

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE NAM-CHIẾU DOMINATION :

A POWERFUL PUSH TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

It was the autochthons who had induced the tiny kingdom of Hoàn-vương to take over for six years the department of Nhật-nam.¹ Again, it was the autochthons who were going to invite the barbarian kingdom of Nam-chiêu² to take over for four years the whole An-nam. This domination, though short, was a big shame for China and a fatal experience for the colons.

³ Vương Thúc who became governor of An-nam in 858 was an educated, talented and magnanimous man. The first thing he did when he just came was to fortify the defense. But it was too late. He had to face a legacy of troubles accumulated many years before him. The autochthons were angry at Chinese authorities to a breaking point. And the Nam-chiêu who were looking at An-nam as a ready territory for their expansion, were not very far from An-nam capital.

The man who brought about this critical situation was Lý Trác..⁴ In him epitomized the worst things that a governor could do to estrange people from the govern-

1. Hoàn-vương had occupied Nhật-nam from 803 to 809 as mentioned above/

2. Nam-chiêu 南詔 A kingdom composed of six chieu (groups) unified in the 8th century, tributary to China, then independent from China; then hostile to China.

3. Vương Thúc 王式 : Tư Trị, book 249, page 1719, Tân Đường thư, book 5, page 3654.

ment and to attract the interest of the enemies. By 854, when he governed An-nam, he went too far in his technic of exploitation. Not only taxes were high, but also his way of trading with the autochthons was outright repulsive. He compelled the montagnards to sell him a cow or a horse for a bowl of salt. When the tribal leader ⁵Đỗ Tôn Thành ⁶made remonstrances, he killed him. All the tribes fumed for vengeance.

Meanwhile he gave no support to those who worked for the government. ⁷Lý Do Độc, for example, who collected taxes, used to rely on the 6,000 troops who guarded the borders. Repeatedly, he was courted by the Chief of the Eastern Expansion Department of the Nam-chiều, ⁸but he hesitated. Suddenly, Lý Trác called back the border troops. Immediately Do Độc passed over to the Nam-chiều, and helped them to conquer An-nam.

Aware of all these difficulties, Vương Thúc felt the need of bringing home to the people the idea that he came to serve, not to exploit them. He severely punished La Hành Cung, ⁹a subaltern, who for many years played

4. Lý Trác 李 涿 : Tư Tri (book 249, page 1718) mentioned another Lý Trác, who was Tiết-độ-sứ of Nghĩa-xương. See note.

5. Mã ngu nhất đầu chỉ dụ hàm nhất đầu 馬牛一頭止與鹽一斗。

6. Đỗ Tôn Thành 都存誠

7. Lý Do Độc 李由獨 was leader of the tribe Thất quán. 七 館

the role of an exploiting agent. Hành Cung had in his house a horde of 2,000 soldiers while the guard of the gubernatorial mansion numbered only 200 men. Vương Thúc beat him with rods then sent him to fight in the frontiers.

When Vương Thúc was informed that a group of armed Nam-chiều were massing at Cầm-diên¹⁰, about 30 miles distant from the capital, he rushed towards them instead of letting them rush towards him. He met with them, explained to them the right and the wrong, the useful and the harmful. That night, they all disappeared, leaving to Vương Thúc a message saying that they came to fight the montagnards who disturbed the peace not to plunder the capital.

The Nam-chiều came again under another pretext. They spread the rumor that brigands were coming from the island of Châu-nhai¹¹ and would invade the capital. They wanted to be in the capital in order to keep it safe.

8. Chief of Eastern Expansion Department or Thác-dông Tiết-độ-sứ 拓東節度使. The Nam-chiều kingdom was in Yunnan, west of An-nam. So a Nam-chiều department was established to take charge of expanding over An-nam.

9. La Hành Cung 羅行恭 : Type of evil agent who served as intermediary in transactions as bribery, extortion, etc...

10. Cầm-diên 錦田 : A place upstream of Tông bình about 30 miles. According to the institution of the Đường, a day on horse back covered 70 Chinese miles.

11. Châu-nhai 朱崖 : In Mainan island. Rumor was spreading that there were the Hoàng-dầu (Yellow Heads) brigands coming from Châu-nhai to threaten An-nam.

They were shouting, hurling vociferously outside the rampart. Vương Thúc was having dinner when the enemies came. His aides told him to escape. He replied: "If I move a step, the capital will fall". Quietly he finished his dinner, then solemnly clad, he went up to the rampart with all his generals, and talked to the malevolent gathering. Struck by his prestige and his arguments, the Nam-chiêu went away. He sent out his men to pursue them and killed almost all of them.

Vương Thúc planned to put down all sources of violence. There was a troublemaker named Đỗ Thủ Đẳng¹² who was fomenting revolt among the tribes. In a skillful way, Vương Thúc sowed dissidence between themselves and Thủ Đẳng had to escape.

Unfortunately, Vương Thúc had to go. In 860 a great rebellion broke in Đông-bá-quan;¹³ the imperial army was many times defeated. The name of Vương Thúc was proposed to the emperor as the only man capable to cope with the situation. The emperor agreed and sent Lý Hộ¹⁴ to replace Vương Thúc in An-nam.

Lý Hộ was not only ambitious but vain. He wanted right away an exploit for himself. So he left Tông-bình

12. Đỗ Thủ Đẳng 杜守澄 was a tribal leader, son of Đỗ Tôn Thành killed by Lý Trác.

13. Đông-bá-quan 桐柏觀: In the department of Thái-châu, 台州 district of Đường-hung

14. Lý Hộ 李 鄩: Tư Tri, book 250, page 1723. Complete History, book 5, page 10.

unguarded and led all the An-nam army to take back Bá-
¹⁵châu fallen into the hands of the Nam-chiêu a year a-
 go. He left on the 10th lunar month and on the 12th
¹⁶lunar month the Nam-chiêu, who lay in wait for an oc-
 casion to take over An-nam capital, rushed into it with-
 out any difficulty. So, before being able to seized Bá-
 châu, Lý Hộ¹⁷ already lost his residence and had to flee
 to Vĩ-châu. The next year, Lý Hộ came back to An-nam
 with his army reorganized and re-inforced. He drove out
 the Nam-chiêu. But his mistake was so great that ^{le} had to
¹⁸be moved and to take a lower position.

Alarmed by the loss of Tông-bình, the emperor has-
 tily appointed Vương Khoan governor of An-nam to orga-
 nize a rescue operation. He came to Tông-bình¹⁹ when Lý
 Hộ had rescued it, but inherited all the consequences of
 Lý Hộ's ill-inspired actions. The Nam-chiêu left the ca-
 pital but still stayed around it. The autochthons, deep-
 ly resentful against Lý Hộ's killing of Đỗ Thủ Đãng, who-
 leheartedly went over to the Nam-chiêu. On the other hand,

15. Bá-châu 播州 belonged to the area of Kiên-trung,
 not to An-nam.

16. That was the 10th and 12th lunar month of the 1st
 year of Hàm-thông (860).

17. Vĩ-châu 武州: Near Nghi-châu 宜州. See Tư trị,
 book 250, page 1724, note.

18. Lý Hộ was moved to the post of secretary of finance
 in Chiêm-châu 儋州 then, was exiled in Phong-châu,
 native department of Đỗ Thủ Đãng. By this gesture, the
 emperor wanted to appease the Đỗ family.

20
 Vương Khoan was weak and dull. He made appeal to the emperor each time there was a threat of the Nam-chiêu. In 862, He was replaced by Sái Tập²¹ former inspector of HỒ-nam. At the same time, a big army, raised from the departments of Hứa, Hoạt, Tử, Biện, Kinh, Nhung, Dầm, Ngạc,²³ was committed to the new governor. When Sái Tập came with this powerful army²⁴, the result was that the Nam-chiêu retreated a bit farther from the capital. But this was not for Sái Tập's safety, because envy would play its deadly role.

There was a reshuffle of high command of Lĩnh-nam in summer 862. Lĩnh-nam was divided into two sections: The Eastern Section, consisted of Quảng-châu and Quê-quản,²⁵ was under the command of Vi Trụ; the Western Section, consisted of Ung-quản and Dung-quản was under the command of Sái Kinh;²⁸ while Sái Tập took care of the army in An-nam for reason of emergency.

19. Tống-bình 宋平 : Capital of An-nam.

20. Vương Khoan 王寬 : Tử Trị, book 250, page 1724.

21. Sái Tập 蔡襲 Tử Trị, book 250, page 1725, Tân Đường thư, book 222, page 4157.

22. HỒ-nam 湖南 : A big department showing that Sái-Tập was talented official.

23. The eight departments Hứa 許 Hoạt 滑, Tử 徐, Biện 汴, Kinh 荆, Nhung 襄, Dầm 潭, Ngạc 鄂.

24. Tha army numbered 240,000 men, because each department provided 30,000 men.

25, Eastern Section or Đông-đạo 東道 was under a Tiết độ sứ.

A huge army under the command of Sái Tập ?

This question perplexed Sái Kinh who thought that those 240,000 men should have been under his hands. Did emergency still exist when there was no more actual fighting ? The answer was positive, because the Nam-chiêu were not yet defeated. What they did was to retreat and wait, just as they had done before. Sái Kinh did not follow this line of reasoning. In a report to the emperor, he said that the threat of the Nam-chiêu was over, the supply for such a big army was a big waste for the imperial treasury, and that it was time to send the soldiers home. The emperor agreed.

On the contrary, Sái Tập was threatened in proportion as his army disappeared. He had his An-nam troops, but they could not measure with all the forces of the Nam-chiêu pulled together, plus the overall help of the autochthons. He made an appeal to the emperor entitled "A hundred per cent bound to death" but the emperor was already "a hundred per cent bound" to ignore the situation. So Sái Tập, despite his heroic defense, was overwhelmed by the Nam-chiêu who became rulers over An-nam. Did the fate of an area have to depend on

26. Vi Trụ 韋宙

27. Western Section or Tây-giang-đạo 西江道. The envious feeling of Sái Kinh came from the thought that An-nam should have been under his command, and that Sái Tập, if he won the Nam-chiêu, would accomplish more than he did.

a lie inspired by envy ? It was apparent to all the colons of An-nam that it did. And, terrible enough, it was not the last time.³⁰

The death toll of this time was pretty high. About 150,000 soldiers of Sái Tập were killed and about 20,000 captured by the Nam-chiêu. This amount would have made an army strong enough to defeat the Nam-chiêu, but confusion and frustration had invaded the generals of the Chinese side so that the outcome was doomed before the fighting. And it is proper to remind here that this amount of dead and captured were mostly colons, because the divisions belonging to the expedition had gone back to their home bases.³¹

The fate of Sái Kinh who caused all this loss was not better than that of Sái Tập. Because of his cruelty and exactions, he was thrown out of his position by his subjects. He escaped to Đãng-châu,³² hastily raised an army, went back to fight Ung-châu where he was the boss. Defeated, he fled to Quê-châu. Here, nobody wanted to receive him. As a punishment, the emperor named him secretary in Châu-nhai. On his refusal, he was ordered

28. Sái Kinh 蔡京 : Type of official who could do any treacherous action to satisfy his selfishness.

29. "A hundred per cent bound to death" or "thập tất tử" 十 必 死.

30. Dương An Quyên will soon replay the role of Sái Kinh in the war to rout the Nam-chiêu.

31. The final battle was over in the spring of 863.

to commit suicide in Linh-lăng. And all this happen-
ed even before the death of Sái-Tập.³³

But did the loss of Sái-Tập and of 170,000 men mean also the loss of An-nam ? Or did it mean the contrary ? Rather it meant the contrary, despite all kinds of contrarities.

When, at last, the attack of Nam-chiều came, the attitude of the emperor was to wait and see. Even he ordered to Sái Tập to retreat to Hải-môn³⁴, but Sái Tập was already heavily surrounded by the Nam-chiều in Tông-bình. The two military Commanders were hastily alerted. More troops were mobilized. More attention was paid to the damage that the Nam-chiều might bring not only to An-nam, but also to other Chinese areas. Both Vi Trụ, and Trịnh Ngu, who replaced Sái Kinh,³⁵ became worried.

From the middle of 863, actions took place in a speedy pace. The expeditionary army was called back to duty. The Protectorate of An-nam was abolished to give place to the Temporary Administration of Giao-châu,³⁶ with residence in Hải-môn, then re-established. Tông Nhung was made prefect of Giao-châu, then Governor of An-nam, with Khang Thừa Huân³⁷ as Commander of the expeditionary army

32. Đàng-châu 藤州 : This was the district of Mạnh-lăng 猛陵 under the Hán. The Đường made that châu.

33. All that happened to Sái Kinh unfolded in the 8th and 9th lunar months.

of Lĩnh -nam. This army stationed both in Ung-quan and in Quảng-châu. In Hải-môn, the army of colon-soldiers numbered already 10,000.³⁸

In spring of 864, Trường-Nhân³⁹ was named Care-taker of all the affairs of Giao-châu.⁴⁰ Because the colon-army at Hải-môn amounted to 25,000, the emperor also mandated Trường Nhân to re-capture An-nam. At the same time, this official got an advancement. He was promoted to the position of Khang Thừa Huân, who just resigned⁴¹ in the hope of avoiding disclosure of his wrong-doings. As Commander of the Western Section, Trường Nhân had in addition under his power the divisions of Dung-quan and Tử-châu. Even so, he did not want to go out and fight the Nam-chiều.

In this conjuncture, one of the greatest men appeared.⁴² Cao Biền was judged fit for the job. The emperor made him Governor of An-nam and Commander of the army. All the divisions under Trường Nhân had to be transferred to him. Cao Biền was an eunuch, educated, talented in matter of war, and very responsible. He was at the head of his army at Hải-môn in the fall of 865.

34. Hải-môn 海門: A port in the department of Hợp-phố.

35. Trịnh Ngu 鄭愚: Tư Trị, book 250, page 1725. Prior to this post, he was Military Inspector of Quê-quan (Quê-quan quan-sát-sứ).

35. Temporary Administration of Giao-châu or Hành Giao-châu 行交州.

37. Tông Nhung 宗戎: Tư Trị, book 250, page 1726.

And envy again entered the scene. There was an official, named Lý Duy Chu, who had the title of ⁴³Giám-quân ⁴⁴. He did not like Cao Biền to have that job. In order to dump the new governor, he wanted to play a trick: To push Cao Biền into the battle with the Nam-chiêu with only 5,000 men. When Cao Biền left Hải-môn, Duy Chu promised to follow him shortly with the rest of the army, but in fact he did not go, nor give any supply to him.

In the 9th lunar month, Cao Biền arrived in Nam-định. He saw about 50,000 autochthons . . . harvesting rice planted by the colons. The autochthons were ⁴⁵commanded ⁴⁶by Trương Thuyên, who worked for Pham Ni Ta, then governor of An-nam. Cao Biền gave to Trương Thuyên a smashing defeat, killed him, took over all the rice for his soldiers. During the winter of 865, he studied the situation while waiting for re-inforcement.

In ⁴⁷Tống-bình, outside Pham Ni Ta, governor, there were ⁴⁸Đoàn Tù Thiên, Moderator of Thiên-xiên, and ⁴⁹Đường Tập, his aide ⁵⁰, ⁵¹Thiệu Nặc Ni, Governor General of Phù-da, and many autochthon leaders who served as guides to the Nam-chiêu, the most prominent of them was Chu Đạo Cồ.

38. In Hành Giao-châu, the army was recruited among the colons of An-nam.

39. Trương Nhân ^{張茵} had the title ^{交州事} Câu-đường Giao-châu sự. Tứ Tri, book 250, page 1727.

40. The Câu-đường was found again in the administrative

In the middle of 866, the Nam-chiếu reshuffled their high command. Đoàn Tũ Thiên had become Moderator of An-nam, while Dương Tập took the Moderatorship of Thiệ̄n-xiê̄n. But by the order of Tũ Long, Dương Tập led his troops to An-nam to help Đoàn Tũ Thiên. Phạm Ni Ta and Triệu Nặ̄c Ni both got the title of generalissime.

There was also a change in the camp of Cao Biê̄n. Vi Trọng Tê came with 7,000 men. With this re-enforcement, Cao Biê̄n attacked the Nam-chiếu. But all the news sent by Cao Biê̄n were stopped by Lý Duy Chu in Hải-môn. The emperor, anxious about the war-front, asked Lý Duy Chu, who answered that Cao Biê̄n stayed idle in An-nam. Immediately Vũ̄ng Án Quyê̄n was dispatched to An-nam to replace Cao Biê̄n. Meanwhile Cao Biê̄n and Vi Trọng Tê had come and besieged Tông-bình more than ten days. The capital was on the verge of surrender, when Cao Biê̄n heard

organization of Việt-nam up to the 20th century.

41. Khang Thừa Huân was accused before the emperor by Vi Trụ, the commander of the Eastern Section of Lĩnh nam.

42. Cao Biê̄n 高 駢 : Tư Tri, book 250, page 1728; Đuông-thư, book 185, page 3550; Tân Đuông-thư, book 224, page 4169. See also Complete History, book 5, page 12-13.

43. Lý Duy Chu 李維周 Type of astute official of all times

44. Giám-quân 監 軍 A title in Chinese army, who cared about the discipline of the soldiers.

45. Trương Thuyên 張 彥 General of Nam-chiếu

46. Phạm Ni Ta 范 昶 些 succeeded to Tư Tấn. 思 緒

47. Đoàn Tũ Thiên 段 苜 遷 was promoted to face Cao Biê̄n in the final phase of Nam-chiếu war.

that Vương An Quyên and Lý Duy Chu were coming. He immediately delegated his command to Vi Trọng Tê and off he went back to Hải-môn. But prior to his departure and after his victories over the Nam-chiều around Tông-bình, he sent one of his aides, named Tǎng Côn⁵⁶, and Trọng Tê⁵⁷ had also sent his, named Vương Huệ Tân, to bring the good news to the emperor. On the way, these messengers saw Lý Duy Chu procession but were able to avoid his seizure. So, when Cao Biền reached Hải-môn, he received at the same time the congratulation of the emperor who sent him back right-a-way to his former job. When once again on the war-front, he saw at his dismay that Duy Chu and An Quyên cared less about fighting and more about bribes to let enemies getting out of the encircling

48. Đoàn Tù Thiên 段 箇 遷 : Commander of the Nam-chiều army in Thiên-xiên, the capital, and then, in An-nam.

49. Thiên-xiên 善 關 : Capital of the Nam-chiều.

50. Triệu Nặc Ni 趙 諾 眉 : First governor of Phù-da, then generalissimo in the fight against Cao Biền.

51. Chu Đạo Cổ 朱 道 古 : This was the most efficient guide of the Nam-chiều. When the Nam-chiều were defeated, Cao Biền killed him with other Nam-chiều generals.

52. Tù Long and all his staff were in An-nam during the fight with Cao Biền.

53. Tư TRỊ, book 250, page 1728.

54. Vi Trọng Tê 韋 仲 宰

55. Vương An Quyên 王 晏 權 : He was of the same type with Lý Duy Chu.

56. Tǎng Côn 曾 衮 : He became governor of An-nam, then called Tĩnh-hai, in 880.

line. He worked hard to encourage his soldiers, tightened the lines and captured the capital. All the great generals of Nam-chiêu were killed as well as the guide Chu Đạo Cồ.⁵⁸ More than 30,000 enemies were beheaded. Cao Biền put down also some tribal leaders who had shown more vehemence in the help of the Nam-chiêu. An-nam was re-gained.

After this victory, the emperor manifested a very conciliatory attitude towards the Nam-chiêu. He ordered to every front to stop fighting. An ambassador, named Lưu Đồng Hiên,⁵⁹ was appointed to resume good relations with the Nam-chiêu. He renamed An-nam Tĩnh-hải and assigned Cao Biền as governor.⁶⁰ Cao Biền began a rescue task-force to help the war victims, who were Chinese colons. He planned to build more than 400,000 huts for the homeless and rebuilt the rempart around the capital. A man of great vision, he wanted to remove all the big reefs that obstructed the water-way between Tĩnh-hải and Ung-châu and Quảng-châu. He commissioned Dư Tồn Cồ⁶¹ to accomplish that work. Because of all these constructions, the emperor awarded him the title of Minister of Public Works. Cao Biền was recalled to China in 869.⁶²

57. Vương Huệ Tấn 王惠贊

58. The names of Nam-chiêu generals mentioned being killed by Cao Biền were Đoàn Tử Thiên, Triệu Nặc Mi, Phạm Ni Ta and Chu Đạo Cồ.

59. Lưu Đồng Hiên 劉潼曉 embodied the weak position of China at that time. Rebellions broke in many places, generals were mostly corrupted....

60. Governor or Tĩnh-hải tiết-dộ-sứ 靜海節度使.

When the dizzy danger was over, the regular needling danger came back. Because of the weakening of the Đuống, the governors felt more and more free to do what they wanted. And they wanted so much that nobody could bear. In 880, people threw out Governor Tǎng CỒN, former aide of Cao Biền. In 905, the Prime Minister Chu Toàn Trung⁶³ was obliged to throw out his big brother Chu Toàn Dục⁶⁴, because of the bad reputation of this man in Tĩnh-hải.

And, finally the great dynasty of the Đuống fell in 907. This was of course a new cycle of trials and sufferings for An-nam, as each time a change of imperial power took place in the past. But this time, it was the final cycle. The war of the Nam-chiếu had awakened all the colonies, victims of the events of 863-866;^{it} had shaken off all their reluctance, and had sharpened their determination. Before the long overdue past, replenished with exploitation and irresponsibility, they had no other choice than to take the final decision of self-defense and self-responsibility.⁶⁵

61. Dư Tôn Cồ 于存古 was a general, native of Ho nam, under the command of Cao Biền.

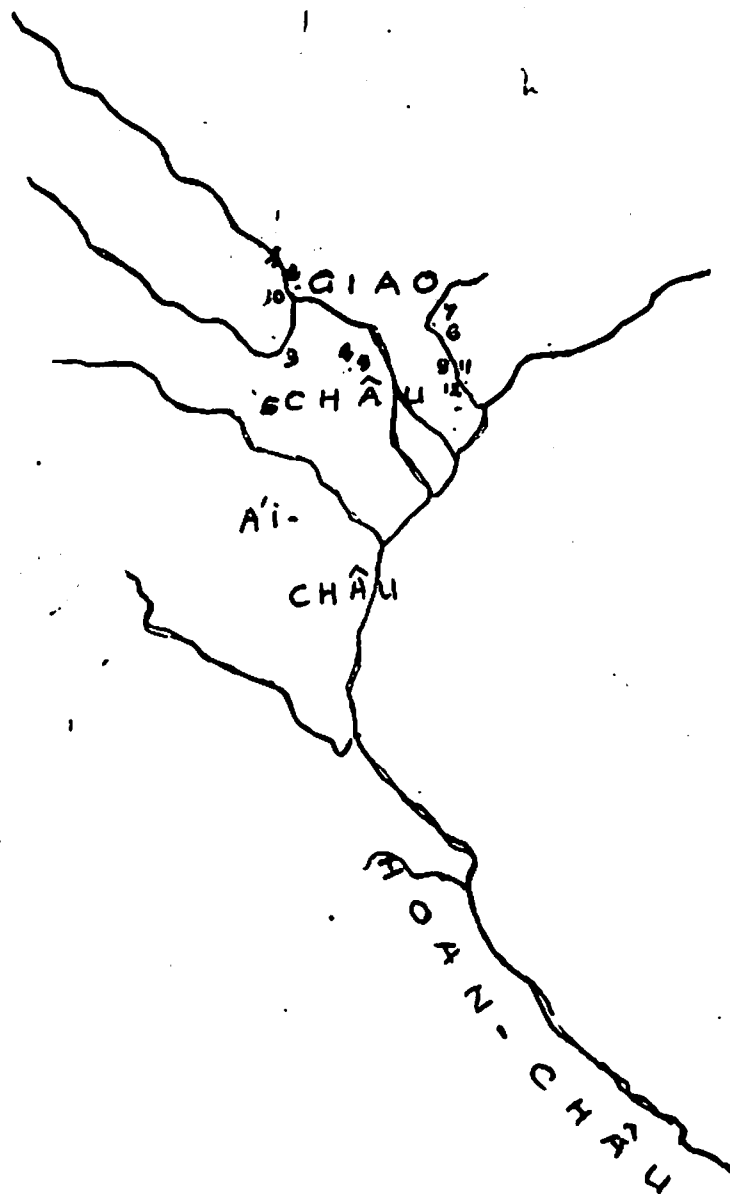
62. Tư trị, book 251, page 1729.

63. Chu Toàn Trung 朱全忠 : He will take over the imperial power from the Đuống and found the New Lương dynasty (907- 923) 後梁

64. Chu Toàn Dục 朱全昱 was removed not because Chu Toàn Trung cared about the plight of the people in An-nam, but because he needed a place to exile his rival ĐỘC CỒ TỒN.

65. Lịch-Sử Việt-Nam ^{almost} skips ^{entirely} the episode of the Nam-chieu domination. What might have meant by that? That might have meant that, according to its authors, only the domination of China had to be resisted, not the domination of other countries. That might have also meant that their history of Vietnam were a history of the autochthons fighting against foreign domination, but in this case, the autochthons themselves had invited a foreign country to invade An-nam, there would be no more reason to talk about.

LOCALITIES OF THE SÚ-QUÂN



1. Phong-châu (Kiêu Tam chề)
2. Nguyễn-gia (Nguyễn Thái Bình)
3. Dương-lâm (Trần Công Lãm)
4. Đổ-động (Đổ Cảnh công)
5. Bình-kiều (Nguyễn Du Dịch)
6. Siêu-loại (Nguyễn Lãng công)
7. Tiên-đu (Nguyễn Lệnh-Công)
8. Tê-giang (Lữ Tá công)
9. Phù-liệt (Nguyễn Hữu Công)
10. Hồi-hồ (Kiều Lệnh công)
11. Đẳng-châu (Phạm Phòng Ất)
12. Giang Bồ-khẩu (Trần Minh công)

CHAPTER NINE

THE POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

The fall of a Chinese dynasty usually entailed a dismemberment of the empire. In the case of the Đuống, this dismemberment came a bit late, because the transition of power was effected by a well-prepared usurpation. But the consequence was worse. In a lapse of about 60 years, five imperial dynasties succeeded one another, with the co-existence of a number of other small kingdoms. This situation was for An-nam, or Tĩnh-hải,¹ a golden opportunity to materialize its multi-century-old aspiration : independence. Certainly, the people of An-nam were not going to miss it.

In 905, when Prime Minister Chu Toàn Trung recalled his big brother from Tĩnh-hải, he had made a mechiavellic move. While showing off his hypocritical integrity, he got a vacancy fit for exiling his most powerful rival, Độc Cô Tôn, or if Cô Tôn refused to obey, he got an opportunity to eliminate him. In fact, Cô Tôn had refused, and was relegated to the post of secretary in Quỳnh-châu.²

To replace Cô Tôn, Chu Toàn Trung chose a colon,

1. This period of the Five Dynasties or Ngũ-dại 五代 started in 907 and ended in 959.

2. Quỳnh-châu was the department that Đuống Chiêu-tông had awarded to the rebel Đuống Thanh to appease his bad feelings. Tư Trị, book 265, pages 1839, 1840.

named Khúc Thừa Dụ³. Not only Thừa Dụ got the title of governor⁴ but was elevated to the grade of Đônq-bình-chương-sự⁵. When Toàn Trung took the imperial throne, in 907, Khúc Thừa Dụ died and his son Khúc Hạo became his successor.⁶

Khúc Hạo governed Tĩnh-hải only until 911, but had a remarkable accomplishment.. Based on his good relations with the Lương, he resisted victoriously to the governor of Thanh-hải⁷, by name Lưu Ân⁸, who wished to extend his governorship over Tĩnh-hải. To placate Lưu Ân the emperor elevated him to the honorific title of Prince of the South Pacified⁹. Still unsatisfied, Lưu Ân tried to become independent from the Lương. But he died in the same year with Khúc Hạo, leaving Thanh-hải to his brother Lưu Nham.

Lưu Nham inherited the driving ambition of his brother. His aim was to expand both in power and in ter-

3. Khúc Thừa Dụ 曲承裕: The process of secession of An-nam from China began from this time. Circumstances brought China to allow to An-nam to be independent, and brought An nam to take care of itself, gradually.

4. Governor or Tiết-đô-sứ 節度使 Tư Trị, book 265, p.1842.

5. Đônq-bình-chương-sự 同平章事: Title that gave to the holder to do what the circumstances required and to report later to the emperor.

6. Khúc Hạo 曲景昊: Tư Trị, book 266, page 1848.

7. Thanh-hải 淸海: Former Quảng-châu.

8. Lưu Ân 劉隱: Man very ambitious, rival with the Khúc family.

9. Prince of the South Pacified or Nam-bình-vương 南平王

ritory. First he did what was comparatively easier to do : to increase his nominal power at the expense of the Lương. In 917, he proclaimed himself emperor, called his little empire Đại-việt¹¹, established his capital in Phiên-ngung. A year later, feeling that the title Đại-việt was not resounding enough, he changed it into Hán,¹² which had more mental association.

Then, the emperor of the Hán, or Nam-Hán,¹³ took up his second aim: to extend his domination over Tĩnh-hải. Khúc Thừa Mỹ¹⁴, who governed Tĩnh-hải since the death of his father Khúc Hạo, was not a strong leader. In a time when one had to provide for oneself a true self-reliance, Khúc Thừa Mỹ wandered... In 919, he sent a mission to the Lương to seek additional appanage.¹⁵ This move irritated Lưu Nham who was lying in wait for a pretext to invade Tĩnh-hải. After a serious preparation, he acted indeed. Taking advantage of the fall of the Lương in 923, he sent to Tĩnh-hải a big army and his best gene-

10. Lưu Nham 劉巖 who later change his name in Lưu Cung 劉恭.

11. Đại-việt 大越: In 1054, emperor Lý Thái-tông called his country also Dai viet. But in 966, when Đinh Bộ Lĩnh first created the new nation, might-be in order to avoid repeating a name already used, instead of calling his country Đại-việt, he called Đại-cổ-việt.

12. We know well that the Hán dynasty was the longest in Chinese history and one of the most brilliant.

13. Nam-Hán 南漢: The Hán in the south,

14. Khúc Thừa Mỹ 曲承美 Tư Trị, book 268, page 1862.

16 17

erals Lý Thủ Dung and Luồng Khắc Trinh . When the Nam-Hán expedition came, Thừa Mỹ immediately surrendered. He was brought to Phiên-ngung, where, ^{putting on} his imperial ornaments, Lưu Nham reproached Thừa Mỹ for his stubbornness, then put him in prison. Meanwhile Luồng Khắc Trinh imitating Lưu Phưởng, went to fight the Chiêm-thành, and looted their treasure. Lý Tiên ¹⁸ was named by Lưu Nham governor of Tĩnh-hải; that the emperor of Nam-Hán had changed into Giao-châu. Luồng Khắc Trinh stayed as military commander.

But this Nam-Hán experience in Giao-châu was not for long. It was difficult for Giao-châu to rise up against China, it wasn't, however, against a little kingdom like Nam-Hán. On the other hand, the example of success of Khúc Thừa Dụ and Khúc Hạo had given much encouragement to its inhabitants. So, in the same year, the prefect of Ái-châu, Dương Đình Nghệ ¹⁹, led 3,000 men to Tống-bình, bribed Lý Tiên to let him stay around, then seized the capital. Lý Tiên escaped to Phiên-ngung to be beheaded. Lưu Nham mandated General Trình Báu to re-cap-

15. Only the Ngũ Đại sử 五代史 (History of the Five Dynasties) of Tiết Cử Chính mentioned this seeking of appanage of power (Tiết and Việt), book 135, in the edition of Nhi Thập Ngũ Sử, page 4372.

16. Lý Thủ Dung 李守鄩 in Tư Tri was said to be sent, đn 1930, (book 277, page 1926); and in Tân Ngũ đại sử, only in 926, (book 65, page 4469).

17. Luồng Khắc Trinh 梁克貞 : There was a curious happening in the Complete History of Ngô Sĩ Liên: Instead of two generals, Ngô Sĩ Liên mentioned only one, and the name was the combination and modification of the

ture Giao-châu. Trình Báu²⁰ came, fought and was killed in battle. All in all, Nam-Hán did not have a year of domination.

While Nam-Hán was waiting for an occasion for revenge on Dương Đình Nghệ, Giao-châu was not safe in the latter's hands. In 937, one of his general, named Kiều Công Tiện²¹ assassinated him to take his function. But Đình Nghệ had a son-in-law named Ngô Quyền²², prefect of Ái-châu since he left this department. . . Ngô Quyền was furious at the action of Công Tiện. After one year and a half of preparation, he marched on Tống-bình with a big army. Công Tiện appealed to the king of Nam-Hán for help. So, instead of facing Công Tiện, Ngô Quyền had to fight against foreign forces.

In 938, Nam-Hán was more than ready to help Công Tiện. It was what it was waiting^{for} for years, and it was confident that it was going to get a big victory. At the news of Công Tiện's appeal, Lưu Cung, former Lưu Nham, considered already Giao-châu as his territory. He gave to his 9th son, named Hoàng Tháo²³, who since 933 held the title of Vạn-vương²⁴, the new title of Governor of Giao-

names of the above two generals. He said that Nam-Hán sent to Giao-châu Lý Khắc Chính 李克正, a name that can not be found no where except in Complete History, book 5, pages 17-18.

18. Lý Tiên 李進 : Tư Tri, book 277, page 1929.

19. Dương Đình Nghệ 楊廷藝 : In Complete History this name is written Dương Diên Nghệ. 楊延藝

20. Trình Báu 程寶 When Trình Báu came, the capital

châu. He intended to give him even the title Giao-
²⁵
 vương. The mandate that this Giao-vương received
 from his father was to take over Giao-châu, make it a
 part of Nam-Hán and govern it. When Tháo departed, with
 a foretaste of new territorial acquisition, Lưu Cung led
 also an army to Hải-môn to be closer to his son.

Giao-vương Hoàng Tháo went to the battlefield as
 to his own territory. His fleet was impressive. He was
 sure of his victory, despite the warning of Tiêu Ích
 who advised him to proceed carefully. ²⁶ In reality, on
 his approaching Giao-châu, ominous news came to him.
 Công Tiện, who supposed to fight from the inside, was
 killed by Ngô Quyền. This cut his hope down to a half
 and sowed doubt and worry in the mind of his army. And
 the strategy of Ngô Quyền would destroy him.

was under complete control of Dương Đình Nghệ, who went
 out to meet him.

21. Kiểu Công Tiện 絞公羨 : Tư Tri, book 281, page 1
 1953.

22. Ngô Quyền 吳 權 : Tư Tri, book 281, page 1957.

23. Hoàng Tháo 弘 操 : Lưu Nham had 16 sons. In 933,
 he gave to all of them the title vương. Hoàng Tháo, the
 9th son, got the name Vạn-vương. 萬 王 .

24. Governor of Giao-châu: Giao-châu tiết-độ-sứ.

25. Giao-vương 交 : King of Giao-châu.

26. Tiêu Ích 蕭 益 was the advisor of the king of
 Nam-Hán. On deciding for the intervention on Giao-châu,
 Lưu Cung asked the opinion of Tiêu Ích, who answered:
 "Now the weather is not propitious and Ngô Quyền is
 valiant and resourceful. Please use guides and proceed
 carefully". But Lưu Cung did not listen to him.

In fact Ngô Quyền had his plan. He knew well his enemy, he knew his country. He knew even the movement of the tide at the mouth of Bạch-đăng River, where Hoàng Tháo would go through. He devised and effected in matter of days an original tactic. During the low tide, he ordered to his men to plant many rows of wood poles with pointed steel heads across the mouth of Bạch-đăng River. These poles could not be seen during high tide and boats of all sizes could go through, But during low tide, the poles would wreck all heavy boats.

Meanwhile, to encourage his troops, he pointed out the disadvantages of the Nam-Hán. Among other things, he said that Hoàng Tháo was young, unexperienced, that the death of Công Tiễn had increased Tháo's worries, that the Nam Hán army, wárry by the trip, would have lost much of their fighting spirit. He did not forget to tell his men that his tactic would be unmistakably successful. Then he explained them where to stay, what to do and when to make what move.

When Hoàng Tháo was still in the high sea, the men of Ngô Quyền, riding light boats and high tide, went out to attack. Unaware of traps, the fleet of Hoàng

27. Ở hải khẩu đã thực đại dặc, nhưê kỳ thủ, mao chi dĩ thiết: 於海口多植大杙銳其首
冒之以鐵 Tư Trí, book 281, page 1957.

28. The difference between the low and high tide in the mouth of the River Bạch-đăng was almost a meter.

Tháo chased Giao-châu fighting men, who seemingly fled before them. Waiting for the Nam-Hán boats to pass through the rows, and for the tide to lower enough for the poles to have sure effect, all the army of Ngô Quyền heretoforth hidden on both banks of Bạch-đăng rose up simultaneously and made a decisive attack on the enemies. In haste, the Nam-Hán fleet retreated. Hit by the steeled head poles, the Nam-Hán boats sank one after another. Hoàng Tháo suffered a total defeat and died drowned in the river. When Lưu Cung learned about what had happened to his Giao-vương, he went home as leading a funeral.

Ngô Quyền, triumphant, came back to Tống-bình in the quality of a supreme ruler of Giao-châu. If the former governor of Thanh-hải could make himself king, why could not he? He made himself king of Giao-châu, established his capital in Cồ-loa³⁰, and organized his court. He governed directly on Giao-châu and Ái-châu, and only indirectly on Hoan-châu, where the Đinh family had ruled for a long time.³¹

From the beginning of 939, to 944, Ngô Quyền had no record. The Complete History said nothing about this period of 6 years, Việt-sử-lược, neither. This is very understandable, because Vietnamese historians

29. Ngô Quyền did not give to his country a name at all.

30. Cồ-loa: Now in the district of Đông-anh, close to Hanoi. It seems that the vestiges of Cồ-loa dug up nowadays dated from the time of Ngô Quyền.

for the ancient history, used to copy what they found in Chinese documents and Chinese documents said nothing on the reign of Ngô Quyền,

In 944, before his death, Ngô Quyền asked his brother-in-law Dương Tam Kha to take care of his oldest son, Ngô Xương Ngập.³² But Dương Tam Kha thought that on what right the country should be committed to Xương Ngập while he did all the governing? Rather he took the kingship himself, and he did. It was, however, an act of usurpation. Xương Ngập had to escape to the house of one of his father's best friends, named Phạm Lệnh Công.³³ Dương Tam Kha kept with him the second son of Ngô Quyền,³⁴ Ngô Xương Vãn.³⁵

Criticized by public opinion, Dương Tam Kha wanted to get rid of Xương Ngập. Twice he sent his men to ask back Ngô Quyền's oldest son, but twice Phạm Lệnh Công stood firm. In 950, a rebellion broke out in the district of Thái-binh, led by the families Dương and Nguyễn.³⁶ Along with the generals Dương Cảnh Thạc and Đỗ Cát Lợi,³⁷ Tam Kha sent out also Xương Vãn, in order to get the support of the population. When they reached Tử-liêm, Xương Vãn harangued the generals on the injustice imposed on his family by his uncle, and asked them to return to fight Tam Kha. The plot succeeded. Xương Vãn did not kill his foster-father, but took away all his power.³⁸

31. Đinh Bộ Lĩnh had become prefect of Nnan-châu since the time of Dương Đinh Nghệ, and was still prefect when

Once becoming ruler of Giao-châu, Xương Văn asked his brother Xương Ngập to join him. Xương Ngập took the title Thiên-sách-vương³⁸, and Xương Văn, Nam-Tân-vương³⁹. Soon, the two brothers could not get along well. Nam Tân-vương retired from public life until his brother died in 954. It was recorded that in 961 Nam Tân-vương would have wished to renew relations with Nam-Hán and asked investiture from Lưu Trưng⁴⁰. Lý Du⁴¹ was commissioned to come to Giao-châu to perform the ceremony, but when Lý Du reached Bá-châu, Xương Văn asked him to go back to Nam Hán under pretext that pirates were infesting the roads. In 965, Xương Văn himself led an expedition against the Đương and Nguyễn families in Thái-bình. An arrow ended his life on his way.

Ngô Quyền came to power. After Đinh Công Trứ 's death, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh had succeeded.

32. Dương Tam Kha 楊三軻: Complete History, book 5, page 22; Việt sử lược, page 13.

33. Ngô Xương Ngập 吳昌

34. Phạm Lênh Công 范令公: Lênh-công used to be common words meaning high personage.

35. Ngô Xương Văn 吳昌文

36. Đương and Nguyễn 唐, 阮: Two family names in the district of Thái-bình.

37. Dương Cảnh Thạc 楊景碩

38. Đỗ Cát Lợi 堵吉利

39. Thiên-Sách-vương 天冊王

40. Nam-Tân-vương 南進王

And then came the worst days for the independence of Giao-châu, the opposite extreme of those under the Nam-chiêu domination. This time, the danger was from the inside, from the internecine struggle. Little Giao-châu was tearing itself into pieces, each one of which tried to destroy the others. Small landlords considered themselves supreme rulers, hostile to one another. History called this period that of the Sứ-quân⁴²

According to Việt sử lược, there were twelve Sứ-quân with their territories as follows:

1. Kiều Tam chế, named Công Hãn, occupied Phong-châu;⁴³
2. Nguyễn Thái Bình, named Khoan, or Ký, occupied Nguyễn-gia.⁴⁴
3. Trần Công Lãm, named Nhất Khanh, occupied Đương-lâm⁴⁵
4. Đỗ Cảnh Công, named Cảnh Thạc, occupied Đổ-động-giang⁴⁶
5. Nguyễn Du Dịch, named Xương Xí, occupied Bình-kiều⁴⁷
6. Nguyễn Lãng-công, named Khuê, occupied Siêu-loại⁴⁸
7. Nguyễn Lệnh-Công, named ThủTiệp, occupied Tiên-đu⁴⁹
8. Lữ Tá Công, named Đương, occupied Tê-giang⁵⁰
9. Nguyễn Hữu Công, named Siêu, occupied Phù-liệt⁵¹

41. Lý Du 李愉 : Tân Đương-thư, book 65, page 4469.

42. Sứ-quân 使君 : Landlord.

43. Kiều Tam-chế 橋三制, Công Hãn 公悍, Phong-châu 封州
now district of Bạch-hạc, province of Vĩnh-phú.

44. Nguyễn Thái Bình 阮太平, Khoan 訖 Ký 記 Nguyễn-gia
无嘉, now district of Cẩm-kê, province of Vĩnh-phú.

45. Trần Công Lãm 陳公監 Nhất Khanh 一卿 Đương-lâm 堂林
now district of Ba-vì, province of Hà-tây.

46. Đỗ Cảnh Công 堵景公 Cảnh Thạc 景碩 Đổ-động-giang 洞

10. Kiều Lệnh Công, named Thuận, occupied Hối-hồ⁵²
 11. Phạm Phòng Át, named Bạch Hồ, occupied Đãng-châu⁵³
 12. Trần Minh Công, named Khoan, occupied Giang-Bổ-khâu⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that this internal struggle affected only Giao-châu, because all the localities mentioned were within a narrow circle going from Vĩnh-phú to Thái-bình, from Hà-tây to Hà-bắc, excluding even Nam-định.

In reality, were there twelve landlords? It might have been less than twelve. Tống-sú⁵⁵ wrote "When Ngô Xúông Văn of Giao-châu died, his aide Lũ Xú Bình⁵⁶, then prefect of Phong-châu, Kiều Tri Hộ⁵⁷, then prefect of Võ-ninh, Dương Huy and his aide Đổ Cảnh Thạc, rose up and fought one another. In the twelve châu of the area, people gathered in groups and plundered. They attacked Giao-châu ..."⁵⁸ But twelve or not, they had transformed Giao-châu

now district of Thanh-oai, in Hanoi.

47. Nguyễn Du Dịch 阮 愈 役 Xương Xí 暹 Bình-kiêu 平 橋
 The Complete History transformed this name into Ngô Xương Xí, *embarrassingly* considered him as successor of the Ngô family. Bình kiêu is now district of Triệu-sơn. Lịch Sử Việt Nam says that "The king of Ngô, Ngô Xương Xí, now retreated south and occupied Bình-kiêu" (p.146).

48. Nguyễn Lăng Công 阮 瀛 公 Khuê 中 Siêu-loại 超 類
 now district of Thuận-thành, Hà-bắc.

49. Nguyễn Lệnh Công 阮 令 公 Thủ Tiệp 守 捷 Tiên-du 仙 俞
 now district of Tiên-sơn, Hà-bắc.

50. Lũ Tá Công 呂 佐 公 Dương 唐 Tê-giang 齊 江, now district of Văn-lâm, province of Hải-hưng.

51. Nguyễn Hữu Công 阮 有 公 Siêu 超 Phũ-liệt 符 列 now

into an arena of war.

Facing the destructive situation of Giao-châu, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh⁵⁹, prefect of Hoan-châu, built up his military forces. He sent his son Đinh Liên⁶⁰ to his native village Hoa-lư, in Giao-châu⁶¹ to protect it from the invasion of other landlords. When the situation worsened, he became landlord himself, brought his forces from Hoan-châu to Hoa-lư, and there, with his son, began his important task of pacification and unification. It took him almost two years to accomplish it. All the other landlords, each one with a small army in a small area, surrendered to him, one after another. People proclaimed Bộ Lĩnh the 'All Victorious King'⁶².

district of Thanh-trị, Hanoi.

52. Kiều Lệnh công 橋令公 Thuận 順 Hôi-hồ 迴湖 now Cẩm-kê, Vĩnh-phú.

53. Phạm Phòng Ác 范 卒 Bạch hổ 白虎 Đãng-châu 荳州 now district of Kim-động, province of Hải-hưng.

54. Trần Minh Công 陳明公 Khoản 寬 Giang-bồ-khẩu 江布口, now district of Vũ-tiên, in Thái-bình.

55. Tổng sử 宋史: written by Thoát Thoát 脫脫 under the Nguyễn dynasty (1260-1368), in the edition Nhi Thập Ngũ sử, book 488, page 5712. Lữ Xứ Bình 呂處平 known otherwise as Nguyễn Du Dịch, or Xướng Xí.

56. Lữ Xứ Bình, or Xướng Xí was not of the Ngô family.

57. Võ-ninh 武寧 former. Gia-ninh.

58. Again, it is clear that only Giao-châu was affected by the civil war.

59. Đinh Bộ Lĩnh 丁部領: Complete History, book 1, bản-kỷ, page 1-2.

In 968, the whole area, including Giao-châu, Ai-châu and Hoan-châu, that means the former An-nam or Tĩnh-hải, was under the control of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh. It was natural for him to take the step that Lý Bí took in 544; to proclaim himself supreme ruler of a new country. It was exactly what Đinh Bộ Lĩnh did. ~~X~~ But first it is proper to state that the situation of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh was not the same as that of Ngô Quyền in 939. Ngô Quyền did not have affair with China as an empire, but only with the Nam-Hán, a little kingdom hostile to the Chinese imperial dynasty. When Ngô Quyền declared his independence, it was independence toward the Nam-Hán. In 968, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh faced a bigger problem. He had to deal with the imperial dynasty of the Tống. The independence, if gained, would have a fuller and more lasting meaning.

There was a happy coincidence that helped Đinh Bộ Lĩnh a lot in his relations with China. While he was victorious over his internal enemies, the emperor of the Tống was also victorious over his internal enemies. By all

60. Đinh Liên 丁 璉: Son of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh, who headed many commissions to China in the name of his father, so China history usually took his name as ruler of Giao-châu.

61. Hoa-lư 華 廬: A village in the province of Ninh-bình, district of Gia-viên.

62. All Victorious King or Vạn Thắng Vương 萬 勝 王
In reality, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh not only won over his internal enemies, but also won the diplomatic struggle with the First Emperor of the Tống dynasty,

purpose, the **Tống** emperor could put **hâm** on the list of Chinese internal enemy to be cracked down, because at the end of the **Đường** dynasty, **Giao-châu** was part of China, as well as the **Nam-Hán**, or any other little kingdom cut out from Chinese empire during the Five Dynasties period. Now, **Tống Thái-tổ**⁶³ unified the former **Đường** territory; he would have to include **Giao-châu** in his scope.

Keenly aware of that fact, **Đinh Bộ Lĩnh** proceeded astutely to cope with current situation. To have a strong basis to talk with China, his kingdom should be well established. So, in 968, he made himself emperor of a new nation, called **Đai-Cồ-Việt**⁶⁴, established his capital in **Hoa-lư**, organized a royal court, applied a rigid discipline to all the inhabitants. Then he waited an occasion to get into contact with the **Tống** emperor.

The occasion came at last in 973, when **Tống Thái-tổ** seemed to think of **Giao-châu**. His son, **Đinh Liễn**, went to China with rich presents. The **Tống** emperor was very pleased, because the timing was perfect. But the result was still poor, because the emperor was thinking as if **Giao-châu** were still a Chinese territory. **Đinh Bộ Lĩnh** was given the title Governor of **Giao-châu**. This would

63. **Tống Thái-tổ** 宋太祖: (960-976) He was man so respected by the generals and soldiers that they acclaimed him emperor almost without his previous consent.

64. **Đai-Cồ-việt** 大鵠越: The memory of the **Đai-việt** of **Lưu Nham** was so recent that **Đinh Bộ Lĩnh** did not want to repeat it. So he put a middle word, **cồ**.

mean that all the efforts of the Khúc, of the Ngô and of the Đinh families were nil, and Đại-cồ-việt was reduced to the status of a Chinese department, as ever before. Fortunately, it was not yet the end of the resourcefulness of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh.

In 975, another commission, also headed by Đinh Liễn, who had the mandate to obtain a more liberal status for Giao-châu. This time, in a very carefully worded message, the Tông emperor gave to Đinh Bộ Lĩnh the title of Giao-chỉ quận-vương⁶⁵. That was what at least Đinh Bộ Lĩnh wanted to have, because with that, Đại-cồ-việt could consider itself as a separate political unit detached from China, though suzerain to China. In fact, the History of the Tông classified Giao-chỉ as a foreign country.

65. Giao-chỉ quận-vương 交趾郡王: Tông-sử, book 2, in the edition of Trung-hoa Học-thuật viện 中華學術院, Taiwan, 1972, page 8.