

## Chapter Three

### **Champa as Contesting Power, 1613-1692**

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

#### **Nguyen Phuc Nguyen and the Break with the North**

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

like ‘Sankin Kotai’ system in Japan<sup>1</sup> To his advantage, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen was also the only son of Nguyen Hoang’s first wife, Madam Nguyen Thi.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, it was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen who defeated a Japanese pirate flotilla at the Viet Hai River estuary in 1585,<sup>4</sup> and it was he who was entrusted by Nguyen Hoang with the governorship of Quang Nam in 1603. When talking about his appointment to the position, the *Tien Bien* was careful to mention in some detail the fate of his five older brothers who died during Nguyen Hoang’s life time.

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 3.

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

<sup>4</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 2a.

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> See *Tien Bien*, Vol. 1: 14a.

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

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

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

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

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

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

As a provincial governor, it was Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's duty to ensure that taxes were collected annually to be sent to the central government. When Nguyen Hoang was sent to govern Thuan Hoa in 1558, his responsibilities included the sending of taxes to the Le government.<sup>11</sup> The *Phu Bien Tap Luc* for instance, provided us with a picture of the amounts to be collected from each of the counties in Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. The taxes were generally divided into two main categories, namely the poll tax and income tax.<sup>12</sup> These taxes were collected based on a registry that was updated every three years.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> Dao Duy Tu only entered Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's service in 1625 but his arrival was timely to the Nguyen. A native of Thanh Hoa, the same province as the Nguyen family, Tu was said to have a good knowledge concerning war strategies. He was also a master ele-

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<sup>11</sup> *PBTL*, Vol. 1: 6.

<sup>12</sup> *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.

<sup>13</sup> *Nam Ha Tiep Luc (NHTL)*, Vol. I: 34.

<sup>14</sup> See *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

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

phant trainer.<sup>16</sup> It was probably at his suggestion that Nguyen Phuc Nguyen moved his headquarters from Ai Tu slightly further south to Phuc An in Quang Dien in 1626.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

cause his 'Kingdom' was at odds with the Trinh.<sup>19</sup> 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 ...".<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, he also began to stockpile gold leaves. It was reported that at one point, there was as much as 90,000 leaves of gold being made and stored in Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's warehouses.<sup>22</sup> 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

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<sup>19</sup> "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*.

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

<sup>21</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 4b.

and eaglewood. All these goods were important resources<sup>23</sup> 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”.<sup>24</sup>

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).<sup>25</sup> Nguyen Phuc Nguyen regarded the act as treason and proof of the treachery and danger of the Trinh.

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

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<sup>23</sup> 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.

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

<sup>25</sup> *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.

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

<sup>27</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 5a.

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

In 1624, Trinh Trang (r. 1623-1657) who succeeded Trinh Tung, sent two officials to Nguyen Phuc Nguyen demanding that taxes be remitted to the Le government. Nguyen Phuc Nguyen refused under the pretext that, due to a poor harvest, revenue could not be collected.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> All these requests were rejected by Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. He scorned at the

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<sup>28</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 8a.

<sup>29</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 10.

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

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

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

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

Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rejection of Trinh Trang's ultimatum led to an attack from the Trinh in April of 1627. A battle broke out at Nhat Le. Although significantly superior to the Nguyen forces, the Trinh army was nevertheless forced to retreat on Trinh Trang's order. There were two reasons why the Trinh forces withdrew. One was that there were rumours of a conspiracy to oust Trinh Trang in Thang Long.<sup>34</sup> The northern Annals of *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* however, reports that the Trinh forces suffered battle loses and were forced to retreat.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

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,

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<sup>33</sup> 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.

<sup>34</sup> *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.

<sup>35</sup> *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

<sup>36</sup> *Toan Thu*, Vol. 18: 939.

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

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

Secondly, the Nguyen was relatively inferior in almost every aspect when compared to the Trinh. This is especially so in terms of human resources. While the two Nguyen provinces of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam were rich in natural resources, the same could not be said of its human resource. The population of Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam had no doubt increased since the arrival of Nguyen Hoang. Various factors mentioned earlier such as unfavourable living conditions in the north and the desire to seek a new beginning in a new place, had resulted in a regular drift of people to Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam. Despite this increase, the population of the two provinces at the beginning of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen's rule probably numbered only about one-tenth of the population in the north. There is however no complete population data on Nguyen Southern Vietnam. An estimate of the population of Thuan Hoa by Li Tana from data collected from the *O Chau Can Luc* (Recent News from O Chau) shows that in 1555, there were 1,436 villages in Thuan Hoa with a population of 75,680 households, representing a population of 378,000. The figure only increased twofold to 789,800 in 1770. A similar estimate of the population of Dien Ban prefecture in Quang Nam in 1555 was 29,040 and 86,680 in 1777.<sup>39</sup> Around the same period, the esti-

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

<sup>39</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 29.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6.

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

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

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

### **Southward Expansion: Champa and Cambodia, 1672-1698**

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

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<sup>43</sup> See previous chapter's discussion on Nguyen-Japan relations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>45</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 6.

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

<sup>47</sup> Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. B1 & B2.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>48</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2, p. 14b.

<sup>49</sup> A *dinh* is equivalent to a military base or garrison in Vietnam.

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

<sup>51</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: p. 15.

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

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

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

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<sup>52</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2, p. 17b.

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

<sup>54</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 7.

<sup>55</sup> Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.

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

During the period of the first three Nguyen (1558-1648), the southern Vietnamese were preoccupied with the affairs in the north – first, to assist the Le Court in its fight against the Mac; secondly, after 1627, to resist a series of battles against the Trinh. This preoccupation with the north forced the Nguyen to co-exist with Champa with the Tran Bien garrison as the front line. Between 1629 and 1648, the year of Nguyen Phuc Lan's death, the Chams hardly troubled the Nguyen, or at least there are no historical sources to date which suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, the Nguyen were constantly wary of the possibility of Champa launching attacks against them in a bid to regain lost territories. Alexander De Rhodes, one of the most famous and earliest Jesuit priests in Vietnam recounted how sometime in 1639, the Nguyen had placed many galleys in the ports of Ran Ran (Phu Yen) in the south to prevent maritime inroads from Champa.<sup>56</sup> At that time, Champa was still maintaining its hold on Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Rang, and the two ports were frequently visited by Portuguese ships from Macao at least until 1639.<sup>57</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>61</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4: 22.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>67</sup> Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.

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

<sup>69</sup> *Liet Truyen Tien Bien*, Vol. 2: 38.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>73</sup> Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. H3.

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

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

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

### **Champa as a Contesting Power (1629 to 1693)**

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

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

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

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<sup>75</sup> Christoforo Borri, *Cochin-China*, p. D3.

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

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

Until 1639 Portuguese ships from Macao continued to Cham ports at Cam Ranh Bay and Phan Rang.<sup>78</sup> Champa also traded with the Dutch beginning from the defeat of Portuguese by the Dutch at Malacca in 1641.<sup>79</sup> Champa-Dutch relations were good and two royal Cham delegations visited Batavia in 1680.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>80</sup> *Tien Bien*, Vol. 4, p. 22.

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

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

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

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

### **Conclusion**

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

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

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

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

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