

# A Historical Overview of China's Influence on Vietnam



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The Turkish version of this report was published by the Asia-Pacific Research Center of Ankara University (APAM), in August 2021. The article – “A Historical Overview of China’s Influence on Vietnam” is a paragraph (p. 137 - 158) of the book entitled “Vietnam Studies in Turkey - I” (ISBN: 978-605-136-525-1).

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## Overview

Throughout history, cross-cultural relations have occupied a significant place in the lives of various civilizations and societies. These interactions constructed the cultural and political patterns that have shaped the course of history. In general, China, one of the world's oldest civilizations, has had significant cultural, political, and economic influences on Southeast Asia's ancient kingdoms and modern states throughout the centuries. Even today, socio-political, economic, and cultural interactions continue to shape and develop modern relations between these countries. Vietnam is a country in the southern portion of the Indochina peninsula in Southeast Asia, had extremely complex relations with its neighbors. Geographical proximity, shared beliefs, and social values, as well as China's dominant position in the region, have been the key factors affecting and determining the dynamics between these two states for centuries.

The article aims to examine the two thousand years of historical processes and bilateral relations between China and Vietnam within the context of the developments of each historical period, which illustrate unique fundamental features of society, culture, politics, and ideas, as well as the contradictions and the significant factors that have had an impact on Sino-Viet relations over time. In Southeast Asia, Vietnam has been the country with the most potent political and cultural ties with China for centuries: thus, through various economic, cultural, and military tools, China has exerted a massive impact on Vietnam. Meanwhile, bilateral relations sometimes developed due to the forced imposition of China's ruling dynasties and sometimes due to mutual cultural and economic activities. However, Vietnam is widely considered the primary part of the East Asian cultural sphere, together with Korea, Japan, and Greater China. Thus, it is necessary to thoroughly comprehend China's ancient history for understanding Vietnam's history.

## Early Political Interactions and the Birth of Nam Việt

Vietnam has had close but not always amicable relations with China. It was part of various Chinese dynasties and kingdoms such as Han (漢朝), Xin (新莽), Eastern Wu (東吳), Western Jin (西晉), Eastern Jin (東晉), Liu Song (劉宋/南朝宋), Southern Qi (南齊), Liang (南梁), Sui (隋朝), Tang (唐朝), Wu Zhou (武周), and Southern Han (南漢). They held authority over Northern Vietnam for nearly a millennium before gaining sovereignty in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Nanyue, also called Southern Yue or Nam Việt, was an ancient kingdom that covered the modern Chinese provinces of Guangdong (广东省), Guangxi (广西省), Hainan (海南省), Hong Kong (香港), and Macau (澳門), as well as parts of southern Fujian (福建省) and northern Vietnam. The Commander of the Nanhai region, General Zhao Tuo<sup>1</sup> (Triệu Đà / 趙佗) founded Nanyue Kingdom after the fall of the Qin dynasty in 204 BC (楊萬秀, 鍾卓安 1996: 24).

Some traditional Vietnamese historians considered him one of the most prominent monarchs of ancient Vietnamese history and the founder of the Triệu dynasty<sup>2</sup> (家趙); other scholars claimed that he was just a foreign invader and conqueror (Masato 2004: 934). In fact, he was appointed to protect and expand the southern borders by the Emperor of Qing Shi Huang<sup>3</sup> of Qin, in particular, to capture port cities in the Gulf of Tonkin<sup>4</sup> (北部湾), where maritime trade and routes have emerged. Subsequently, General Zhao Tuo took advantage of the fall of the Qin Empire and the political turmoil in China and declared himself as an emperor of Nanyue with the capital city of Panyu<sup>5</sup> (番禺) on the territory of Southern China and Northern Vietnam after crashing the Âu Lạc<sup>6</sup> (瓠貉). The Nanyue Kingdom was the first kingdom to be formed from the mixture of the Chinese and Yue

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<sup>1</sup> Zhao Tuo (Chinese: 赵佗) was the founder of the kingdom of Nanyue. He was a Chinese military commander who gained independence upon the collapse of the Qin Dynasty. His kingdom covered northern Vietnam and parts of southern Chinese provinces.

<sup>2</sup> The ruling elite included both Yue and Chinese. Triệu Đà conquered the Vietnamese state of Âu Lạc and led a coalition of Yue states in a war against the Han dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> The emperor of the Qin dynasty (221 – 207 BC) and a founder of the first unified Chinese empire.

<sup>4</sup> The Gulf of Tonkin (Vietnamese: Vịnh Bắc Bộ) is a medium-sized gulf at the northwestern portion of the South China Sea, located off the coasts of northern Vietnam and South China. The main ports on the Gulf coast are Beihai (北海市) of China and Ben Thuy and Haiphong of Vietnam.

<sup>5</sup> The city was established by Zhao Tuo during his first failed invasion of the Baiyue in Guangdong in 214 BC. Today it is a prefecture-level city of Guangzhou in China.

<sup>6</sup> An ancient Yue kingdom in Northern Vietnam from 257 to 179 BC.

peoples on Vietnamese soil. Unlike Emperor Qin Shi Huang of Qin<sup>7</sup> (reigned 221 – 210 BC), General Zhao was tolerant of Yue traditions and values, allowing local rulers to maintain their political customs and traditions. Although Zhao Tuo came of Chinese descent, he assimilated into the native Yue culture and created a new identity as the King of Nanyue. Under the ideology of "Harmonization and Unification", the Chinese immigrants from the north were encouraged to marry the indigenous Yue people, resulting in a civilization that was a combination of Han and native Yue cultures (Howard 1994: 61). Moreover, according to some scholars, modern Vietnamese people come from a mixture of ancient Yue (Northern Vietnam) and Guangdong (Southern China) indigenous people (Bellwood 1996: 96).

A military genius and skilled diplomat, Zhao attempted to build balanced and peaceful diplomacy with his northern neighbors: the Qin and Han Empires, respectively. Most importantly, he never succumbed to pressure and threats of aggressive Han rulers. Although Zhao Tuo was Chinese, he identified himself as Yue and dressed as ancient Yue kings at the reception of ambassadors from the Han Empire and treated them following the local customs.

Eventually, Empress Lü Zhi of Han<sup>8</sup> (吕后) sent an army to gain a political and territorial advantage in Nam Việt, but the military expeditions to the region ended with failure, and Chinese forces were forced to withdraw. In the following years, the imperial policy sought diplomatic incorporation: thus, Emperor Wen of Han (漢文帝) decided to reconcile with Zhao. Subsequently, the Han-Nanyue border disputes were solved, and the political and economic relations between the two countries were established. Zhao Tuo and his successors had managed to rule Nanyue for almost a century (Lam 2012: 75). However, despite being autonomous from the Han Dynasty, Chinese cultural and political influences gained prominence in Vietnam.

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<sup>7</sup> The Emperor severely destroyed all the political ideologies opposed him by burning the books and executing philosophers and officials.

<sup>8</sup> Empress of the Han from 202 to 195 BC as the wife of Emperor Liu Bang. While she never proclaimed herself Empress, but many historians recognise her as the first reigning Empress of all China.

## A Millennium of Chinese Rule and its Influences

The *Bắc thuộc*<sup>9</sup> is used by Vietnamese historians to describe when Northern Vietnam was under Chinese dynastic rule and colonization for centuries. The "Bắc thuộc" is considered to begin in 111 BC, when the Han dynasty<sup>10</sup> conquered Nanyue and lasted until the fall of the Tang dynasty<sup>11</sup> in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, ancient China sought to expand its imperial control over southern borders and attempted to take control of Northern Vietnam during the Qin dynasty, but the mission is failed because of the fall from power.

Eventually, the Han Dynasty achieved to establish a strong central state and a stable political system with a reorganized administration taken from the former Qin dynasty. Lasting over four centuries, the Han dynasty is often considered a golden age in Chinese and East Asian history, and it was the most prominent dynasty that shaped the social, cultural, and political orders of the region. With a rebuilt military strength and mighty army, the Han launched massive military campaigns against neighboring countries and territories.

Emperor Wu of Han<sup>12</sup> (孝武皇帝), who ascended the throne in 141 BC, continued the expansion policy of Imperial China. As the dynasty expanded southward, Emperor Wu ordered to capture the Minyue Kingdom<sup>13</sup> (閩越). Thereafter, the expeditionary forces of Han defeated the Nanyue Kingdom (Nam Việt) and achieved to bring Northern Vietnam under the suzerainty of China for the first time in history. As the Han conquered parts of Vietnam, they brought in Chinese cultural practices and built Chinese settlements. Eventually, in 111 BC, the Han dynasty was able to take overall control of Nam Việt and officially annexed it to the empire. The Nanyue Kingdom was divided into nine military districts by a central authority and became one of the largest provinces of the Han empire

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<sup>9</sup> The term is translated to "belonging to the North" in Vietnamese. It refers to the era of Vietnam under Chinese rule.

<sup>10</sup> The second imperial dynasty of China (206 - 220 BC), which succeeded the Qin dynasty (221 - 207 BC). So thoroughly did the Han dynasty establish what was thereafter considered Chinese culture that "Han" became the Chinese word denoting someone who is ethnically Chinese.

<sup>11</sup> Chinese dynasty that succeeded the short-lived Sui dynasty (581 - 618 AD) during 618 - 907 AD, developed a successful form of government and administration, and stimulated a cultural and artistic flowering that amounted to a golden age.

<sup>12</sup> The seventh emperor of the Han dynasty of ancient China, ruling from 141 - 87 BC. Emperor Wu led Han China through its greatest expansion. At its height, the Empire's borders spanned from the Kyrgyzstan in the west, to Korea in the east, and to northern Vietnam and to South China Sea in the south.

<sup>13</sup> An ancient kingdom that existed in the province of Fujian (福建) in Southern China from 334 to 110 BC, and the Min people was mostly close to Taiwanese indigenous (台湾原住民族).

under the name Jiaozhi<sup>14</sup> (交趾). Therefore, the first Chinese domination over Vietnam began. (越南第一次北屬時期 111 BC - 40 AD).

The intense military campaigns intended to expand Han sovereignty and control into Mainland Southeast Asia (Indochinese Peninsula) and Maritime Southeast Asia. On the other hand, due to its strategic location and economic potential, Jiaozhi played a crucial role in advancing further plans of China in the region, and, thus, the Chinese officials and merchants were able to build diplomatic relations and trade networks with other civilizations settled in the South. These relations accelerated the development of the Maritime Silk Road (海上丝绸之路), one of the most important world trade networks of history (Yü, Ying-shih 1987: 377).

The nearly a thousand years of Chinese domination had clearly profound affects on Vietnamese culture. In addition to its political hegemony, the Han exported a powerful cultural influence upon Nam Việt. After establishing Han domination, the Confucianism<sup>15</sup> (儒家) dominated state doctrine left deep marks on Vietnamese culture and philosophical view. Confucianist philosophy, commonly known as Rujia or Ruism (儒家学派), was a philosophy mostly dominated by morality and ethical views. Confucianism built an ancient ethical foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional societies, and it's often characterized as a system of social and ethical philosophy and teachings. Thus, these teachings gradually became the official state philosophy of some East Asian countries. With the learning of the Confucian classics, the principles of Ruism began to form the basis of the civil service examinations<sup>16</sup> and curriculum for selecting candidates for the administrative system of the traditional government. Under the Chinese rule, Ruism continued to play an important role in Vietnamese society and kept dominating individuals' lives and administrative systems even after Vietnam gained its independence in 939. In particular, during the Lê Dynasty (後黎朝 1428 - 1789), Ruism teachings were introduced instead of Buddhism for maintaining the unity of the nation and strengthening central and influential authority. In the following centuries, Lê Thánh Tông, head of the Lê dynasty (1460 - 1497) tried to centralize the

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<sup>14</sup> The name of the territory was used to refer to Northern Vietnam by Chinese after the Han annexation. It kept to be used until the Tang Dynasty. Jiaozhi was one the largest administrative divisions of the empire.

<sup>15</sup> An ancient Chinese belief system, which focuses on the importance of personal ethics and morality. It is mainly concerned with inner virtue, morality, and respect for the community and its values.

<sup>16</sup> Chinese imperial examinations (科舉) were a civil service examination system in Imperial China for selecting candidates for the state bureaucracy. The examination system was imitated in other Asian countries, notably in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

administration under the influence of Confucian scholars through the strong reinforcement of Ruism values. Throughout ancient Vietnamese history, Ruism became the official faith in the bureaucratic system and helped to build a highly organized hierarchical society. As a consequence, Ruism, together with the Chinese education and examination systems, deeply affected the sociocultural and sociopolitical structure of Vietnam. Furthermore, Confucianism has exercised a powerful influence in the formation of the Vietnamese family as the fundamental unit of society. These values kept dominating the social and moral life of the Yue people for decades. The profound impact of Ruism remains strong in Vietnam even today. Social order is defined by its principle as well as the rituals, deference, and obedience.

Moreover, Ruism was not the only imperial contribution to Jiaozhi's development. Daoism<sup>17</sup> (道家) and Buddhism<sup>18</sup> (佛教) two most prevalent philosophical traditions of the East, have primarily influenced the thought, belief, and moral systems of ethnic Vietnamese since this period. To be more specific, the Vietnamese system of values is mainly impacted by the principles of Ruism, Daoism, and Buddhism under China's Hegemony.

In particular, Mahayana<sup>19</sup> (大乘), one of the three major branches of Buddhism, was introduced to Vietnam by the Chinese, along with the Indian monks. At the beginning of the second century, the capital of Jiaozhi - Luy Lâu<sup>20</sup> (羸口), became one of the most important centers of Buddhism in the Han empire after the capital city of Luoyang (洛阳) (SarDesai 1992: 13). Luy Lâu brought together many of the Buddhist holy sites and religious centers. While Vietnamese Buddhism was inherited from Indian Buddhist missionaries, but nevertheless it was blended with local folk religions and teachings from China as well (Nguyen, Barber 1998: 132).

In fact, Vietnamese Buddhism has had a syncretic relationship with certain elements of Daoism, Vietnamese folk religion, and as well as Chinese spirituality.

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<sup>17</sup> A Chinese philosophy attributed to Lao Ze (老子). Taoism or Daoism is therefore both a philosophy and a religion. It emphasizes doing what is natural and "going with the flow" in accordance with the Tao (Dao), a cosmic force which flows through all things and binds and releases them.

<sup>18</sup> Religion and philosophy that developed from the teachings of the Buddha who lived in India. Spreading from India to Central and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan, Buddhism has played a central role in the spiritual, cultural, and social life of Asia.

<sup>19</sup> Developed in India in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It remains influential today in China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Vietnam.

<sup>20</sup> Luy Lâu or Leilou was the first capital of the Han commandery of Jiaozhi from 111 BC following China's conquest of Nanyue till 106 BC. It was also the main center of China's maritime trade on the Gulf of Tonkin and South China Sea.

Additionally, Luy Lâu has become the center of international trade because of its geographical position and economic development, and it was not just a commercial hub for merchants but also a key transit point for ambassadors, diplomats, and missionaries from southern countries who involved with the visiting missions to the traditional capitals of the empire; Chang'an<sup>21</sup> (长安) and Luoyang (洛阳). Furthermore, Buddhist monks from India, Sri Lanka, and other Buddhist countries involved in spreading their faith to China and learning Chinese and its culture made their initial visits to Luy Lâu. They also translated the Mahayana sutras from Sanskrit<sup>22</sup> into Chinese with the aid of Vietnamese Buddhists who have displayed proficiency in both Chinese and Sanskrit. Moreover, Chinese monks who wanted to visit India and learn Sanskrit and become Buddhist opted to stop in Jiaozhi to communicate with the local Buddhists and pilgrims (Chi, Hoa and Minh 2008: 20).

Thus, Buddhism continued to spread and gain prominence until the end of Chinese rule, and even after Vietnam gained independence. Though Daoism became the official state religion of various Chinese dynasties, Buddhism thrived in Vietnam throughout the Chinese era. Furthermore, Buddhism became the official religion during the early native Vietnamese dynasties of Đinh (丁朝 968 - 980), Early Lê (家前黎 980 - 1009), Lý (李朝 1009 - 1225) and Trần (陈朝 1225 - 1400) respectively (T.Thu 2008: 77).

In the first century, Buddhism was exported through the southwestern corridor from India to Vietnam; in the following centuries, the route shifted to China through the northeastern corridor. At this point, the various sects appeared in China; for instance, Chan Buddhism<sup>23</sup> (禅宗) formed under the doctrine of Dao teachings, were introduced to the Vietnamese society through the northern routes and caused the birth of Vietnamese Buddhism (Thiền Buddhism). On the other hand, while the Sui dynasty<sup>24</sup> was in power, the Tiantai<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The city served as an imperial capital for 13 Chinese dynasties. In classical Chinese history, the name of city means "Perpetual Peace". Today it is the capital city of Shaanxi (陕西) province in the Northern China under the name of Xi'an (西安).

<sup>22</sup> A 3500 years old classical language of South Asia belonging to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European languages. Sanskrit is the language of classical of historical texts of Buddhism. It was a link language in ancient and medieval South Asia, and upon transmission Buddhist culture to Southeast Asia, East Asia and Central Asia in the early medieval era, it became a language of religion and high culture, and of the political elites in some of these regions.

<sup>23</sup> Developed under huge influence of Daoism in China. It spreaded from China south to Vietnam as Thiền and north to Korea as Seon, and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, east to Japan as Japanese Zen. Over time, Chan has been divided into 5 different schools, such as Guiyang (湧仰宗), Linji (臨濟宗), Caodong (曹洞宗), Yunmen (雲門宗) and Fayan (法眼宗).

<sup>24</sup> A short-lived imperial dynasty of China of pivotal significance from 581–605.

<sup>25</sup> Known as Thiên Thai in Vietnamese was formed in China during the sixth and seventh centuries. Tiantai received its greatest influence from the Chinese scholar-monk Zhiyi (智顓). Zhiyi was the most thorough among the early Chinese doctrinal masters who sought to

Buddhism (天台), became one of the dominant philosophical schools of China, with numerous temples built by the emperors.

The intense ideological influence of the Sui Dynasty (隋朝), had played an important role in the development of Vietnam's Buddhist values (Snelling 1987: 154). Whilst early Buddhist teachings were acquired from Sanskrit sutras from India nonetheless, the Chinese school of Buddhism grew vigorously in Vietnam during the "Six dynasties" and Sui dynasty era. Therefore, the modern practice of Vietnamese Buddhism can be very eclectic, including elements from Thiên (Chan Buddhism) and Thiên Thai (Tiantai Buddhism).

In early Song<sup>26</sup> (宋朝) times, two of the five main sects (五家) of Chan Buddhism; Lin Ji<sup>27</sup> (临济宗) and Cao Dong<sup>28</sup> (曹洞宗) were also introduced in Vietnam. Hence, Vietnam became the core region within the East Asian Cultural Sphere<sup>29</sup> (Sinosphere), where most elements of Chinese civilization were adopted and practiced (Lowe, Yasuhara 2016: 77).

Moreover, Vietnamese vocabulary and language have been strongly influenced by Chinese and led to the creation of the Vietnamese logographic and vernacular writing system - Chữ Nôm script (喃字), which means Southern Characters. Even so the modern Vietnamese was adapted to the Latin alphabet, they used to apply Chinese Logograms<sup>30</sup> and Classical Chinese<sup>31</sup> (文言文) for a long time (111 BC – 1919 AD).

More specifically, Chữ Nôm was built on a script using Chinese characters and locally invented characters as well. Traditional Chinese characters were used for the formation of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary, and thereby, thousands of new words and expressions were gradually created on the model of Chinese characters. Along with the characters,

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create a way of sorting out the confusing morass of Buddhist teachings (The Lotus Garden) that had been imported from India. During Sui and Tang, it gained huge political support and aid from central authority.

<sup>26</sup> The imperial dynasty of China that began in 960 and lasted until 1279. The dynasty was founded by Emperor Taizu of Song following his usurpation of the throne of the Later Zhou, ending the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.

<sup>27</sup> One of the main schools of Chan Buddhism named after Linji Yixuan (临济义玄). It was founded in Tang China and spread to Japan as the Rinzai school and it is widely accepted by the Japanese Samurais.

<sup>28</sup> One of the five sects of Chan Buddhism was founded by Chinese monk Dongshan Liangjie (洞山良价) in Tang China. It was spreaded to Japan by the Japanese monk Dōgen Zenji (道元禅師) under the name of Sōtō Zen Buddhism.

<sup>29</sup> The term traditionally refers to the East Asian cultural sphere (东亚文化圈 / 汉字文化圈), nations that have historically been influenced by China in terms of literary traditions, culture and religions.

<sup>30</sup> In a written language, a logogram or logograph is a written character that represents a word or morpheme. Chinese has a logographic writing system, one in which each basic symbol (character) represents an independent syllable.

<sup>31</sup> Classical Chinese is a traditional style of written Chinese that evolved from the classical language, making it different from any modern spoken form of Chinese. Literary Chinese was used for almost all formal writing in China until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; during various periods, in Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

thousands of Chinese words and expressions were borrowed either (Nguyen, Tri Tài 2002: 5). The newly created script became the written medium for both government and popular literature, as the vast majority of Vietnamese literature and most documents were written in Chữ Nôm. In fact, it was mostly used to record novels and poetry; for instance, "The Tale of Kieu" (Đoạn Trường Tân Thanh) - one of the most significant works of classical Vietnamese literature, was also written in Vietnamese using the Chữ Nôm. In addition, famous Vietnamese writers who used the Chữ Nôm writing style were Emperor Trần Nhân Tông (1258-1308); the government officials and writers - Nguyễn Thuyên, Nguyễn Sĩ Cố (1230 - 1312), and Nguyễn Trãi (1380 - 1442). Besides, Hồ Quý Ly (1336 - 1407), the founding emperor of the Hồ dynasty, translated Chinese Classics<sup>32</sup> (中国古籍) into Vietnamese and wrote royal proclamations, religious texts, and authoritative orders by using Chữ Nôm as well.

In other words, while China was a dominant power in the region, the influence of the Chinese, particularly its language and culture, kept dominating the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese alphabet (Chữ Quốc Ngữ) derived from Latin script effectively replaced Chữ Nôm only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the general use of Chinese scripts was rapidly abandoned. Nevertheless, a large number of Chinese-borrowed words are still widely used in some parts of Vietnam, and Chữ Nôm still appears in special contexts, such as in ancient literature, legal documents, and scholarly monographs. Although the writing system was based on Chinese, the spoken language was predominantly Yue and played an essential role in the birth of modern Cantonese<sup>33</sup>. Additionally, Vietnamese Buddhist monks and merchants, along with Chinese, played active roles in spreading the Chinese language and culture to other southeast Asian countries through the Maritime Silk Route.

Traditionally, the Chinese have seen themselves in the center of world civilization for centuries, and they were assured in their theory that they were the greatest and advanced society in the entire world. In that regard, the Vietnamese customs were seen as unorthodox and barbaric to the Chinese, and they attempted to assimilate all Yue people into Chinese. Han authority has implemented acculturation policies to integrate

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<sup>32</sup> Canonical texts refers to the Chinese texts which originated before the imperial unification by the Qin dynasty. It covers the collections of Chinese history, philosophy and literature and they were the subject of mandatory study who wished to take the imperial exams to become government officials.

<sup>33</sup> It is the traditional prestige variety of the Yue Chinese dialect group within the Chinese language family originating from the city of Guangzhou and still spoken in Southeastern China area, such as Guangdong (广东省) Guanxi (广西省), Hong Kong (香港) and Macao (澳门).

"uncivilized" indigenous Yue people into more "civilized" Chinese throughout centuries. The Chinese vigorously tried to assimilate the Vietnamese either through forced sinification or through brute Chinese political domination. The rulers believed that if the entire ethnic Vietnamese population see themselves as Chinese and renounce their cultural identity, they would be more obedient and less likely to rebel against Han domination. Adopting the Chinese writing system, philosophical views, and value systems were the primary tools for exporting and building Chinese cultural imperialism upon Vietnamese culture. As a result of the harsh implementation of the assimilation policy, the Vietnamese customs and traditions were strictly banned. From then onward, the Yue people were forced to wear Han-style clothes, observe Chinese religious rituals, and learn classical Chinese. On the contrary, China was already the cultural epicenter of East Asia. Therefore, some Vietnamese, particularly the upper class of people - aristocrats and ruling elites welcomed the integration policy as they reckoned Chinese culture to be more civilized, advanced, and superior than their own.

Plus, as Chinese scholars, architects, engineers, merchants, and other specialists migrated to the southern lands, they brought the most advanced architectural technologies, engineering skills, Chinese medicine, and martial arts from various provinces of China. As a result, Vietnam has managed to develop powerful economic, political, and agricultural system. In particular, Vietnam's agriculture and irrigation technology, which is used even today, was enhanced thanks to Chinese engineering and technology. It has made significant progress in the Vietnamese agricultural industry.

Over time, with the compulsory Chinese education system imposed by the central authority, in the meantime, ethnic Vietnamese specializing in Chinese Classics were prevented from recruiting into public services and holding official positions in the bureaucracy. The Yue people were indeed not equated with the Han people. Undoubtedly, their levels were not seen as the same; hence their skills and intelligence were not fairly rewarded.

In fact, despite the Vietnamese nobility, scholars, and civil servants inherited most elements of Chinese culture, the majority of Yue people still practiced local customs and habits, such as the habit of blackening the teeth (the teeth were covered with a shiny black lacquer), wear caps of catfish skin stitched crudely with an awl, and giving authority and key role to women within the family affairs. Thus, all these activities were defined as "barbaric" and "inappropriate" habits by the imperial court.

However, the acculturation process was not easy, as frequent uprisings and rebellions were indicative of Vietnamese reluctance and resistance to these changes. As mentioned above, the harshly imposed Sinicization<sup>34</sup> policy and brutal dynastic rule of the Han caused the growing social inequality, which eventually led to violent conflicts and widespread uprisings.

The most notable rebellion against Han rule erupted in 40 AD under the leadership of two sisters (Trung sisters), named Trung Trắc (徵側) and Trung Nhi (貳) and officially brought the end of the first Chinese rule (Bielestein, Hans 1987: 271). The Trung Sisters, who ended 247 years of Han occupation and ruled Jiaozhi independently for almost three years, were defeated and executed by General Ma Yuan of Han (馬援). To prevent further insurrections, General Ma Yuan set about the aggressive destruction of all cultural heritages of the indigenous people. Dramatically, the expeditionary forces of Han massacred most of the indigenous aristocracy, beheading five to ten thousand people and deporting several hundred families to China (Kiernan 2017: 82).

A severe Sinicization policy was initiated to further assimilate the Yue people through the more intense adoption of classical Chinese and the Chinese-style education system and the implementation of Confucian ethical concepts and practices. Consequently, the local government of Jiaozhi was abolished and divided into three prefectures and fifty-six counties under the jurisdiction of Chinese Mandarins<sup>35</sup> so that the Han Dynasty could more easily govern them. Eventually, General Ma Yuan completed his mission in 44 AD and returned to the capital of Luoyang, where he received his reward and promoted to be one of the nine ministers. He also brought Emperor Guangwu of Han (光武帝) the gifts - the horse sculptures, made from some melting down of the traditional Yue Bronze Drums<sup>36</sup> (Dong Son Drums), the symbols of indigenous governance of Vietnam.

Despite the crushing defeat, the Trung sisters became the potent symbol of national freedom and pride for the Vietnamese people, and many monuments and temples were dedicated to them after their death (Forbes, Henley 2011: 32). Meanwhile, the Second

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<sup>34</sup> The term is defined as bringing non-Chinese people under the influence of Chinese culture. It is a process where societies that are traditionally non-Chinese are put under the influence of the Han Chinese communities, by adapting to their culture, customs, and way of life.

<sup>35</sup> The term derives from the Portuguese mandarin and it is generally applied to the bureaucratic officials appointed through the imperial examination system.

<sup>36</sup> The most famous artifacts of the Southeast Asian Dongson culture, they are one of the culture's most astounding examples of metalworking of ancient time.

Chinese Domination in Vietnam (北屬各次二 43 - 544 AD) began with the suppression of rebellions and the annexation of Jiaozhi to the Han Empire once again. Although the Trung sisters' rebellion was brutally crushed, it inspired other resistance in Jiaozhi in the following decades.

For instance, guerrilla armies comprising local people were mobilized under the leadership of a 19-year-old woman named Bà Triệu (趙嫗 226 – 248 AD) and attacked the Chinese garrisons in 248 AD, but after months of resistance, the mighty army of Eastern Wu overcame the rebellions and the insurrection was savagely put down. Although, the aforementioned rebellions ended with suppression; they continued to be an essential factor in the struggle to shape Vietnamese national identity and sovereignty in the following centuries.

However, in 220 AD, the Han Dynasty collapsed and split into three rival kingdoms<sup>37</sup> (三国时代). Afterward, Northern Vietnam began to be ruled by one of the three kingdoms, the Eastern Wu (東吳 222 – 280 AD). The Wu clan ruled for 62 years, and during its reign, Jiaozhi remained loyal to the kingdom under the Chinese mandarin Shi Xie (士燮). He served as the Administrator of Jiaozhi and was the leader of the elite ruling class of Han Chinese families who immigrated to Vietnam. Therefore, he achieved stability in the region by appealing to local customs and played a major role in developing Vietnamese civilization. Shi Xie was a promoter of Buddhism and built monasteries and patronized monks (Kiernan 2017: 92). However, the dominance of Shi Xie had prefigured the rise of a new Sino-Vietnamese governing class.

Gradually, the Jin Dynasty of China (晉朝) rose to power and conquered the Eastern Wu; hence, Northern Vietnam thereby came under the suzerainty of Jin realm (266 – 420 AD).

Briefly, from the fall of the Han Empire until the Sui Dynasty, various rival dynasties and kingdoms ruled China separately. A century later, the Three Kingdoms were replaced by the "Sixteen Kingdoms"<sup>38</sup> (十六国时期). Following the tumultuous era of the Sixteen Kingdoms, China again divided into the "Northern" and "Southern" Dynasties<sup>39</sup> (南北朝).

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<sup>37</sup> After the fall of the Han Empire, it was divided into three kingdoms, Wei (魏) in the North, Wu (吳) in the South, and Shu (蜀漢) in the West. Political and military contradictions and struggles were frequent between these Three Kingdoms.

<sup>38</sup> A chaotic period in Chinese history from 304 to 439 CE when the political order of northern China fractured into a series of short-lived dynastic states.

<sup>39</sup> A period in the history of China that lasted from 420 to 589. Four short-lived dynasties in southern China; Liu Song (劉宋 420 - 479), Nan Qi (南齊 479 - 502), Nan Liang (南梁 502 - 557) and Nan Chen (南陳 557 - 589), five dynasties in northern China; Northern Wei (北

Despite an age of political unrest and economic turmoil, it was also a period of the flourishing diverse range of cultures and arts, advancement in military techniques and technology, and the spread of Buddhism and Daoism. Subsequently, during this period, Jiaozhi changed hands frequently, and the process of sinicization accelerated among the indigenous people of Vietnam.

The enormous influence of Ruism over Chinese culture weakened drastically during the reign of the Jin dynasty, which led to the formation of a wide variety of political thoughts and philosophical schools during the Northern and Southern Dynasties era. Among these various movements, the most influential one was a Neo-Daoism<sup>40</sup>. During the authority of Liu Song Dynasty (劉宋), a Neo-Daoist Academy was established at the request of the Emperor Wen of Song<sup>41</sup> (宋文帝) and introduced it as one of the four major subjects of curriculum together with Ruism, literature, and history. With the development of new philosophical sects, a Neo-Daoist phenomenon - Qingtan (清談), which can be translated as a "Pure Conversation", involved witty conversation or debates about philosophy and politics. This phenomenon allowed intellectuals to engage and share their views and suggestions on philosophy and metaphysics. Although this tradition gradually lost its popularity during the Sui dynasty, it continued to exist in China, Vietnam, and neighboring countries until the beginning of Tang dynasty.

The 6<sup>th</sup> century was also a critical period in Vietnam's political evolution towards sovereignty. During this era, the indigenous leaders emerged to claim power following the local Vietnamese royal traditions. The most notable monarch was Lý Nam Đế (李南帝), who could withstand an enormous imperial army raided by the Liang Dynasty of China. Lý Nam Đế, the founder of the Lý dynasty (家前李) and the Kingdom of Vạn Xuân, ended the second Chinese rule and managed to rule the kingdom independently from 544 to 602. Throughout his reign, the military strength and economic development of the kingdom reached its highest levels.

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魏 386 - 534), Eastern Wei (東魏 534 - 550), Western Wei (西魏 535 - 556), Northern Qi (北齊 550 - 577) and Northern Zhou (北周 557 - 581) ruled various part of China for a while.

<sup>40</sup>A metaphysical post-classical Chinese philosophy from the Six Dynasties (222-589), bringing together Daoist and Confucian beliefs through revision and discussion. The movement found its scriptural support both in Daoist and drastically-reinterpreted Confucian sources.

<sup>41</sup>The third Emperor (420 - 479) of Liu Song. He is also known for maintaining political stability and effective administration.

Despite the flowering of Confucianist, Daoist and Buddhist influences from China, there were more anti-imperial rebellions in Jiaozhi from the sixth to tenth centuries than there had been in the first to fifth centuries (Kiernan 2017: 114).

Throughout the age of civil war and political conflicts, the Imperial China faced innumerable insurrections and challenges. The fragmentation of legislative authority that began with the collapse of the Han Empire lasted about four centuries until China's reunification under the Sui dynasty at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The armies of the Emperor Wen of Sui (隋文帝) finally recaptured Jiaozhi and brought an end to the existence of the Vạn Xuân Kingdom in 602 AD. Subsequently, the Third Chinese Domination (北屬齊次三) began, which resumed until the fall of the Tang in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. After the annexation of Northern Vietnam to China as the Jiaozhou (交州) province, the emperor raided several military campaigns to the Kingdom of Champa<sup>42</sup> (战成), located in central and south parts of modern Vietnam. The Sui's forces defeated Champa's army and maintained the protection of southern borders by eliminating foreign threats effectively. Even though the Champa was no longer a menace to the Empire, Emperor Yang of Sui (隋煬帝) ordered to reorganize a second military raid against it. However, the Sui Dynasty was doomed to collapse when most of its army suffered from malaria and other similar tropical diseases during the last military expedition to the southern borders, besides, the Goguryeo Campaign<sup>43</sup> also ended with catastrophic results which weaken the Sui drastically.

The Tang Dynasty, which replaced the Sui Dynasty in 618 AD, succeeded in establishing full authority over the country and reinstated the rule of ethnic Han in the entirety of China proper.

Therefore, the Tang took control of Northern Vietnam and established twelve provinces and 59 districts under the Protectorate of Annam<sup>44</sup> (安南). Nevertheless, it was China's most prosperous time and marked the zenith of its power but during the last years of its existence, the Tang government became corrupted, and it was drastically weakened by factionalism between civil officials and rebel groups, the burdens of a growing population,

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<sup>42</sup> Champa was extended across the coast of what is today central and southern Vietnam from approximately the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD until 1832 when it was annexed by the Vietnamese Empire under Minh Mạng (明命).

<sup>43</sup> The Goguryeo–Sui War (隋与高句丽的战争) were a series of invasions launched by the Sui dynasty of China against Goguryeo (高句丽), one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, between AD 598 and AD 614. It resulted in the defeat of the Sui and was one of the pivotal factors in the collapse of the dynasty.

<sup>44</sup> The Vietnamese form of the Chinese name Annan, which means "the Pacified South" or "to pacify the South" since the annexation of Tang in 679 AC, Annam divided into the 12 prefectures under Tang domination and the name of province kept to be used even under the French colonial rule.

bureaucratic mismanagement, and a succession of inattentive rulers. Hence, the possibility of widespread rebellions among the ethnic minorities in the highlands and borders increased accordingly, particularly in the remote prefectures of the Empire whose ties with the central government were diminished. Unlike Annam's lowland Viet culture that flourished under Tang hegemony, most of the countryside remained un-Sinicized. The indigenous Muong<sup>45</sup> (蠻) people, living in the highlands of Annam rebelled and captured Tong Binh, the capital of Annam. They ousted the Chinese governor and garrison, but, eventually, the rebellions were savagely suppressed by the imperial forces.

However, Tang kept suffering territorial losses after the outbreaks with the central government collapsing in authority over the Empire's various regions. More specifically, after An Lushan<sup>46</sup> (安史之乱) and Huang Chao<sup>47</sup> (黃巢起义/唐末农民起义) revolts, the autonomous power and authority accumulated by the regional military governors in various parts of the Empire went beyond the central government's control. The Military commissioners, also known as a Jiedushi<sup>48</sup> (节度使), slowly came to challenge the power of the central government and became more autonomous from the imperial court. The unlimited power of the Jiedushi was one of the main factors causing the period of economic turmoil and political unrest, such as the era of "Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms"<sup>49</sup> (五代十国), an age of constant struggles among rival kingdoms, dynasties, and warlords.

When the Tang Dynasty entered its final phase of collapsing in 905 AD, Khúc Thừa Dụ (曲承裕 905 - 907), head of the powerful indigenous Khúc family (祗曲) began to rule Annam without relying on the imperial court. He proclaimed himself a Jiedushi of Annam

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<sup>45</sup> Ethnic minority in Vietnam, located in the mountainous area southwest of Hanoi. Considered the only surviving descendants of the early Vietnamese, the Muong, unlike the lowland northern Vietnamese, have been little influenced by the Chinese.

<sup>46</sup> The rebellion, which lasted for 14 years, led to the end of the empire's golden age and its collapse in terms of administration. With a population of 2 million, the capital Chang'an was captured by the rebels, and the emperor Xuan Zong (玄宗) had to retreat to the south with his family. The Tang Dynasty succeeded in suppressing the rebellion thanks to the military support it received from the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur.

<sup>47</sup> With great forces, the rebellion leader Huang Chao managed to capture the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, then the capital Chang'an, forcing Emperor Xizong of Tang to flee. In 884, the rebellions were defeated by Li Keyong (李克用), the deputy commander of the Shatuo (沙陀) troops.

<sup>48</sup> Regional Military Governors or Military commissioners were high-ranking officials nominally controlling one circuit's military affairs but increasingly gained control over civilian matters. They had judicial rights, not just in the military sphere but also in political and economic issues.

<sup>49</sup> The era commenced with the collapse of the Tang dynasty and having reached its climax with the founding of the dominant Song dynasty.

protectorate; then, in 906, it became an autonomous region under his lordship. Khúc Thừa Dụ is considered the ruler who marked the beginning of independent Vietnam because, while Annam still nominally belonged to the Tang Dynasty, it gained autonomy with a native ruler who could decide domestic affairs with no interference from China (Trọng Kim 1971: 28).

In 907, his son Khúc Hạo (曲顥 907 - 917) inherited father's position and continued to strengthen the autonomy and prosperity of the country with great effort. While he was a Jiedushi, he followed an extremely cautious policy towards the Chinese authorities in order to maintain Annam's stability, growth and prosperity. The kingdom was still vassalage to China and often had to make tributes to gain political support and avoid military confrontations. Although Vietnam was technically under Chinese control, the Khúc family had managed to rule it autonomously.

The Khúc family played a vital role in Vietnam's early economic development; the economy had prospered with administrative and social reforms and policy changes. Khúc Hạo contributed to the revitalization of the Vietnamese economy through strong leadership. He was the one who implemented reforms by introducing a range of initiatives to achieve improvements in trade, land distribution, and taxation systems (Trọng Kim 1971: 29). Thus, the Khúc family had made all administrative decisions that are directly related to domestic affairs and political activities within Annam's borders. However, Khúc Thừa Mỹ (曲承美 917 - 930), who took power after his father's death, failed to maintain the autonomy of Vietnam. He sought political support and assistance from the Northern Chinese Zhu Liang<sup>50</sup> dynasty (朱 梁/后梁). Meanwhile, the Emperor of Liu Yan<sup>51</sup> (刘 夔) of Southern Han invaded Annam in 930 and managed to re-establish the Chinese domination by appointing Chinese official Li Jin as a Jiedushi to the region.

The native Khúc clan never proclaimed themselves kings or emperors like some other clans during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. Nonetheless, members of Khúc succeeded in establishing and forming a more autonomous administration than ever before. In 931, another Vietnamese native leader Dương Đình Nghệ achieved to overcome the Southern Han army and forced them to retreat. From the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, various Chinese dynasties attempted to regain control over territory; eventually, they could not re-

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<sup>50</sup> Also known as The Later Liang (907 - 923), was one of the Five Dynasties during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period in China. The Later Liang controlled most of northern China and maintained a tense relationship with the Shatuo Turks.

<sup>51</sup> The first Emperor (896 - 911) of Southern Han from the period of Chinese Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

establish total hegemony over Vietnam in the next five centuries, until the Ming invasion in 1407.

As mentioned above, since 905, the Tang dynasty lost control of Annam to native rulers. Consequently, The Khúc clan ruled Annam autonomously until the invasion of the Southern Han in 930. Therefore, rise of the local Ngô clan to power had radically altered the sociopolitical development of Vietnam. As one of the most prominent members of the Ngô family, Ngô Quyền (吳 權 939 - 944) was a high-ranking official in Annam and he increasingly tempted to challenge Chinese rule. His father, Ngô Mân, was an influential Tang government official in Annam either. Being familiar with the military strategy and tactics of the Chinese forces, Ngô Quyền was able to defeat the Southern Han army in the Battle of Bạch Đằng (白藤江藤战) and declared the independence of his kingdom in 939. Most importantly, in the battle, the imperial prince and commander Liu Hongcao (劉弘操) was killed. After a humiliating defeat, the Chinese withdrew their forces from Northern Vietnam. Hence, Ngô Quy overthrew the Southern Han government and founded the Ngô Dynasty (吳朝), officially ended a thousand years of Chinese domination and proclaimed himself king of a newly founded independent state. He moved the capital to the Cổ Loa<sup>52</sup> (古螺城), believed to have been the capital of Vietnam's legendary Âu Lạc Kingdom following Lạc Việt<sup>53</sup> (雒越) traditions. Unfortunately, Ngo Quyen's successors were unable to maintain peace and unity. When he died in 944, the kingdom fell into a succession crisis. Dương Tam Kha (楊平王 944 - 950), brother-in-law of Ngo Quyen usurped the throne for a brief time - until Ngo Quyen's two heirs, Ngô Xương Văn(南晉王)and Ngô Xương Ngập(天策王), eventually agreed to established a joint rule, which lasted until the collapse of the Ngo dynasty in 965. However, despite the return of the legitimate heirs to the throne, native feudal lords rebelled by seizing the authority of their local governments, and the kingdom quickly succumbed to prolonged civil conflicts, beginning with internecine struggles between members of the Dương and Ngô families.

"The Anarchy of the Twelve Warlords" (Mười hai sứ quân 944 - 968) era witnessed a wide range of social movements, fierce battles for seizing the throne, and political confrontations among twelve rival chieftains. Eventually, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh (丁先皇 968 - 979),

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<sup>52</sup> An essential historical fortified settlement and archaeological site in present-day Hanoi's Dong Anh district.

<sup>53</sup> The owners of Bronze Age Đông Sơn culture in Southeast Asia and considered to be ancestors of modern Vietnamese people. They also were skilled bronze casters, which is evidenced by the Dong Son drum found widely throughout northern Vietnam, and South China. According to legend, the Lạc Việt founded a state called Văn Lang in 2879 BC.

one of the twelve lords, achieved to unify the country by crushing other rebellious warlords and became the first emperor of Vietnam. As a result of that unification, he renamed the country Đại Cồ Việt (Great Viet) under the rule of the Đinh dynasty. Thus, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh holds the title of being the first ruler to declare his empire after a millennium of Chinese rule and colonization.

In the early years of his reign, he eliminated the social and political anarchy that had caused the division of his kingdom. Đinh Bộ Lĩnh appointed Buddhist and Taoist monks to the administrative positions, who were subordinate to government and imperial court. Besides, he organized his state in a form adapted from the Chinese model, and imposed a new administrative hierarchy that emphasized loyalty and individual performance of duties.

Dinh Tien Hoang sought amicable relations with the Song dynasty of China. He had consented to pay tribute to the Chinese emperor in return for recognition of the sovereign status of his kingdom. He thus achieved permanent independence from China for the Vietnamese kingdom. Thereafter, China's Song dynasty recognized monarchs of the Đinh dynasty as the legitimate rulers of all Vietnam. Although mighty dynasties from China, such as Song (宋朝), Yuan<sup>54</sup> (元朝), Ming<sup>55</sup> (明朝) and Qing<sup>56</sup> (清朝) sought unsuccessfully to reclaim the territory in centuries to come, the Vietnamese kingdoms managed to protect the sovereignty and unity of country until the French seized control in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## The Last Chinese Domination

The Trần dynasty was a ruling family of Đại Việt from 1225 to 1400, who resumed the former tributary relationship with the Ming dynasty of China like the previous Vietnamese monarchs. However, Hồ Quý Ly (胡季犛), an official of the Trần government, overthrew the Trần clan and seized the authority in 1400. During his reign, Hồ Quý Ly had renamed the country from Đại Việt to Đại Ngu (大虞). He also made several significant developments by introducing a wide range of economic and administrative reforms. Though he abdicated

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<sup>54</sup> The Great Yuan State (1271 - 1368), was a successor state to the Mongol Empire after its division and a ruling dynasty of China established by Kublai Khan, leader of the Mongol Borjigin clan, son of Tolui and grandson of Genghis Khan.

<sup>55</sup> The Great Ming, was the ruling dynasty of China from 1368 to 1644 following the collapse of the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty. The Ming dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China ruled by Han Chinese.

<sup>56</sup> The Manchu State was the final imperial dynasty in China, lasting from 1644 to 1912. The dynasty was founded by the Manchu Aisin Gioro clan in Manchuria. It was the fourth largest empire in world history in terms of territorial size (after British, Russian and Mongol empires).

the throne to his son Hồ Hán Thương (胡漢蒼) in 1402, but still possessed great authority over administrative affairs.

Meanwhile, in 1404, Trần Thiêm Bình (陳添平) arrived at the imperial court of Ming in Nanjing<sup>57</sup> (南京), claiming to be a true heir of the former Trần dynasty. He convinced the Emperor Yongle of Ming<sup>58</sup> (永乐帝) for the seizing the throne as a legitimate ruler and restoration of Trần dynasty (Chan 1990: 230).

Thus, Prince Trần Thiêm Bình was escorted back to Vietnam by a Ming envoy in a military convoy under the commandership of Huang Zhong (黃中). On the way back to Vietnam, the Ming envoy was ambushed by the Vietnamese forces and suffered massive military losses. In consequence, the commander Huang Zhong fled back to Nanjing, and the prince was caught and executed by Hồ Quý Ly in 1406. Accordingly, the incident sent Emperor Yongle into a rage and thereby led to the invasion of Vietnam.

The fourth and last Chinese Domination (北屬齊次四) commenced with the Chinese forces marched to Vietnam in 1406. Therefore, Ming's expeditionary forces rapidly occupied and took over Đại Ngu. Emperor Yongle subsequently transformed Vietnam from a tributary state into a Chinese province, restoring its classical name Jiaozhi as it was throughout the Han era.

The Ming invasion left significant damage in the history of Vietnam. The central government thus began a harsh rule of both assimilation and colonization: in addition to the annexation of Đại Ngu into Ming territory, the emperor sought to sinicize the indigenous people by ordering to destruct every non-Chinese cultural elements while preserving those of Chinese culture, such as Chan Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian texts (Ji, Yun 1781: 695).

Moreover, throughout the occupation, the "Bao Minh" pagoda, one of the prominent historical buildings of Vietnamese culture, was demolished after being looted by Ming soldiers along with many other historical monuments and sites. Vietnam's economy also suffered dramatically due to the harsh policy imposed by Ming in the economic fields.

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<sup>57</sup> One of the nation's most important cities for over a thousand years, is considered as one of the Four Great Ancient Capitals of China (Xi'an, Luoyang and Beijing). Nanjing also served as a national capital for the Republic of China (1911 - 1949). Today, it's a capital of China's wealthiest province of Jiangsu (江苏) in terms of economic development.

<sup>58</sup> The third Emperor of the Ming dynasty, reigning from 1402 to 1424. He expanded Chinese influence throughout the known world by ordering to build massive treasure fleet under the command of prominent Muslim Admiral Zheng He (鄭和).

Valuable artifacts such as gems, jade, gold, pieces of art, as well as craftsmen were transported to China. Besides, many leading scholars and bureaucratic officials were deported to the north, and all government records of previous kingdoms were destroyed as part of the acculturation process.

Consequently, local resistance re-emerged against the brutal rule of Ming in almost every corner of the country. Most notably, in 1418, Lê Lợi (1385 - 1433), the founder of the Lê Dynasty, rose effectively against the Ming invasion. The resistance movement called Lam Sơn (藍山起义 1418 - 1427) and lasted roughly nine years. Finally, in 1426, Emperor Xuande of Ming (1425 - 1435), who ascended the imperial throne upon the death of Emperor Yongle, was defeated in the decisive battle of Tốt Động - Chúc Động (峯洞祝洞之战) and was forced to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Lê Dynasty and withdrew Chinese army from the Vietnamese territory permanently. Hence, the 4th and the last Chinese hegemony came to an end, and the tributary relations were established once again (Laichen 2003: 7).

After the restoration of the unity in Đại Việt under the rule of the Lê Dynasty (also known as Later Le dynasty 1428 - 1788), Vietnam entered a period of stabilization, prosperity, and territorial expansion. The Lê monarchs instituted a series of reforms to stabilize the newly organized administration by adopting Chinese imperial techniques of governance. As a result of two decades of Ming occupation, the Vietnamese bureaucracy came under the influence of Ruism and gradually abandoned the previously predominant Buddhist doctrine. From then onward, all the officials were recruited by passing a government examination based on the Chinese model. In terms of military strength, Đại Việt rulers launched new southward territorial expansion, and the raiding expeditions became more organized against the southern neighbors such as Champa, Laos, and Myanmar.

## Conclusion

The past three millennia of Vietnamese culture and history were mainly took shape in Northern Vietnam. Over the eighteen centuries, Vietnam and China shared many common features of cultural, philosophical, and religious heritage. During a millennium of imperial colonization, the Yue people had learned much from their rulers, especially in the fields of literature and administration. Before the great migration, more than a million Chinese

inhabited Vietnam, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), the economic hub and the largest city of Vietnam. Traditionally, Chinese businesses controlled most of the city's economic and financial activities, and Vietnamese Chinese played a predominant role in the early period of economic development of Vietnam, maintaining close commercial ties with Mainland China. The Cholon district (堤岸) in Ho Chi Minh is still home to the largest Chinese community in Vietnam, and it is considered the largest Chinatown in the world by area. Some of the Chinese living in Vietnam were either descendant of Han Chinese who migrated during the time that Vietnam was under the suzerainty of Imperial China or the immigrants who came from the southern provinces of modern China in the 19th century, and they were widely known as the Hoa people (越南華人).

Throughout the Indochina Wars (1945 - 1991), the Hoa people were blamed for espionage activities and were targeted for pro-China propaganda campaigns by some Vietnamese leaders. As a result of political discrimination and public pressure, following the Sino-Vietnamese war in 1979, approximately 170,000 Hoa people left Vietnam for China within only a few months. Thus, following the high-level Sino-Vietnamese meetings, the negotiations between the two countries were ended with a border pact signed on 30 December 1999. The two came to terms with the "Land Border Treaty" (LBT) that settled land border disputes and long-standing peace.

The presence of Vietnam in the neighborhood of two prominent civilizations - India and China made sociocultural interactions inevitable. More specifically, China has predominantly affected the socioeconomic, cultural, and political spheres in Vietnam. Hence, because of intense imposition of the sinicization policy throughout the colonial presence of China, Chinese traditions and teachings have become an integral part of Vietnamese culture; nonetheless, they never entirely replaced local Vietnamese customs and habits. Despite the acculturation and colonization, the Vietnamese managed to preserve their national culture, the local language, and traditional practices. In particular, the peasants, farmers, and craftsmen played a significant role in protecting and transmitting intangible cultural heritage for future generations.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Vietnamese had already adopted many aspects of Chinese culture, including its governance, architecture, philosophy, and religions. Undoubtedly, the most significant contributions of Chinese civilization – Ruism (Confucianism), together with

Daoism and Buddhism have influenced Vietnam for hundreds of years and incorporated it into Chinese culture. Ruism is still prevalent in Vietnam because it provides fundamental social values and a moral framework related to individuals, institutions, family, politics, and metaphysics. Furthermore, the general moral standard was elevated, and political principles, civil institutions as well as economic ideals were enhanced by its influence.

Accordingly, in the formative centuries of Vietnam, Ruism made remarkably contributions in improving the status of Royalty and building a traditional hierarchical structure based on the dominant power's interests. Thus, the bureaucratic system built on the principles of Ruism helped the Vietnamese monarchs to consolidate a strong autocratic leadership over the society.

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