710, the Nguyen once again interfered in the affairs of the Cambodian court when they supported King Ang Im's claim to the Cambodian Throne and disposed of Thommo Reacha II. The latter returned in 1715 with the support of the Siamese army. The Siamese army which consisted of 15,000 men was defeated by a combined Nguyen and Cambodian force. Both Ang Im and the capital of Oudong were safely defended. In 1717, the Siamese returned with 50,000 forces and a naval force of 20,000 men which struck at Ha Tien before joining the main force.⁸² Once again, Ang Im was compelled to appeal to the Nguyen for assistance. Alexander Hamilton, the English traveller who visited Ha Tien in 1720 remarked, "He (the King of Cambodia) then addressed the king of Couchin-China for Assistance and Protection, which he obtained, on condition that Cambodia, should become tributary to Couchin-China [sic] which was agreed to, ..."⁸³ Even though the Vietnamese force of 15,000 was able to drive out the Siamese, mainly with the help of an outbreak of cholera epidemic in the Siamese

⁸² The actual date of the invasion is disputable. Most sources however, including *Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi*, *Dai Nam Liet Truyen Tien Bien* and *Tien Bien* agreed on 1715. Alexander Hamilton who arrived at Ha Tien in 1720 mentioned 1717. See Alexander Hamilton, *Account of the East Indies*, written 1727, London: The Argonaut Press, 1930, p. 115.

⁸³ Alexander Hamilton, *Accounts of the East Indies*, p. 115.

camp, the Siamese managed to plunder Ha Tien before they left. Ha Tien had to be rebuilt again by Mac Cuu.

In 1724, Mac Cuu once again presented himself at Phu Xuan. He was well received by Nguyen Phuc Chu. It was to be Mac Cuu's last visit to the Nguyen capital. He passed away in 1735 at the age of 80. Mac Cuu was succeeded by his son Mac Thien Tu, who remained loyal to the Nguyen. Mac Thien Tu was the son of a Vietnamese woman from Dong-Mon, Bien-Hoa.⁸⁴

In response to Mac Cuu's death, Nguyen Phuc Tru (1725-1738), who had succeeded his father as Nguyen ruler, posthumously accorded Mac Cuu the title of grand pillar of the kingdom for the establishment of a township (Tran), and the posthumous rank of a Do Doc (general).⁸⁵ Possibly in his efforts to further entice Mac Thien Tu to remain loyal to the Nguyen rule, Nguyen Phuc Tru named Mac Thien Tu as the Do Doc (Commander of Navy and land forces) to continue garrisoning Ha Tien. He also granted Mac Thien Tu three seagoing ships (named Dragon Seal ships) and exempted them from exit duties. This was to allow Mac Thien Tu to carry out shipping expeditions "to collect and purchase of treasures to be presented to the Nguyen Court".⁸⁶ These ships were probably built by Chinese craftsmen in Gia Dinh.⁸⁷ Nguyen Phuc Tru also accorded a great deal of autonomy to Ha Tien by allowing Mac Thien Tu to mint his own coins of minor

⁸⁴ Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, p. 19.

⁸⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 9: 12.

⁸⁶ *Tien Bien*, 9: 13.

⁸⁷ *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (hereafter *PBTL*), Vol. 2: 10. The construction of ocean-going vessels was mainly undertaken in Gia Dinh, and normally cost 1,000 Quan each.

value by using zinc known as "Sapèques"(possibly the same metal as Tutenag).⁸⁸ These measures also strengthened Ha Tien's autonomous status. Under the Mac family, Ha Tien was required to send to the Nguyen Court, a tribute valued at 3,000 quan once in every three years, and 300 quan annually.⁸⁹

The cordial relations between the Nguyen and the Mac continued throughout the entire period of Nguyen rule. Even though the Mac had submitted to the Nguyen, Mac Thien Tu was left very much on his own to administer Ha Tien. The arrangement nevertheless, suited the Nguyen. The Nguyen were satisfied as long as Ha Tien continued to submit to it as Ha Tien's position in the heart of Cambodian territory could help the Nguyen to maintain a strong presence in the country, notwithstanding through the hands of a proxy.

Even as the Nguyen were making inroads into the Mekong Delta, issues relating to the uplanders again required Nguyen's attention. This time, it took on a different nature under Nguyen Phuc Tru, who succeeded Nguyen Phuc Chu in 1725. This was especially true in relation to the uplanders in the southwest highlands which sits astride the borders between Nguyen southern Vietnam and Cambodia. Unlike the uplanders found at the Central highlands near Quang Nam who were more receptive to the Nguyen's peaceful overtures in establishing relations, the southwest uplanders at Pleiku, who were Lao, resisted Nguyen attempts to control them. This resistance against Nguyen rule was a result of resentment on part of the uplander towards Vietnamese settlers who had settled in

⁸⁸ The *Tien Bien* merely mentioned the permission to mint money whereas Nicholas Sellers suggests that the money were coin tokens of small value made from zinc. See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 9: 13, *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 3-4 & Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien*, p.42.

⁸⁹ *Nam Ha Tiep Luc*, P. 37.

the Tran Phien and Gia Dinh area. Many of the uplanders also suffered from unscrupulous business dealings, resulting in resentment against the Nguyen.⁹⁰

In 1731, some of the uplanders supported the Cambodians in challenging the Nguyen's position in Gia Dinh in the Mekong Delta. The first incident took place in the May 1731 when a Cambodian army aided by a Lao tribe, attacked Gia Dinh. The Cambodians who were based in Oudong, tried to recapture Gia Dinh which was lost to the Nguyen in 1698, and the area north of the Bassac River. The effort was also an attempt to end the Vietnamese-sponsored Cambodian rule, based in Gia Dinh. Thus far, Nguyen rule had benefited from their control over the area which served as a buffer between the Nguyen territories and the Cambodians based at Oudong. Nguyen Phuc Tru responded by sending one of his top commanders, Truong Phuc Vinh to check the Cambodians' advance.

The campaign did not begin well for the Nguyen Army, and the Cambodians and the uplanders were able to defeat it. But a joint army of Phuc Vinh's troops under Nguyen Cuu Tran, along with Chinese troops led by Tran Dai Dinh (Chen Dading)⁹¹ managed to break the Cambodian-hill tribes forces and reasserted Nguyen rule in Gia Dinh. The Nguyen army under Tran Dai Dinh also entered the Vietnamese sponsored southern Cambodia in Mekong Delta and requested the Nguyen-sponsored Cambodian king, Ang Da (Sathar II) to use his army to suppress the 'rebels'. The Vietnamese considered this as an effort to

⁹⁰ They were possibly charged the same rate of interest as imposed on the Chams by the Vietnamese as discussed below.

⁹¹ Tran Dai Dinh (Chen Dading) was the son of Chen Shangzhuan, one of the Chinese military commanders who arrived in Nguyen Southern Vietnam with his troops in 1677. Despite his contribution to the Nguyen cause, Dai Dinh was framed by one of his colleagues and died in the Nguyen prison before being reprieved. See *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 6: 17-19.

atone for his negligence in allowing the uplanders to work in league with some of his subjects in attacking Gia Dinh.⁹²

The matter dragged on until the early months of 1732 when the Lao tribes once again attacked Gia Dinh from Cambodia. The attack was broken up by a force that was once again led by Truong Phuc Vinh and by the fourth month, Tran Dai Dinh entered Luu Viet (Lovek) in Cambodia and was assisted by Ang Da (Sathar II) in annihilating the rebels.⁹³ The threat posed by the Lao tribes who had joined up with the Cambodians forced Nguyen Phuc Tru to pay more attention to the developments in the South. This was especially so when the Nguyen-nominated Cambodian king at Gia Dinh, Ang Im (the same Ang Im who reigned with the title of Kev Fa III. This was his third reign which began in 1729) was too weak and unpopular with his own people. He was also unable to control his own army. After the incident, the Nguyen-sponsored Cambodia in the area north of the Bassac River that had served as buffer zone between the Nguyen and the independent Cambodia at the south of the Bassac was no longer effective.

The campaign of 1731-32 was not only an effort in defending the newly gained territories against a military threat, it was also an attempt to restore order in Nguyen-sponsored Cambodia by sustaining Ang Im's position. Though not recorded in the Nguyen chronicles, the campaign also brought the two areas of Nguyen Chau (My Tho) garrison and Long Ho (Vinh Long) garrison under direct

⁹² *Tien Bien*, Vol. 9: 7.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Nguyen control. The move also saw the setting up of the Long Ho garrison. It was placed under the control of Gia Dinh prefecture.⁹⁴

The experience of being exposed to the threat from the Lao tribes and the Cambodians in 1731 and 1732, forced Nguyen Phuc Tru to take certain measures aimed at strengthening Vietnamese presence in the area. First, he appointed Nguyen Huu Duong as the governor for Gia Dinh and placed Nguyen Cuu Tran to garrison Tran Bien Dinh (present day Bien Hoa). The choice was obvious as the *Tien Bien* reported how the Cambodians had feared Nguyen Cuu Tran like they had feared a tiger.⁹⁵ And with the setting up of the Nguyen administration at Nguyen Chau and Long Ho, Nguyen influence in the Mekong Delta, north of the Bassac River was very much consolidated.

In 1735, Ang Im, the Nguyen-sponsored Cambodian king passed away. After ascending the throne, Ang Da, sent a delegation to Nguyen Phuc Tru's court seeking approval as the new Cambodian king at the lower Mekong. This was the only occasion where such a practice was recorded. It is interesting because it mirrored what a new Vietnamese Emperor would do when coming to the throne. A delegation would be sent to China to pay homage and to receive the official investiture from the Chinese Emperor. In so doing, the Vietnamese emperor acknowledged the suzerainty of the Chinese Emperor over his kingdom. In the same way, Ang Da (Sathar II), the Cambodian king, acknowledged Nguyen's

⁹⁴ *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (hereafter *DNNTC*), Vol. 12 (Vinh Long): 1. See also Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Ha Tien (1682-1867)*, Brussels: Edition Thang Long, 1983, p. 11.

⁹⁵ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 9: 7.

suzerainty over his kingdom. This was followed shortly by the sending of a tribute from Cambodia to the Nguyen Court at the end of 1737.⁹⁶

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

Even as the Nguyen were facing challenges in the Mekong against the Cambodians, another factor in its foreign relations equation unraveled when Po Saktiraydaputih, the Nguyen-sponsored king of the Cham ruling over the autonomous kingdom of Thuan Thanh in Binh Thuan, passed away. That year, Po Saktiraydaputih, the Nguyen-sponsored king of the Cham autonomous kingdom of Thuan Thanh in Binh Thuan, passed away. Apparently, the cordial relations that Po Saktiraydaputih had cultivated with Nguyen Phuc Chu was not accepted by his own people as he was deemed to have represented the Vietnamese. Shortly after Po Saktiraydaputih's death, the Chams at Phan Ri revolted in 1728.⁹⁷ As a subdued region, that was given the status of a kingdom by Nguyen Phuc Chu, Champa (Thuan Thanh) was crucial to the prestige of the Nguyen rule, especially

⁹⁶ *Tien Bien*, Vol. 9: 14.

⁹⁷ "Father De Flory to Langellerie" 28 Nay 1728, AMEP: Cochinchine, Vol. 739, f. 600.

in the context of the Nguyen-imposed tributary relations. Even though the French missionary, Father De Flory's account remained the only one available regarding the revolt, it did not offer details concerning the revolt. Nonetheless, it is possible that the roots of the revolt could be traced to several issues which were beneath the framework of tributary relations between the autonomous kingdom of Thuan Thanh and the Nguyen rule.

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

In response, Nguyen Phuc Tru dispatched a military force to re-establish control over Thuan Thanh. He then reinforced Vietnamese presence in the area by the resettlement of more Vietnamese people in Thuan Thanh. As a result, there

was a large influx of Viet people into the annexed territory. This led inevitably to rivalry for space and resources.

In their dealings with the Vietnamese, the Chams often lost their land and rice fields, slaves and even family members to the Vietnamese settlers. Economic dealings also involved borrowing of money at exorbitantly high interest. In some cases, the interest rate was fixed at 150% per annum by the Vietnamese.⁹⁸

According to Po Dharma, the main factor that had brought about the Cham revolt of 1728 was Chams dissatisfaction over this socio-economic situation with the Viets. This in turn, brought about the emergence of anti-Vietnamese movements.⁹⁹ After Nguyen Phuc Tru managed to calm the situation in 1728, subsequent Cham rulers proved to be subservient to the Nguyen's authority. Far from revolting or attempting to break free from the Nguyen control, the Cham rulers and elites at Thuan Thanh supported the Nguyen, especially in the latter's wars against Cambodia and Siam. In fact, a French missionary who was in Lam Thuyen, Thuan Thanh, wrote in 1746 that since 1728, there were hardly any problems in Champa.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The most significant phase of the Nguyen's territorial expansion to the south was during the reign of Nguyen Phuc Tran and Nguyen Phuc Chu. In this period the Vietnamese extended their territory from Phan Rang in present day Binh Thuan to the area bordering the Bassac River. Since 1711, the Nguyen also incorporated

⁹⁸ Po Dharma, *Le Panduranga (Campa)*, 1802-1835, Paris: EFEO, 1987, p. 71.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ "Father Bennetat to M. Dufau", 20 July 1746, AMEP: Cochinchine, Vol. 742, f. 652.

Ha Tien at the other side of Cambodian territory, giving them access to the Gulf of Siam. In the process, the Nguyen had thoroughly conquered the kingdom of Champa and had considerably weakened the declining Cambodian Kingdom, incorporating the two as part of its tributary system. In both cases, the Nguyen continuously used the pretext of extracting tribute from the Chams and the Cambodians as reasons for their actions against the two states. Opportunity arose in Cambodia particularly because of wars of succession.

While the Nguyen's control over Champa was completed in 1693, it faced opposition in Cambodia. In this regard, the Nguyen were challenged by both the pro-Siam Cambodians and Siam itself. The need to maintain its position in the Mekong Delta vis-à-vis Cambodia became important for the Nguyen not only due to strategic and economic considerations but also because of the need to safeguard the prestige of the Nguyen as overlords of Cambodian. In this role they were tempered by an increasingly powerful Siam which also aspired to maintain its traditional hold on Cambodia.