

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DYNASTY OF HÔNG-BÀNG :

#### A SERIES OF TALES POORLY CONNECTED

The intellectual attitude of Ngô Sĩ Liên in regard to the tale of Triệu Quang Phục predicted what we are going to see in the story of Hông-bàng dynasty that he placed at the beginning of his Complete History. This story was made up of a series of tales, similar in nature to that of Triệu Quang Phục, that came into existence in the 13th and 14th centuries. Ngô Sĩ Liên did not repeat them in full length, but shortened them, gave them an arrangement of formal history, provided them with dates whenever need be.

In the Preface of his work, he voiced his intention to begin the history of Vietnam from its beginning. He claimed for himself the initiative of adding the chapter on Triệu Việt-vương, for example. He was much prouder when he added more than two thousands years to the past of his nation, in the chapter on Hông-bàng dynasty. Before him, all the official historians had started their chronological narrative with the reign of Triệu Đà in 207 B.C. But why these historians did not do what Ngô Sĩ Liên was planning to do ? They were two in number. Lê Văn Hưu<sup>1</sup> wrote in 1274 and Phan Phu Tiên<sup>2</sup> in 1445. Their works were known

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1. Sometimes the work of Lê Văn Hưu was referred to as Việt-chi 越志

as History of Đại Việt. When Lê Văn Hưu finished his history, the tales about the origin of Vietnam did not exist yet. Only later in the dynasty of the Trần<sup>3</sup> they appeared gradually. The fact that Phan Phu Tiên, who continued the work of Lê Văn Hưu, did not get involved with these tales might be credited to his good sense of historiography.

As for initiative, it can be said that Ngô Sĩ Liên was not necessarily the first to speak of Hùng-vương. The anonymous author of a history book called Việt Sử Lược<sup>4</sup>, written sometime after 1377, had given a glimpse at the period before Triệu Đà. He opened his narrative with the Kings Hùng, with the nation's name Văn-lang, and with the 15 'bộ lạc'<sup>5</sup> that composed this nation. However, he had his personal view on the King Hùng. According to him, the kings were called so, just because they were heroic in character and tall in stature.

But to tell the story of Hùng-vương as they were in the tales, Ngô Sĩ Liên had no precedent. Not only he was the first official historian who did so, he was unchallengingly the first who took the date 2879 B.C. as the first year of Vietnam history. This stroke of his pen offered to

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2. Phan Phu Tiên 潘夫先: It seems that he did not bring any change to text of Lê Văn Hưu and added only the part of history from the beginning to the end of the Trần dynasty.

3. The dynasty of the Trần 陳: It was founded by Trần Cảnh in 1225 and ended in 1400.

Dại-việt an ancientness if not more, at least as respectable as that of China. Was it a joke? No. Ngô Sĩ Liên did that with all practical intent. And those Vietnamese who boastfully said that their nation had 4,000 years of history and civilisation were also no less serious.

In order to understand to what extent this seriousness might be, let us look at some facts. In 1966, in a book entitled Lessons of History and Geography<sup>6</sup>, authored by a group of teachers and used as textbook in community schools of Vietnam, the first lesson begins: "Our nation, at first, in the Hồng-bàng dynasty, was named Văn-lang. Through other dynasties, this name changed <sup>into</sup> Âu-lạc<sup>7</sup>, Tướng<sup>8</sup> quân<sup>9</sup>, Giao-chí<sup>10</sup>, Giao-châu<sup>11</sup>, Đại Cồ-việt, Đại-nam, etc ...and now it is officially changed into Việt-nam, that means, the Nation of the Việt in the South. According to history, our nation was established more than 4,000 years

4. Việt sử lược 越史略 or Summary of History of the Việt people: This little book begins with the Kings Hung and ends at the years 1377.

5. Bộ-lạc 部駱: This means tribes. In the Complete History Ngô Sĩ Liên talked about 15 "bộ" only.

6. The name of the book in Vietnamese is Bài Học Sử Địa, Ministry of Education, Saigon, 1956.

7. Âu-lạc 區駱: The tribe of Dịch Hu Tông that commentators identified with the Lạc Việt.

8. Tướng-quân is the department of Tướng of the Tân. This department did not square with Vietnam but certainly included Vietnam territory.

9. Giao-chí was the name that the Hán Anterior gave to the area covered by the kingdom of Triệu Đà. This Giao-chí was used from 111 B.C. until 264.

ago"<sup>12</sup> . By all intent and purpose, these lines testified the strong belief of the authors and conveyed officially to the students of Vietnam that the dynasty of Hông-bàng was as historic as any other dynasty, and that Vietnam had more than 4,000 years of history and civilization.

Recently, the social scientists of North Vietnam professed the same belief. Publications like Epoch of Hông-vương<sup>13</sup> , Establishment of the Nation by Hông-vương<sup>14</sup> , and History of Vietnam are obviously intended to instill more deeply in the minds of the Vietnamese the idea of a national distant past.

But history has a way to express itself. Historical truth cannot bear pressure, from whatsoever source this pressure might come. Pressure had come from patriotic feelings. Pressure is now coming from ideology. But history stands on the basis of reality. Besides, a long past is not a genuine topic for pride. It could be a shame instead if it was bare and unfruitful. Nothing deserves more to be proud of than the historical truth that comes from solid historical searching. Let us analyse the dynasty of Hông-bàng, as Ngô Sĩ Liên wrote it, to see how much historical truth it

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10. Giao-châu 交州 : Term used in place of Giao-chí area, then, from 264, to designate the departments of Giao-chí, Cửu-chân and Nhật-nam. From 680, the term An-nam replaced it. To be complete, there should be mentioned Tĩnh-hải, Đại-việt.

11. Đại-nam 大南 : This name was used to replace the name Vietnam under the reign of Minh-mạng (1820-1940).

could give.

Let us take first the dates. There are two of them in this very long dynasty, one in the beginning and one at the end. In the beginning, that is the majestic 2879 B. C. This date is distant by 2622 years from the other, that is 257 B.C. Another striking point is that, during this whole period, reigned only 18 Kings Hùng, this makes the reign of each king numbers in average 145 years and some months. So, cheer numbers bespeak the dubious value of the story.

Imagination takes a bigger part in the nature of the story itself. Here is the first in the series of tales that compose the dynasty of Hông-bàng. This tale gives account of Lord Lạc-long<sup>15</sup>, father of the first Hùng-vương.

Descendant of three generations of Emperor Viêm (16) of China, Emperor Minh made an observation trip (17) to the South. He married a fairy by name Vụ (18) who gave birth to a son called Lộc Tục (19). This Lộc Tục was enthroned as king of our nation with the title Kinh Dương-vương (20). The king espoused a female Spirit named Long (21), to whom was born a son named Lạc Long-quân. According to the legend, Lord Lạc Long took as wife a fairy named Âu Cơ (2)

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13. Epoch of Hùng-vương is the translation of the Vietnamese name: Thời-giai Hùng-vương, written by Văn Tân, Nguyễn Linh and Nguyễn Đông Chí, and published by Nhà Xuất-bản Khoa-học Xã-hội (Social Sciences Publications), Hanoi, 1973.

14. Establishment of the Nation by Hùng-vương, in Vietnamese Hùng-vương Dựng Nước; Written by the Archeological Committee of the Department of Social Sciences of North Vietnam, published the Department of Social Sciences, Hanoi, 1972.

### The Legendary Kingdom of VAN-LANG



who gave birth to a hundred eggs, from which came a hundred sons. One day, Lord Lac Long told Au Cò: "I am of the race of dragon, you are of the race of fairy. Water and fire are incompatible". Then they divided their sons, 50 followed their mother to the mountains, 50 followed their father to the seashore, the oldest being king. This was the king Hùng. The sons going to the mountains were ancestors of the montagnards, those going to the seashore, ancestors of the countryside people. King Hùng established his residence in Phong-châu, named his country Văn-lang (23) composed of 15 bô (24). Kings and mandarins were hereditary. All the kings were called by the same name Hùng. The mandarins were called Lac-hầu (25), the generals Lac-tướng (26), lower mandarins, Bô-chính (27), sons of king, Quan-lang (28), daughters of king, My-nương (29). In the period of Emperor Nghieu of China (30), King Hùng offered a Spirit Tortoise. Our people used to fish for their living, and were often harassed by water-monsters. King Hùng instructed them to tattoo themselves (31). Water-monsters saw their tattooed bodies, mistook them for animals of their own race, and did not harm them anymore. The tattooing habit took place from that time. In the period of the Chu dynasty (32)

15. Lord Lac Long or Lac Long-quân 駱龍君: This is the title of the tale on the kings Hùng. Ngô Sĩ Liên had eliminated many details that looked too immoral and extravagant.

16. Emperor Viêm 炎帝: Viêm means "fire". Emperor Viêm was mentioned in the Records, book 1, page 3, in the same time with Hoàng-đế 皇帝, the first emperor of China. It is said that the two emperors fought between themselves three times without any result on both sides. Mentioning Emperor Viêm, the author of the tale intended to show that Vietnam did not have to be afraid of China, because originally it was equal to China in every aspects.

17. Emperor Minh 帝明: This is a name brought out by the author's imagination.

18. Vu tiên-nữ 婺仙女: This kind of mythology had a great effect on the superstitious minds of the people. Now the Vietnamese used to boast that they come from the races of fairy and dragon (Rồng-tiên).

King Hùng sent emissaries to offer to the Chu emperor white pheasants. On their return, the Chu gave them a carriage mounted with a compass to show them the way back to their country. (33). In the reign of King Hùng the Sixth, war broke with the An... In the reign of King Hùng the 18th, the country was lost into the hands of King An-dương (34) of the Thục (35).

19. Lộc Tục 祿俗 : A name of the author's invention.
20. Kinh-Dương-vương 荆陽王 : king of the provinces Kinh or Kinh-châu 荆州 and the province Dương or Dương-châu 陽州. These provinces were located along the Blue River or Dương-tử-giang 陽子江. See Chang Chi-Yun, Chinese History of Fifty Centuries, Vol. I, Ancient Times, Institute for Chinese Advanced Studies, Taipeh, 1962, pages 220-223.
21. Thân Long 神龍 : Long means dragon; the name intended to say that the lady was a Spirit of the Dragon.
22. Âu Cơ 歐雉 : We have seen that there was a tribe called Âu. The author wanted to put together in his tale a combination of different names of people and places.
23. Văn-lang 文郎 : Here is also a name that did not exist. Close to the Lake Động-Dinh 洞廟湖, there was a district by name Dạ-lang.
24. 15 bộ 部 : Bộ may have the meaning of tribe, or area. In the Việt sử lược, it is said that there were 15 "bộ lạc". The authors of the Lịch sử Việt-nam understand that "bộ" means tribe, page 45.
25. Lạc-hầu 雉侯 : mandarin of the Lạc-việt tribe.
26. Lạc-tướng 雉將 : General of the Lạc-việt tribe.
27. Bô-chính 佈正 : Title of the mandarin of Vietnam who govern the Mường tribe. The Mường are descents of the Lạc-việt tribe.
28. Quan-lang 官郎 : Title used to call sons of king and high mandarins.
29. My-nương 美娘 : Title used to call daughter of king and mandarins.
- 30.
30. Emepror Nghiêu, or Đế Nghiêu 帝堯 : He reigned China



This first tale of the story of Hông-băng dynasty is loaded with things to be remarked. Some lines should be devoted to its author before going to its meaningful details.

The anonymous author of the tale should have been an educated and purposeful man. He would have memorized everything about the ancient history of China and knew well what details would be most useful to give to the average people of Đại-việt the belief that their country once had had all the properties that China possessed. With the mention of Emperor Viêm, he gave respectability to his king and to his country. With geographical names as Kinh and Dông, and Văn-lang, he wanted to show to his countrymen how vast was Đại-việt in the immemorial days. To a people who were far from being able to distinguish between history and mythology, he offered marriages between spirits and fairies, which would make them prouder of their ancestors. He was sure that an explanation of the common origin of the whole population would have the effect of strengthening unity, which was useful in time of peace, a fortiori, in time of war. Thanks to the many names of personalities and their

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from 2333 B.C. to 2233 B.C.

31. To tattoo means in Sino-Vietnamese văn-thân 文身. This was not a national custom of Đại-việt, but of the Trần family.

32. The Chu 周 : from 1100 to 481 B.C.

titles, he presented to the people the image of a country immense but well-organized, which was as glorious as China itself, but because of Chinese invasion and oppression, was reduced to the present size and condition. He had the intention not only to consolidate the self-confidence of the people, but also to excite their aggressiveness against China.

Why this intention ?

We know that under the Trần dynasty, there were bitter wars between China and Đại-việt. By other sources, for example history of literature, we know that these tales appeared under the Trần dynasty. Some traits of the tales itself testified to the same effect.

In the tale, the author mentioned the habit of tattooing the body as a national habit of the Vietnamese. Intentionally, he emphasized that habit in order to attract respect and love in regard to the reigning family. In reality, only the Trần family practiced that habit. In 1293, when wars against the Mongols were over, and victorious

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33. A carriage mounted with a compass; translation of the expression chí-nam-xa 指南車, meaning that the emissaries' country was so far that they needed that kind of device to go back home.

34. An dương vương 安陽王: This king is said to have invaded the territory of Lạc-việt and taken the throne of Lạc-vương. See Records, book 113, page 2.

35. Thục 蜀: Many historians tried to explain that this Thục was not the province Ba-Thục, because Ba-thục and Đại-việt were so far from one another.

Trần Nhân-tông<sup>37</sup> felt desirable to leave the worldly life to enter the monastery, as it was the mood of that time, an interesting incident took place. Nhân-tông summoned his son Trần Anh-tông, who was his successor, then still a young lad, and told him: "Our family has the habit of tattooing the body. We are descent of downstream people. You have to do it to yourself"<sup>38</sup>. After this short speech, Nhân-tông was busy talking to someone else. Anh-tông took advantage of his father's inattention, fled away and never got himself tattooed. His father didn't insist.

By this short narrative, two things become clear : a) the tattooing habit was not a national habit ; b) the author of the tale was a member of the Trần family.

a) Taking literally, the exhortation of Trần Nhân-tông asserted strongly enough that only the members of the royal Trần family tattooed their bodies. If it were a national habit, Anh-tông would have been tattooed and done it solemnly. On the contrary he declined it as he would in regard to a superstitious and meaningless action, and

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36. It is obvious that the meaning of the 100 eggs story was to appeal for unity, saying that the many tribes who were found in the region of Lĩnh-ngoại came from a common origin.

37. Trần Nhân-tông 陳仁宗 : He reigned from 1257 to 1293 and had the luck of saving Đại-việt from the domination of the Nguyễn 元 or Mongols.

38. Complete History, book 11, page 21.

did not incur his father's blame.

History also proved that the Trần Family immigrated in Đại-việt from Phúc-kiên<sup>39</sup>, and Phúc-kiên, since the ancient time, was a place where people used to tattoo themselves. In effect, at the beginning of the Trần dynasty, it is said that Trần Cảnh<sup>40</sup>, the first emperor of the Trần, was descent of four generations of a Trần family who came to a seashore village from the province of Phúc-kiên. As we know it by ancient history, Phúc-Kiên was the arena of the old kingdom Việt of King Câu Tiên<sup>41</sup>. And exactly in the story of this great man, it is written that he tattooed his body and cut short his hair<sup>42</sup>. Thus, the habit of tattooing the body, as mentioned in the tale of Hồng-bàng dynasty, is traced to its origin. If there was a place where people used to tattoo their bodies, this place was Phúc-kiên, not Đại-việt.

b) Once the origin of the tattooing habit and the circumstances in which the tale of Hồng-bàng had been specified, we can affirm that the author of the tale was a member of the Trần family. The reason is if he were not, he would not have paid so much attention to the tattooing habit. By stressing on it and making it a national habit, the

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39. Phúc-kiên 福建 : A province at the mouth of Triết-giang.

40. Trần Cảnh 陳景 : The first emperor of the Trần dynasty. He married the heiress of the Lý dynasty then manoeuvred her transferring of royal power.

author of the tale wished to consolidate the prestige of the Trần dynasty, pointing to the fact that the Trần who were practicing that habit should have been at the root itself of the Vietnamese race.

So, the question : Why this intention? is answered. The author composed the tale because his nation was at war with China, because the royal family was in danger of losing the throne, because the inhabitants needed to be united, because their morale should be lifted. He used his historical knowledge and his literary skill to serve a patriotic cause. He performed the duty of a scholar in time of national distress by spreading, under the form of a tale, an appeal for national self-confidence. Nobody would quarrel with him, because his tale was a piece of propaganda.

The problem arises only when Ngô Sĩ Liên made that piece of propaganda a chapter of history. And the difficulty is that, not only the Vietnamese people, but also foreign historians have followed suit. To prove that the elements of the tale are a mere collection of disparate historical items put together notwithstanding time, place or even logic, would have been a superfluous work, it now becomes a necessity.

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41. Việt-vương Câu tiên 越王勾踐 : The Records gives to this king a whole book (41).

42. Văn thân tiên phát 文身斷髮 : The Records says expressly that Câu Tiên had tattooed his body and cut his hair short because that was the custom of his country.

Not only the socialist historians, whose works are mentioned earlier in this chapter, but French scholars as Henry Maspéro and Léonard Aurousseau, have assumed that what Ngô Sĩ Liên put in the first pages of his Complete History, was history. In 1918, in an article on the history of Vietnam, printed in the Bulletin de l'École Française d' Extrême Orient,<sup>43</sup> Henry Maspéro had a long reasoning on the falsehood of the title Hùng-vương. According to him, the title should be Lạc-vương which would go with the titles Lạc-hầu and Lạc-tướng, and with the name of tribe, that is Lạc-việt. He suggested that Ngô Sĩ Liên might have mistaken the character Hùng Hùng for Lạc Lạc, because the two words an almost similar appearance. He cited Chinese texts to support his argument. His painful research showed that he took seriously the tale of Hồng-bàng.

In fact, if Ngô Sĩ Liên might have mistaken, the author of the tale did not. Not only he knew the texts cited by Henry Maspéro, but he proved that he knew much more. His intention was to make a combination of his knowledge about the past. To this purpose, he chose the title Hùng-vương for king, as it was written in the Thái bình Hoàn vũ ký,<sup>44</sup> then the titles Lạc-hầu, Lạc-tướng, as it was found in Quảng-

43. Henry Maspéro, Étude de l' Histoire d' Annam, B.E.F.E.O. Vol. XIX, pages 1-30.

44. Thái-bình hoàn-vũ ký 太平寰宇記 (Universal History of the Epoch Thái-bình.): The epoch Thái-bình was in the 10th century.

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châu ký. Moreover, he decided that the number of the  
 Hùng-vương was 18, so to remind his readers that the cha-  
 racter Hùng 雄 is homonym with Hùng 熊, and with  
 this latter character, there were 18 kings Hùng in the  
 history of the kingdom Sở<sup>46</sup>, as it was related in the Re-  
 cords.<sup>47</sup>

The other French scholar who used the tale of Hông-  
 bàng as a historical document was Leonard Arousseau. Di-  
 rector of the French School in the Far-East in Hanoi, he  
 published in 1929 a study on the expansion of China in  
 the 3rd century. In appendix to this long and important  
 article, he gave his idea on the origin of the Vietnamese  
 people. His theme: All ethnic groups, including Lạc-việt,  
 that populated South China, and had the name Việt, were dis-  
 mantlements of the people of the kingdom Việt of Câu Tiên  
 after the defeat of this kingdom by the Sở in 333 B.C. Ac-  
 cording to the French historian, the proofs that all these  
 groups came from the Việt kingdom is that all of them are  
 called Việt and have the habit of tattooing their bodies.  
 As documents, Arousseau brought forth, among other things,

45. Quảng-châu-ký 廣州記: Cited in the Records, book 113.

46. The kingdom Sở 楚 had 18 kings having the same title  
 Hùng, namely: Hùng Lộc 熊麓, Hùng Cường 熊狂, Hùng  
 Trach 熊析, Hùng Mậu 熊茂, Hùng Đán 熊旦, Hùng Thăng  
 Hùng Dịch 熊狄, Hùng Cử 熊舉, Hùng Mậu Khang 熊茂康,  
 Hùng Nghê 熊執, Hùng Diên 熊延, Hùng Dũng 熊勇,  
 Hùng Nghiêm 熊嚴, Hùng Tương 熊霜, Hùng Tuân 熊遵,  
 Hùng Ngao 熊嗇, Hùng Nghi 熊儀, Hùng Tuấn 熊俊

what the tale of HỒNG-băng said about the tattooing habit.

Historically speaking, the two key testimonies on which Aourousseau based his argument are not historical at all. The Việt tribes found in the Ngũ-lĩnh could not come from <sup>the Việt kingdom-</sup> Right in the time of the expedition of 214 B.C., they had inhabited almost everywhere in southern China, and from this date up to that of the collapse of the Việt kingdom, the time lapse was a little more than a century. And the Lạc-việt, for example, were in North Vietnam centuries <sup>48</sup> before the final defeat of the Việt in Triết-giang. On the other hand, the concept of one origin for all the tribes to whom China gave the general name of Việt is wrong ethnically. To take only the tribal elements of North Vietnam <sup>49</sup> today, it is impossible to say that the Thờ-Tày <sup>50</sup>, the Lolos, <sup>51</sup> the Muống, <sup>52</sup> the Nùng, <sup>53</sup> the Thái, etc... are of the same origin.

If the meaning of the word Việt is invoked for support to the Aourousseau's argument, it would be no less dis-

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47. Records, book 40, pages 3-4.

48. Triết-giang 浙江 : Name of a province on the seaboard of Southern China.

49. The Thờ-Tày are in the region of Lạng-sơn.

50. The Lolos are in the region of Bắc-kan.

51. The Muống, descendants of the Lạc-việt are in the region of Hoà-bình.



appointed. Written with the character 越<sup>54</sup>, it might stand for descendants of Thiệu Khang<sup>55</sup>, emperor of the Hạ dynasty<sup>56</sup>. According to Chang Chi-yun<sup>57</sup>, they were called so, "probably because of their skillfulness in the production and use" of a sort of weapon named Việt, but written 鉞. In this case, the Việt were living in the kingdom of Câu Tiễn and could not be ancestors of all the Việt, as discussed above.

But why all the tribes of southern China were called by the same name Việt? The answer is that all of them lived to the south of the Blue River and the character 越 means also beyond or on the other side of. The Chinese, on their southward expansion, when they reached this side of the River, might have globally designated all the strangers beyond the River by Việt-dân "people of the other side". And the word Việt can again be written 粵, a character with two key components, namely hòa 禾 meaning rice, and cung 弓 meaning arc. With this second word, Việt would signify a people who knew how to till the soil, plant rice, and at the same time how to use the arc for hunting wild animals for food. So, the word Việt, because its meaning was

52. The Nùng are in the region of Đông-Mô.

53. The Thái are in the region of Lai-châu.

54. Thiệu Khang 少 康 The emperor of the Hạ dynasty who had initiated its revival (2079-2957 B.C.)

55. The Hạ 夏 : The dynasty of Chinese history, starting with Emperor Vũ 禹 and ending with Emperor Kiệt (2183-1752 B.C.).

either geographical or vocational, could be applied to peoples of different ethnic groups living in the same area or working the same way for their living.

Leonard Aurousseau through his new theory, had tried to slash the national ancientness of Ngô Sĩ Liên of some 2,500 years. The Vietnamese historian contended that Đại-việt began in 2,879 B.C., while the French scholar wanted to prove that Đại-việt started its existence only after the debacle of the Việt kingdom in Triết-giang. But in this struggle, both had lost, because both had relied on a patriotic tale.

To show more fully its imaginary character, the story of Hồng-bàng includes the following tales, beside the tale of Hùng-vương. First, here is the tale of 'The Miraculous Child of the village Phù-dổng:

In the reign of King Hùng the Sixth, there was war against the Ân ( 58). The king sent out emissaries in search for talented generals. In the village of Phù-dổng (59), there was a child three years old who did not say a word since his birth. In a sudden, when he heard the appeal of the royal emissaries, he began to speak. He asked his mother to let him fight the war. He told the emissaries that he needed an iron horse, and iron rod and a sword. When the king learned about his request, he offered him an iron horse and a golden sword. Right away the child grew up to be a man, jumped on the horse and rode straight to the battle field. He won the war, then disappeared in the sky. (60).

56. Chang Chi-yun 張其昀 : Author of the 32-volume work called "Chinese History of Fifty Centuries, Institute of Advanced Chinese Studies, Taipei, 1962.

57 Việt-dân 越民 : people beyond the Blue River.

58. The Ân 殷 : A Chinese dynasty which began in 1751 B.C. with the name Thương 湯, then in the reign of Bàn

In a time of fierce and dangerous war, this tale helped much to raise the morale of the fighting men.

The next tale, that of "The Spirit of Mountains and The Spirit of Waters", served both purposes: explained the natural phenomena of flood that came each year when the precipitous waters of the Red River immerged the delta, and gave an idea about the efforts of the population in fighting against this flood.

Hùng-vương the Eighteenth had a very beautiful daughter named Mỹ-châu (61). The Spirit of Mountains (62) and the Spirit of Waters (63) simultaneously asked for her hands. The king promised to marry his daughter to the Spirit who would bring him first the traditional offerings. The Spirit of Mountains came first and got Mỹ-châu. Outraged, the Spirit of Waters flooded the country and frightened with thunders and lightnings. (64)

Ngô Sĩ Liên had much shortened this tale. He gave here only the introductory part of the tale and summarized the outcome in one sentence.

Then comes the tale of "The Young Lad of The Village Chử":

A daughter of King Hùng named Tiên Dung (65) made an excursion by boat to the mouth of River Chử.

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Camh 盤庚, changed into Ân as dynastic name (1398 B. C. The dynasty Thương-Ân lasted 1751-1112 B.C.

59. The village Phù-dổng was called also Dóng, and the Miraculous Child "The Holy Child Of Dóng".

60. Complete History, book 1, page 4.

61. Mỹ-châu 美珠: Means beautiful complexion.

62. The Spirit of Mountains or Sơn Tinh 山星.

gia. There she stopped to take a bath. The young lad of the village Chu was very poor. His father and himself had as garment only one slip. When the father used it, the son had to be naked. Caught in this situation, the young man hid himself in the beach sand. The king daughter took her bath right over him. The water caused the sand to slide away and the young man was uncovered. Both the king daughter and the young man thought that fate had arranged them to meet one another. So, they got married. When this news came to the king, he was out of himself. He hastened to reach the place with the intention to destroy the couple. But, during the night, showers and thunders and storm raged on that place. The young couple and their hut were taken in the sky. This happened in Khoai-châu, in the district of Hưng-yên. Later people called that place Châm Tự-nhiên or Châm Dạ-trạch ( 66).

Explicative in nature ( explaining the existence of the Marsh Tự-nhiên), this tale is also a lesson of resignation to fate. At the same time it warned against the habit of compulsory marriage. In Vietnam, especially in the ancient times, marriages were usually arranged by parents and contracted only between families with socially equal standing.

All in all, the story of Hồng-bàng dynasty, or the series of tales just studied, openly belongs to creative literature. It was written with premeditative purpose and directed toward predetermined goal. The historic and geographical names found in it played only the role of shadow that gave relief to the aim of the author. To take the story for real,

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63. Thủy-tinh 水星 was the name of the Spirit of Waters.

64. In Lịch Sử Việt Nam, the authors commented on this tale as follows: "The Spirit of Mountains" won over "The Spirit of Waters" was a meaningful epic colored with mythology, which praised the first victory of the Lạc-viet people in their efforts to fight against flood to preserve the

is to take shadow for reality. So, it is not enough to slash the past of Vietnam from 2,879 B.C. to 333 B.C., as Leonard Arousseau did, but much more, that is, to the 10th century A.D.<sup>67</sup>

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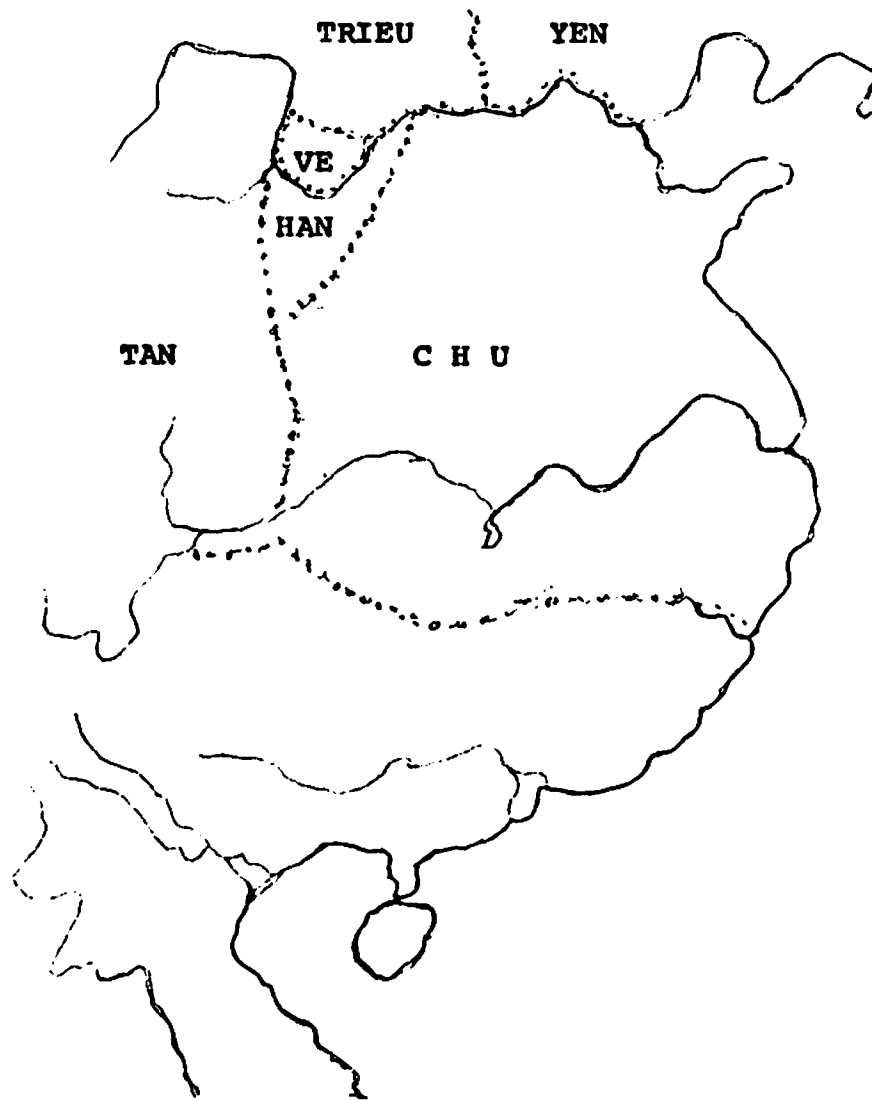
fertile soil on the river banks. (page 46).

65. Tiên Dung 仙容 means beautiful complexion.

66. Châm means marsh. Châm Tự-nhiên might have the meaning of natural marsh.

67. The fact that people believed in the historical value of the tale of Hồng-bàng comes from the confusion in the mind of those historians who expressed doubt on this tale. To cite only Đào Duy Anh in his Việt-nam Văn-hóa Sử-cương (Outline of a History of Vietnamese Culture) edited by Bòn Phương in 1938. On page 21, he said: "Lạc Long-quân married Âu Cơ....This is a legendary tale but it might have some meaning. Perhaps, it intends to show the dismantlement of the kingdom Xích-qui into a hundred Việt peoples" But a little later, on page 25, he wrote peremptorily: "History said that Lạc-Long quan made his eldest son king of Văn-lang with the title Lạc-vương..."

C H I N A  
BEFORE THE UNIFICATION OF TÀN THỦY HOÀNG



yên 燕 ; Triêu 趙 ; vệ 衛 ; hàn 韓 ; tàn 秦 ; chu 周

## CHAPTER THREE

## SOUTHWARD EXPANSION OF CHINA

Late in the 3rd century B.C., China was pacified. The First Emperor of the T<sup>1</sup>ân dynasty, ambitious and cruel, had subdued all his rivals. China from the Blue River to the north was under the rule of one monarch. This was the domain of the Hoa<sup>2</sup>, the civilized. All the peoples outside of China were considered as the man-di<sup>3</sup>, the barbarians. China tried to expand itself into the barbarian land, both as an act of conquest and of civilization.

The barbarians in the south were called nam-man<sup>4</sup> who occupied the immense area south of the Blue River. This region was also known as Ngũ-l<sup>5</sup>nh, because of its five ranges of mountains, or of Lục-luong. It was a region of forests and of jungles, in which roamed wild animals and were hidden natural treasures. This was a region where one could find precious stones, tusks of elephants, horns of unicorns, feathers of pea-cocks and rare pearls. In short, the south was so enticing that China was ready to invade it whenever possible.

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1. The T<sup>1</sup>ân was the first dynasty that unified China. The First Emperor of the T<sup>1</sup>ân was famous for his conquest and his toughness toward the lettres.

2. Hoa 華 :It is said that Hoa was named after Hoa son 華山, cradle of the Chinese people.

3. Man-di 蠻夷 :The Chinese considered the ethnic groups other than themselves as barbarous, uncivilized.

The barbarians of the south were called also Việt by the Chinese, meaning that they were living beyond the Blue River. The Việt were not of the same race. They belonged to different ethnic groups and lived by hunting and by planting rice. Their agriculture was mostly primitive. Their character was primitive, too. But they became fierce fighters when they had to defend their interests.

In 214 B.C., the Tần was ready to attack the Việt people.<sup>6</sup> The first emperor of the Tần mobilized a big army.<sup>7</sup> This army of 500,000 men was not composed of career-soldiers. Compulsorily enlisted were the vagabonds, those who were parasites of the bride's family, the charlatans,<sup>8</sup> in short, all the undesirable elements of the Chinese society. Triệu Đà and Đồ Thư got the command of this army while Giám Lộc took care of the supply. This huge expedition served two purposes: to conquer new territories, to initiate new Chinese colonies.

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4. Nam-man 南蠻 : This was a common name that Chinese gave to the barbarians of the South just as the name Việt.

5. In the time of the Tần expedition, Chinese people had crossed the Blue River and occupied its south bank.

6. Records of History, book 6, page 17, book 112, page 7,

7. We have discussed at length about the expedition of Tần Thủy-hoảng on pages 28-32 of this study.

8. The Tần had mobilized thường phụ vong nhân 嘗通亡人 chúe tề 齊 媿, mai nhân 賈人. The Tần wanted them to go out and fight, but did not want them to be back. This policy was the best to spread the Chinese way of life in new territories.



The Tần army went deep into the territory of Lạc-lường, fought against the Việt people during three years without respite<sup>9</sup>. When the king of Âu-việt<sup>10</sup>, Dịch Hu Tông was killed, the Việt retreated in the dark forests rather than served the Tần. On the territory taken from the Việt, the Chinese emperor established three departments, namely Nam-hải in the east, Quế-lâm in the west, and Tượng, far-away in the south west<sup>11</sup>. Nhâm Ngao was appointed prefect of Nam-hải<sup>2</sup>, and Triệu Đà sub-prefect of Long-xuyên, district of the Nam-hải department.

The Việt people were far from subdued. They organized guerilla attacks and fought the Tần during the nights. The Tần forces were decimated and Đồ Thử was killed. The Tần emperor had to send to the new departments another expedition made up with prisoners for guarding the territory. A great number of women came, too, in this region in order to found new Chinese families for a sound and lasting colonization<sup>12</sup>.

The first emperor of the Tần died in 210 B.C. His immense empire fell into disorder. His second son, Hồ Hối<sup>13</sup>, who succeeded him, was weak and immoral. Strong men stood up

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9. According to Lữ An, the fight lasted three years, but in the Records, book 112, page 8, it is stated that the fight was going on fiercely during 10 years...

10. The Âu-việt was another tribe close to the Lạc-việt. In the tale Hồng-bàng, Âu-cổ seemed to indicate that Lạc-long, when he married her, had made an alliance between the Lạc-việt and the Âu-việt.

11. The Tần empire had already 36 departments, with these new departments, it made 39.

and fought against the Tần to be independent. When HỒ HỢI, or Nhị-thế Hoàng-đế<sup>14</sup>, committed suicide in 207 B.C., two generals, Lưu Bang and Hạng Vũ entered into a fatal duel.

During this time, the region of Ngũ-lĩnh became also independent under the leadership of Triệu Đà. This man, following the advice of Nhâm Ngao, created a new nation out of the new departments and proclaimed himself king of Nam-việt,<sup>15</sup> with Phiên-ngung as capital. That was in 207 B.C. Later he invaded the territory of today North Vietnam, erected two departments, namely Giao-chỉ<sup>16</sup> and Cửu-chân, and governed them by emissaries. In these new departments of Triệu Đà, lived many tribes, but the most important was the Lạc-việt. During the reigns of Triệu Đà and of his successors, Chinese people continued to move south and settled in Nam-việt, even in Giao-chỉ.

The Hán had succeeded the Tần. Lưu Bang, now Hán-cao-đế, after pacifying China, wanted to re-occupy Nam-việt. He and his successors sent envoys to Phiên-ngung to talk the kings of Nam-việt into capitulation.<sup>17</sup> Triệu Đà and his successors stood firm. The Hán had to use tricks. Triệu Minh-vương<sup>18</sup>, while hostage in the Hán capital, was pressured into marrying a Chinese woman. After his death,

12. Complete History book 1, page 8; Tư Tri, book 6, page 47.

13. HỒ HỢI 胡亥 was kid brother of PHỦ TÔ 扶蘇. The latter was killed by his brother after the death of his father.

this woman worked on her son, Triệu Ai-vương<sup>19</sup> for the cause of China. Ai-vương complied. In 111 B.C., on the eve of Ai-vương's departure for China to recognize Chinese power over Nam-việt, Nam-việt's Prime Minister Lữ Gia<sup>20</sup> managed to kill Ai-vương, the Queen-Mother, and the Chinese envoy<sup>21</sup>.

While Lữ Gia busied himself putting the son of Ai-vương, Kiến Đức<sup>22</sup> on the throne of Nam-việt, the Hán was ready to cope with the situation. Under the command of Lô Bác Đức<sup>23</sup>, entitled Subduer of the Waves<sup>24</sup>, a powerful army of the Hán came before the gate of Phiên-ngung.

14. Nhi thế Hoàng-đế 二世皇帝 : Emperor of the Second generation.

15. Records, book 113; History of the Hán Anterior, book 95. Tư Tri, book 12, page 80, Complete History, book 1, page 9; book 2, pages 1-7.

16. Triệu Đà sent nhi sứ 二使 (two emissaries) to govern the two departments of Giao-chí and Cửu-chân.

17. Records, book 97, pages 7-8; Tư Tri, book 13, page 86; book 16, page 109; book 17, page 117.

18. Triệu Minh-vương 趙明王: 124-113. See Tư Tri book 20, page 136.

19. Triệu Ai-vương 趙哀王: 112-111. Complete History book 2, page 13.

20. Lữ Gia 呂嘉 : Type of patriotic official. He had advised in vain many times, so he had to take strong measure against the king and the Queen mother.

21. Records, book 113, pages 3-4, History of the Hán Anterior, book 95, page 12.

22. Kiến Đức 建德.

23. Lô Bác Đức 路博德: A great general of the Hán.

The capitql of Nam-viêt was besieged. Chinese forces defeated Lữ Gia and Kiên Đức, who were captured on their way of escape. Nam-viêt became seven departments of the Hán dynasty, namely Nam-hải<sup>25</sup>, Uất-lâm<sup>26</sup>, Thương-ngô<sup>27</sup>, Hòp-phô<sup>28</sup>, Giao-chỉ, Cửu-chân and Nhật-nam. This political re-shuffle at the end of 111 B.C. marked a turning point for the last three departments, which about a thousand years from that date, would become Vietnam. From now on, this study will center on this part of Chinese territory.

The seven new departments constituted an administrative unit called Giao-chỉ area or Giao-chỉ-bộ<sup>29</sup>, under the power of a governor or thú-sứ<sup>30</sup>. Each department, or quận<sup>31</sup> was governed by a prefect or thái-thú<sup>32</sup>, each department was subdivided into many districts or huyện<sup>33</sup>, at the head of which were the sub-prefects or huyện-lệnh<sup>34</sup>. The policy

24. Subduer of the Waves or Phục-Ba Tướng-quân 伏波將軍. This title was given also to Mã Viện when this general was dispatched to fight Trưng Trắc.

25. Nam-hải was in Canton today, having 6 districts.

26. Uất-lâm 鬱林: This was the Que-lam of the Tan, having 12 districts.

27. Thương-ngô 蒼梧: This department later, in the Đường, was called Tân-quang, having 10 districts.

28. Hòp-phô 合浦 later named also Hoan-hòp, had 5 districts.

29. Giao-chỉ-bộ 交趾部: This meant area of Giao-chỉ. Sometimes it was used without the word 'bộ', and was easily confused with the Giao-chỉ quan or district of Giao-chỉ.

of the Hán Anterior was still liberal. In the department of Giao-chí<sup>35</sup> for example, the Lạc-tướng who formerly governed the districts were still allowed to do so. But mostly, from the function of sub-prefect upward, the officials were appointed by the Central Government and the officials<sup>36</sup> should be born Chinese.

As for colonial policy, the Hán followed the procedure of the preceding dynasty. The undesirable, the prisoners were sent to the colonies to be soldiers or colons. They lived mainly around the residences of the governors and in the delta of the Red River<sup>37</sup>. They used to settle in well-knit villages in order to till the soil for a living and, at the same time, to look out for the security of China.<sup>38</sup>

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30. Thứ-sú 刺史 : He was governor of an area, not of a department. In the Complete History, there are many confusions of this kind.

31. Quận 郡 : In 111 B.C. the Hán had 82 departments and 20 quốc or kingdoms.

32. Thái-thú 太守 .

33. Huyện 縣 . In the Hán Posterior huyện was called thành.

34. Huyện-lệnh 縣令 .

35. There was a Lạc-tướng 雄將 in Mê-linh and in Châu-diên.

36. There was much discrimination between the native Chinese and the colons, who were born in the colonies, meaning the three far-south departments (Giao-chí, Cửu-chân, Nhật-nam).

37. Red River or Hồng-hà 紅河 : The biggest river of North Vietnam.

The Central Government did not take much care of the colons. They had to make a living by themselves and were harassed in many ways by the officials. Far away from the emperor and the imperial court, the officials felt free to do anything they wanted. In the first decades of the first century A.D., however, some good prefects appeared, namely Tịch Quang<sup>39</sup> of the department of Giao-chí, and Nhâm Diên of the department of Cửu-chân. The first had the initiative to establish schools to teach the colons literature and good manners. During the usurpation of Vương Mãng<sup>40</sup> that divided the Hán dynasty into Anterior and Posterior,<sup>41</sup> Tịch Quang with the governor and other prefects remained faithful to the Hán. When Vương Mãng was finally eliminated,<sup>42</sup> the Hán emperor sent Sâm Bành to the south to appeal for unity. Tịch Quang and his colleagues gave submission to the new ruler.

38. In 231, Tiết Tông 蘇宗, the prefect of Hợp phô, made a report to the Ngô (210-279), in which there is this passage: "Hiệu-Võ of the Hán killed Lữ Gia... appointed a governor to Giao-chí, sent Chinese prisoners to this area, had them settled here and there, taught them some knowledge, showed them some good manners... Tư Tri, book 41, page 280.

39. Tịch Quang 錫光 : The first good prefect to be mentioned in the Han Anterior. Tịch Quang had no biography of his own in the History of the Hán Anterior. His mention was made in the story of Nhâm Diên.

40. Vương Mãng 王莽 : He was son of a brother of Queen Hiếu-nguyên of the Hán, rose rapidly in power and in the year 8 A.D. usurped the throne of the Hán, kept it until 23.

41. The Hán Anterior or Tiên Hán 前漢 (206-B.C.-8A.D.) and the Hán Posterior or Hậu Hán 後漢 (23-226).

43

The story of **Nhâm Diên** , prefect of Cửu-chân, was full of information about the social and economic situation of that department. Praises should have causes. Improvements should imply previous defects. The biography of **Nhâm Diên** the History of the Hán Posterior <sup>44</sup> , was a long praise for his improvements to the benefit of Cửu-chân in the 3rd decade after Christ. Because of its rich content, let us read the text itself:

The tradition of the people of Cửu-chân was to live on hunting and fishing. The people did not know how to till the soil with water buffaloes. Whenever there was scarcity in rice, they used to trade with Giao-chí. Dien gave order to make agricultural tools, taught them to clear the jungles; new fields increased year after year. Rice supply became abundant.

Moreover, the people of Lạc-viet had no marriage tradition. They were debauch, did not want to have a family, did not know the relationship between father and child, between husband and wife. Dien sent out instructions to his districts, telling the sub-prefects to enjoin males from age 20 to 50 females from age 15 to 40, to choose their espouses according to their ages. As for the poor people who could not afford the wedding presents, he asked all the officials to cut out a portion of their salaries to help them. Once, people getting married amounted to more than two thousands. That year, the crop was good, rice price was cheap. The children born began to have a family name. Everybody said: 'If I have this child, it's thanks to Prefect **Nhâm**'. Many named their children after his name. (45).

42. **Sâm Bành** 岑彭 : He was one of the best generals who helped restoring the Hán. The story of Sâm Bành is found in the History of the Hán Posterior, book 47, page 9-16.

43. **Nhâm Diên** 任延 : He had his story in History of the Hán Posterior, book 106, pages 3-4.

44. History of the Hán Posterior or Hậu Hán-thư 後漢書 edited by Trung-hoa Thư-cục, in Taiwan.

The first remark is that the Lạc-việt not only lived in Giao-chỉ, but also in Cửu-chân. In both departments, they were not the whole population, but they constituted the most populous tribe among the autochthons. As for agriculture, Cửu-chân was much inferior to Giao-chỉ. In this department, as early as in the time of Triệu Đà, the autochthons had learned from Triệu Quá,<sup>46</sup> emissary of the king of Nam-việt, the Chinese technique of planting rice. In Cửu-chân, on the contrary, the Lạc-việt continued their backward way until the time of Nhâm Diên. Before the introduction of agricultural tools by this prefect, they used to burn brushes and sowed rice seeds in holes dug in ashy soil.<sup>47</sup>

The total lack of marriage among the Lạc-việt was to be noted. Phạm Việp<sup>48</sup> gave a reason for this barbarous custom: The Lạc-việt, he said, were debauch, they liked flesh satisfaction, but did not like conjugal responsibility. Nhâm Diên initiated a bold reform; his policy was effective. The Lạc-việt seemed to enjoy the good results.

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45. Phạm Việp, op.cit. book 106, page 4.

46. Triệu Quá 趙過 was governor of Sưu-túc or Sưu-túc đô úy 搜粟都尉.

47. This way of planting rice is called "lâm rẫy" in Vietnamese. Until now the montagnards still burned brushes and dug holes to plant rice seeds.

48. Phạm Việp 范曄: He was prefect of Tuyên-thành when he wrote his history under the Tống dynasty (420-477).



It would be proper here to pose some questions.

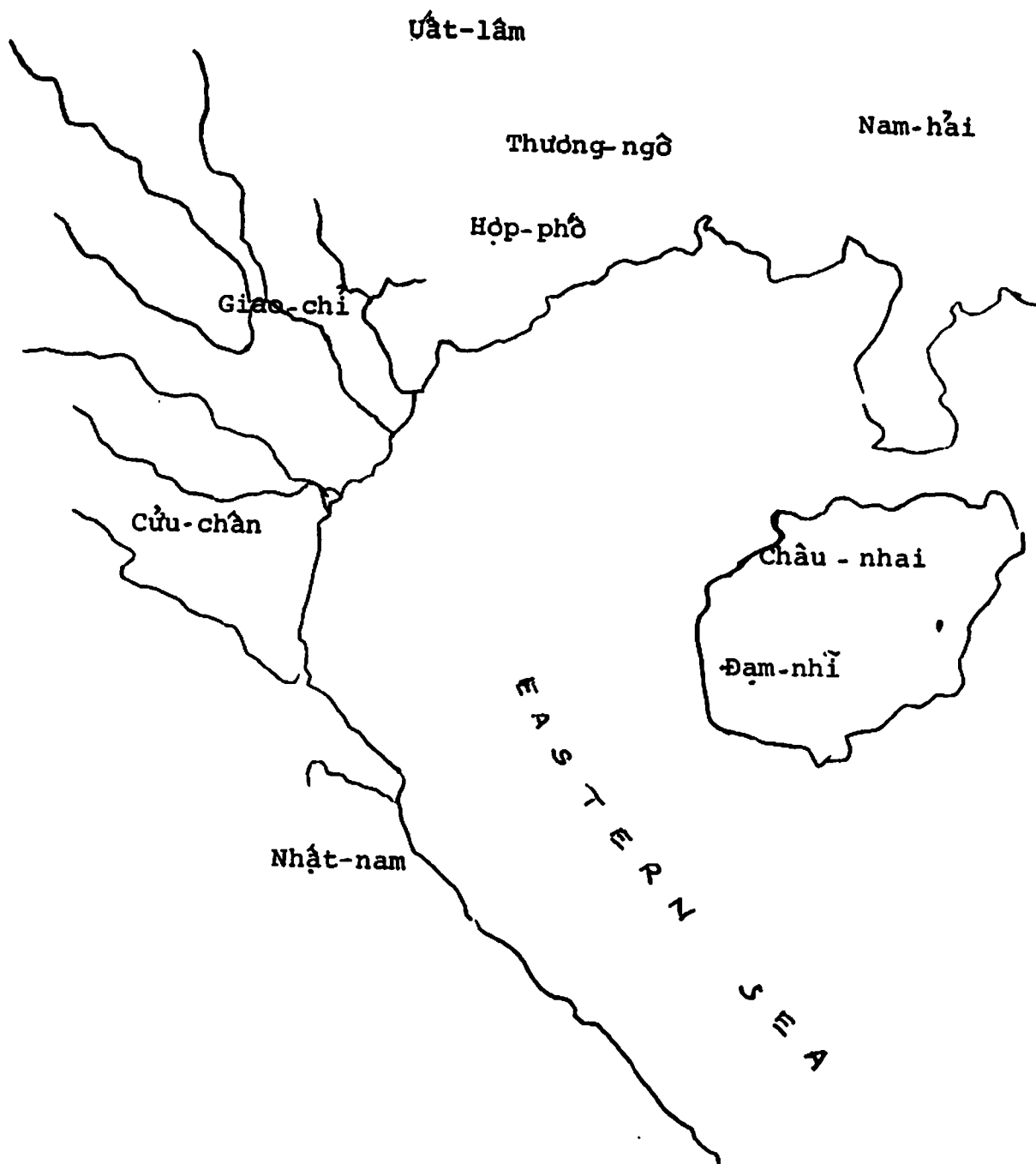
Why during a period of more than two centuries only two prefects bothered themselves about helping their subjects ? What was then the role of the governors and prefects ? Did they have <sup>only</sup> to exploit the population and harrass them for bribe ? Why their corruption and their irresponsability were not checked ? Was it because the departments of Giao-chí, Cửu-chân and Nhật-nam were too far from the Cnetral Government ? If it was so, the life of the people in this part of China was too much hopeless. This life would depend entirely on the whim of the officials. So, when the officials had some cover for their ambition, the population was outright miserable.

Prior to the usurpation of Vương Mãng, the Hán behaved as conquerors. Satisfied with what they got, the Hán emperors seemed not to worry about the vicissitudes that might happen to their possession. Suddenly, a stanger was able to interrupt the course of their succession. The throne lost for 15 years had awakened them. The fighting for the restoration was long and destructive. It was not surprising that when they recaptured the power, they did not want to loose it a second time. They tried to keep it tightly. They wanted not only unification but also uniformity. They wanted that their country should be governed the same way, everywhere. Schools everywhere should use the same characters. People everywhere should be submitted under the same laws.

These policies had made the Hán famous, but they were

also the cause of many additional troubles to the restored dynasty. For the area of Giao-chí, they were an occasion for many more harassments at the expense of the population and obviously at the origin of the uprising of the autochthons in 39.

GIAO-CHỈ AREA AFTER THE FALL OF NAM-VIỆT IN 111 B.C.



Nam-hải 南海 Uất-lâm 鬱林 Thương-ngô 蒼梧 Hợp-phồ 合浦  
 Giao-chỉ 交趾 Cửu-chân 九真 Nhật-nam 日南  
 Châu-nhai 朱崖 Đạm-nhĩ 澗