

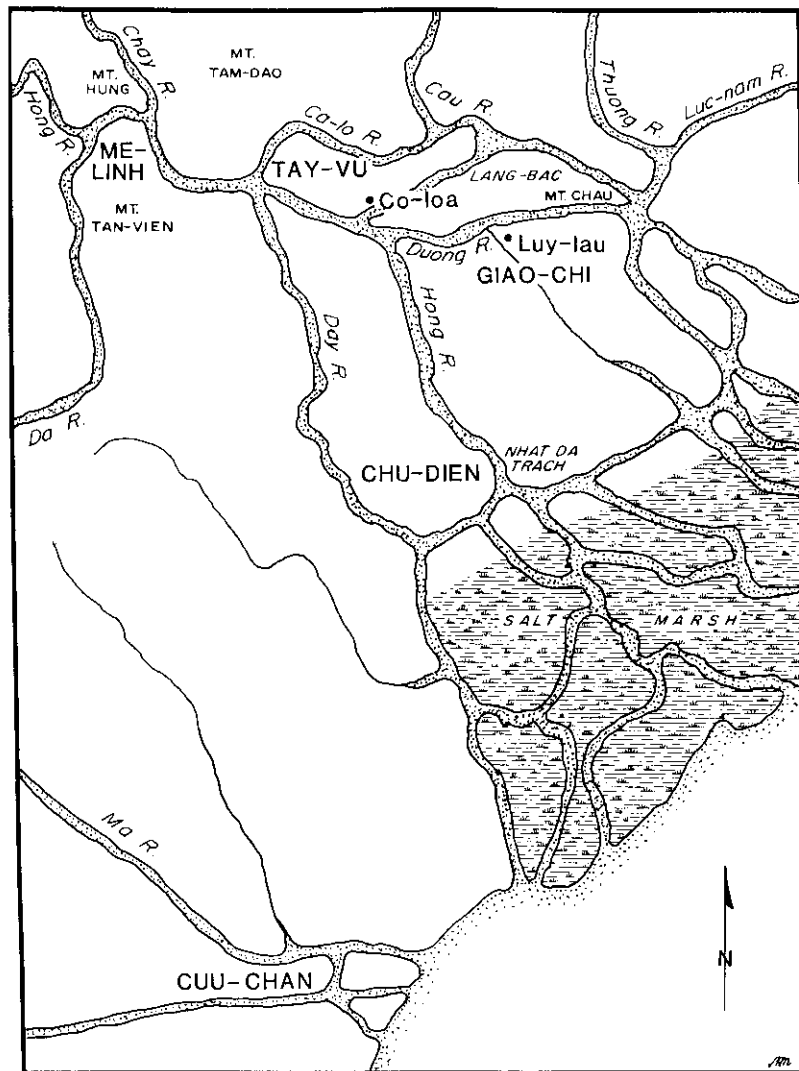
I Lac Lords

The Earliest Traditions

The earliest traditions of the Vietnamese people, as revealed in the *Linh-nam chich quai*, an accumulation of lore edited in the fifteenth century, are associated with the Hung kings who ruled the kingdom of Van-lang.¹ The Hung kings claimed descent from Lac Long Quan, "Lac Dragon Lord," a hero who came to the Hong River plain in what is now northern Vietnam from his home in the sea; he subdued all evil demons in the land and civilized the people, teaching them to cultivate rice and to wear clothes. Lac Long Quan returned to the sea after instructing the people to call on him if they were ever in distress. Eventually, a monarch from the north, China, entered the land and, finding it without a king, claimed it for himself. When the people cried out to Lac Long Quan for deliverance from this alien ruler, he heard them and came back from the sea; he kidnapped Au Co, the wife of the intruder, and took her to the top of Mount Tan-vien, which overlooks the Hong River as it enters the plains. Failing to retrieve his wife, the northern king departed in despair. Au Co eventually gave birth to the first of the Hung kings, and Lac Long Quan returned to his home in the sea after again promising to return if needed. Lac Long Quan, a prince of the sea, and Au Co, a princess of the mountains, are regarded by the Vietnamese as the progenitors of their race.

The mythical traditions surrounding Lac Long Quan and the origin of the Hung kings reveal a sea-oriented culture coming to terms with a continental environment. Civilization arrived with a culture hero from the sea who foiled a continental power by seizing his foe's wife and making her the mother of his heirs. This theme of the local culture hero neutralizing a northern threat by appropriating its source of legitimacy foreshadowed the historical relationship between the Vietnamese and the Chinese. The mythical origin of the Hung kings reflects a maritime cultural base with political accretions from continental influences. This idea was later elaborated by Vietnamese literati into a genealogy of Lac Long Quan and Au Co that brought together the southern aquatic line and the northern continental line

1. *LNCQ*, 5-7. On the *Linh-nam chich quai*, see Appendix O. On Hung and Van-lang, see Appendix B.



Map 1. Lac Vietnam

of a single royal family, of which the founder was selected to predate the first mythical Chinese emperor.²

According to a recent Vietnamese study, the name *Hung* derives from an Austroasiatic title of chieftainship that has persisted up to the present time in the languages of Mon-Khmer-speaking peoples living in the mountains of Southeast Asia, as well as in Muong, the upland sister language of Vietnamese; the title is also found among the Munda of northeast India, who speak the most western of the surviving Austroasiatic languages.³ A modern Vietnamese linguist has associated *Van-lang*, the traditional name of the Hung kingdom, with phonetically similar words in the languages of minority peoples throughout the region bounded by the Yangtze and Mekong rivers that mean "people" and, by extension, "nation."⁴ According to oral tradition, the totem of the Hung kings was a large mythical bird; the name of this bird is thought to have been the origin of the toponym given by the Chinese to the region from which the Hung kings ruled: Me-linh.⁵

Me-linh was in the northwest corner of the plain, where the Hong River emerges from the mountains and is joined by its two great tributaries, the Da and the Chay. The confluence of these three rivers is at an altitude of about 30 to 35 feet above sea level, approximately one hundred miles from the sea. Me-linh is dominated by Mount Tan-vien to the southwest and Mount Tam-dao to the northeast. The three rivers join their waters at the foot of Mount Hung, where the ancestral temple of the Hung kings is located.⁶

The earliest event recorded as historical in a Vietnamese source comes from the *Viet su luoc* and is dated in the reign of a Chinese king, Chuang of Chou, who reigned from 696 to 682 B.C. Eighteen generations separated Chuang of Chou from the end of his dynasty. Vietnamese historians seem to have inherited a tradition of eighteen generations of Hung kings, coming to an end simultaneously with the Chinese house of Chou; that they dated the first Hung king to Chuang of Chou on the basis of this tradition is a reasonable supposition. According to the *Viet su luoc*, Vietnamese history began when an "extraordinary man" of Me-linh used magical arts to unite all the tribes under his authority; he took the title of Hung king and named his realm Van-lang. The origin of this account is obscure, and its authenticity

2. See Appendix A.

3. Tran Quoc Vuong, "Ve danh hieu 'Hung Vuong,'" pp. 353-55.

4. Hoang Thi Chau, "Nuoc Van-lang qua tai lieu ngon ngu," pp. 39-42. Tran Quoc Vuong, "Ve danh hieu," p. 353, conjectured that *Van-lang* derived from the ancient Vietnamese name for the mythical bird believed to have been the clan totem of the Hung kings.

5. Tran Quoc Vuong, "Ve danh hieu," p. 353.

6. Le Tuong and Nguyen Dinh Ai, "Qua trinh hinh thanh khu di tích lịch sử thời Vua Hung trên Núi Hung," pp. 66-72; Le Tuong and Nguyen Loc, "Ve kinh đô Van-lang," pp. 34-45; Van Lang, "Dat to den Hung," pp. 76-77.

is open to serious question.⁷ However, the date it assigns to the rise of the Hung kings coincides with archeological evidence indicating that, about the seventh century B.C., the different cultures of northern Vietnam became united under the influence of the oldest bronze-using culture, which had its origins in the Me-ling area; this marked the beginning of what is generally called the Dong-son culture.⁸

The archeological progression culminating in the Dong-son culture began near the end of the third millennium B.C. with the appearance of late Neolithic, early Bronze Age cultures in the valleys of the Hong and Ma rivers. These two cultural centers continued a parallel yet distinct development until they were united in the Dong-son culture around the seventh century B.C. The Dong-son culture is known for its ornamented bronze drums, which have been found in many parts of Southeast Asia and in southern China; the designs on these drums reflect a sea-oriented culture.⁹

Vietnamese scholars associate the Hung kings with the Dong-son culture. They consider this to have been the formative period in establishing their national tradition;¹⁰ thus they can view the subsequent period of Chinese rule as a temporary intrusion into an already established national life. This perspective explains Vietnamese independence in the tenth century A.D. as the reappearance of a preexisting tradition; it denies the conventional view of Chinese and French scholars, according to which the Vietnamese heritage has its roots in the Chinese provincial experience, a view increasingly difficult to maintain as archeological, linguistic, and historical work progresses.

From their center in Me-ling, the Hung kings extended their influence eastward to include the region of Tay-vu. The name *Tay-vu* came from later centuries and derived from contact with Chinese-oriented peoples further north. This region lay between the Cau and Hong rivers at the foot of Mount Tam-dao. It was a fertile region of lakes, rivers, hills, and plains, bounded by mountainous terrain on one side and soggy delta lands on the other; it was heavily populated from a very early time.¹¹ The highlands north of Tay-vu are drained by rivers whose valleys communicate with southern China through low passes. Consequently, Tay-vu was vulnerable to attack from the north, and the earliest legends from this region are about defending the land against invaders from the north.

The best known of these legends is about Ong Giong, a three-year-old boy who grew miraculously into a giant by eating vast amounts of rice; after

7. See Appendix C.

8. See Appendix D.

9. Chikamori Masashi, "Don Son Seiōki Bunka no Kigen ni kansuru Ichi Shiron,"

p. 90.

10. Pham Huy Thong, "Ba lan dung nuoc," pp. 64-67.

11. Dinh Van Nhat, "Vung Lang-bac ve thoi Hai Ba Trung," p. 49.

sweeping the invaders from the land, he disappeared into the heavens.¹² Ong Giong has been interpreted as an incarnation of Lac Long Quan returning to succor his people;¹³ he is similar to heroes in Indonesian lore.¹⁴

One of the most powerful figures of Vietnamese mythology is the Great King of Mount Tan-vien, also known as the Spirit of Mount Tan-vien or simply the Mountain Spirit. He was a son of Lac Long Quan and Au Co, who followed his father to the sea but later returned to dwell on Mount Tan-vien, the "Olympus" of Vietnamese mythology. One legend about the Mountain Spirit is virtually identical to a folk tradition from northern Borneo.¹⁵

The most famous legend of the Mountain Spirit is about his battle with the Water Spirit,¹⁶ which has been differently interpreted as symbolizing the monsoon rain season,¹⁷ a sudden rise in sea level,¹⁸ or invaders from the sea.¹⁹ While a plausible case can be made for each of these

12. According to Dinh Van Nhat, "Vung Lang-bac," p. 49, the legend of Ong Giong (variously Ong Dong), which in later centuries received official recognition, was simply one of several similar legends from the area of ancient Tay-vu. The fullest version of the legend is found in *LNCQ*, 13-15, from which the account in *TT*, 1, 3b-5a, is apparently derived. *CL*, 26, contains a short notice giving the barest outline of the legend. The *VDULT* and *VSL* do not contain the legend.

13. According to *LNCQ*, 33-35, in the invasion crisis the Hung king was advised to seek the aid of Lac Long Quan. After performing sacrifices for three days, the Hung king was visited by Lac Long Quan in the form of an old man who promised deliverance. Ong Giong subsequently rose to defend the land. On Ong Giong as a reincarnation of Lac Long Quan, see Cao Huy Dinh, "Hinh tuong khong lo va tap the anh hung dung nuoc, giu nuoc trong truyen co dan gian Viet Nam," pp. 87-91, and Yamamoto Tatsurō, "Myths Explaining the Vicissitudes of Political Power in Ancient Viet Nam," pp. 85-86.

14. The notion of a baby boy's consuming prodigious amounts of rice and growing miraculously to heroic proportions is found in the folk traditions of many areas of Southeast Asia. One example can be found in the preliminary draft of a translation of *Tamelak Mangan*, "a folk epic from Lombok telling of the origin of the Sasak people," by Ma'sum Ahmod, Hunsri A. Hatid; and A. L. Becker (manuscript; Malang, East Java, 1970-71).

15. The legend consists of a confrontation between the Mountain Spirit and the Tree Spirit on Mount Tan-vien, in which an ancient tree is miraculously restored after being chopped down by the Mountain Spirit. After the third such episode, the Mountain Spirit hides and observes the White Star Spirit restore the tree at the break of dawn. The Mountain Spirit captures the White Star Spirit and reaches an agreement on the use of the land and the trees on it. See Gustave Dumoutier "Étude historique et archéologique sur Co-loa, capitale de l'ancien royaume de Au Lac," pp. 261-62. In the Borneo legend, a tree is similarly restored after being cut down; the spirit who restores the tree is captured and in return for the use of the trees and the land demands sacrifice and veneration. See Henry Ling Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, 1: 177-78. Both of these legends can be compared with the victory of Lac Long Quan over the thousand-year-old demon-tree in Me-ling (*LNCQ*, 9-10).

16. *VDULT*, 36-37, and *LNCQ*, 26-27. Also see Yamamoto, "Myths," p. 87.

17. Gustave Dumoutier, "Choix de legendes historique de l'Annam et du Tonkin," pp. 159-91.

18. Nguyen Duy, "Cu dan o Viet Nam truoc, trong, va sau thoi Hung Vuong," p. 22.

19. Claude Madrolle, "Le Tonkin ancien," pp. 308-21.

interpretations, they do not take into account all elements of the legend as it has been preserved in the *Viet dien u linh tap*, our earliest source.

Far from being an alien invader, the Water Spirit was originally a good friend of the Mountain Spirit; both dwelt in seclusion in Me-linh. The cause of their enmity was courtship of a Hung princess. The Hung king and his advisors considered both to be acceptable consorts for the royal bride and invited each to compete for the honor of her hand. The Mountain Spirit won the contest and took his bride to Mount Tan-vien; the Water Spirit, however, refused to accept defeat and assaulted the Mountain Spirit with great ferocity, but little success. This legend appears to explain the preeminence of Mount Tan-vien over the adjacent lowlands as resulting from its possession of the princess. This is supported by popular folklore, in which the political importance of Mount Tan-vien in ancient times is a recurring theme.²⁰

The legend of Nhat Da Trach, "One Night Marsh,"²¹ comes from the southern part of the Hong River plain, a low swampy area near the sea. According to this legend, a Hung princess named Tien Dung was exploring the river channels of the deltaic plains when she met a naked young man named Chu Dong Tu. She married the lad, and the couple established themselves near the sea in a palace filled with the luxury wares of seaborne merchants. Hearing of this, the Hung king sent an army against the upstarts; however, as the army approached, the palace disappeared in a single night and nothing remained but a vast impenetrable swamp: Nhat Da Trach. This legend contains elements similar to the founding myth of what the Chinese called Fu-nan, in the lower Mekong.²²

Legends of Lac Long Quan, Ong Giong, the spirit of Mount Tan-vien, and Nhat Da Trach were incorporated into Ngo Si Lien's court history in the fifteenth century. All of these legends were by that time encrusted with elaborations stemming from the cultural currents of later centuries.²³ These legends were remembered by the Vietnamese because they expressed their earliest identity as a people.

Beyond the details of these legends lies a basic psychological truth of ancient Vietnamese society: sovereign power came from the sea. Lac Long Quan belonged to the watery realm. As we have seen, certain elements of

20. Tan Vu, "Tu tuong chu yeu cua nguoi Viet thoi co qua nhung truyen dung dau trong than thoi va truyen thuyet," p. 110; Nguyen Loc, "Buoc dau tim hieu moi quan he Hung Vuong va Thuc Vuong," pp. 54-60.

21. LNCQ, 11-13; Dumoutier, "Choix," pp. 172-74; Maurice Durand, "La Dynastie des Ly antérieurs d'après le *Viet dien u linh tap*," p. 448, n. 2. *TT*, 4, 17b.

22. In the Fu-nan myth, the Brahman Kaundinya encounters a naked woman in the Mekong delta whom he marries, thereby founding a kingdom (Georges Coedès, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 37).

23. Tran Quoc Vuong, "Tu tu duy than thoi den tu duy lich su," p. 404.

these legends are similar to legendary themes found in the island and coastal world of Southeast Asia. The idea of an aquatic spirit's being the source of political power and legitimacy, which attended the formation of the Vietnamese people in prehistoric times, is the earliest hint of the concept of the Vietnamese as a distinct and self-conscious people.²⁴ This idea was given clear visual form in the art of the Dong-son bronze drums, where sea birds and amphibians surround boats bearing warriors.

Lac Society

Vietnamese archeologists date the beginning of their civilization to the Phung-nguyen culture of the late third millennium B.C., which flourished in the region later called Me-linh.²⁵ They regard Phung-nguyen as an advanced Neolithic, early Bronze Age culture. Phung-nguyen sites covered tens of thousands of square meters and accommodated thousands of inhabitants. This has been seen as evidence of a communal life built up from aggregations of clans and tribes.²⁶

As the use of bronze developed during the next two millennia, this primitive communalism broke up into a more hierarchical society based on relatively small village or family groups.²⁷ This trend culminated in the Dong-son civilization, which Vietnamese archeologists date from the seventh century B.C. to the first century A.D.²⁸ The graves of ruling-class people from the Dong-son period are rich with bronze burial goods.²⁹ They show that ruling-class people had by this time established a clear distance between themselves and the people they ruled. Vietnamese scholars identify this as the time of the legendary Hung kings and their kingdom of Van-lang.³⁰

A Vietnamese linguist has pointed out, in a study of terms found in traditions associated with the Hung kings, that words for "headman" (*phu-dao*), "lady or princess" (*mi-nuong*), and "gentleman or prince" (*quan-lang*) are shared with a number of Austroasiatic and Austronesian languages in

24. Jean Pryzluski ("La Princesse à l'odeur de poisson et la Nagi dans les traditions de l'Asie orientale") pointed out that the idea of sovereignty's issuing from the sea is directly opposed to the continental cultures of the Indo-Aryans and Chinese and attributed it to a prehistoric maritime civilization in Southeast Asia. For more on this, see my "Madagascar and the Ancient Malayo-Polynesian Myths."

25. Hoang Xuan Chinh and Bui Van Tien, "Van hoa Dong-son va cac trung tam van hoa trong thoi Dai Kim Khi o Viet Nam," pp. 40-41.

26. Nguyen Phuc Long, "Les nouvelles recherches archéologiques au Vietnam," p. 46.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

28. Nguyen Duy Ty, "Nien dai van hoa Dong-son," p. 84.

29. Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 7 and 83, n. 2.

30. Pham Huy Thong and Chu Van Tan, "Thoi Dai Kim Khi o Viet Nam va 'Van Minh Song Hong,'" pp. 37-44.

Southeast Asia, and he theorizes that these words entered Chinese from these southern languages.³¹ A word for "maidservant or slave" (*xao*) is shared with Thai, a word for "people or subjects" (*hon*) is shared with both Thai and Cham, and a word for "assistant headman" (*bo-chinh*) is shared with Jarai, an Austronesian language in the mountains of central Vietnam.³² The precise linguistic origins of these titles and terms are not yet clear, but their distribution suggests that ancient Vietnam was a meeting place of different linguistic cultures.

An ancient Vietnamese word for "village or locality" (*ke*) seems to be indigenous to the Hong River plain, and the geographical sphere of its survival in contemporary village names suggests an origin in Neolithic and Bronze Age paddy society.³³

The Vietnamese word for "river" (*song*), which is shared with many neighboring linguistic groups and was borrowed by Chinese (*chiang*),³⁴ has recently been shown to have derived from Austroasiatic.³⁵ Likewise, as noted earlier, there is reason to believe that the term *Hung* derives from an Austroasiatic title of chieftainship. Modern scholars tend to see Austroasiatic and Austronesian as continental and maritime branches of an older Austroasian group. The Austronesian influence left the mainland for the islands of Southeast Asia, while the Austroasiatic presence moved overland through mainland Southeast Asia; Mon-Khmer is a major language family within Austroasiatic.³⁶ Vietnamese is, according to a recent investigator, "an undoubted Mon-Khmer language" with clearly recognizable loans from Austronesian.³⁷

The opposition of mountain and sea in Vietnamese mythology³⁸ thus has a linguistic base. In northern Vietnam during prehistoric times, we can assume that the Mon-Khmer, or Austroasiatic, linguistic world thrived on land adjacent to the sea-based Austronesians, and eventually absorbed them; the Vietnamese language accordingly developed from Mon-Khmer in a cultural world deeply indebted to contact with Austronesian peoples. Con-

31. Hoang Thi Chau, "Nuoc Van-lang qua tai lieu ngon ngu," pp. 41, 46. Refer to Chinese *fu-t'ou*, *niang*, and *lang*. On *phu-dao*, see also Nguyen Dinh Chien and Ngo The Long, "Tam bia doi Tran Du Tong moi phat hien o Ha-Tuyen," p. 69.

32. Hoang Thi Chau, pp. 46-47.

33. Ibid., p. 45; Le Tuong and Nguyen Loc, p. 41.

34. Hoang Thi Chau, p. 39.

35. Jerry Norman and Tsu-lin Mei, "The Austroasiatics in Ancient South China," pp. 280-83. Other Austroasiatic words identified as having been borrowed by Chinese during the first millennium B.C. are: "the housefly insect," "tiger," "tooth, tusk, ivory," and "cross-bow" (Norman and Tsu-lin Mei, pp. 284-94).

36. Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 12-13.

37. H. L. Shorto, "The Linguistic Protohistory of Mainland South East Asia," pp. 276-77.

38. See Appendix A.

tact with Thai peoples and, in historical times, the Chinese has also left conspicuous marks.

Dong-son art reveals a ruling-class perspective heavily influenced by Austronesian culture. The rectangular stone axe, which is generally associated with Stone Age Austronesian culture, has been found in large quantities in northern Vietnam, while the stone-shouldered axe, thought to be characteristic of Austroasiatic culture, is relatively scarce.³⁹

A distinctive Dong-son weapon, the bronze pediform axe, is thought to be a development of the rectangular stone axe.⁴⁰ The pediform axe was superior to other bronze axes because it could be used both for chopping and for thrusting; furthermore, it could easily be disengaged by rolling it loose against its heel, enabling the delivery of more strokes in a given period of time.⁴¹

This weapon, depicted in the hands of warriors on the Dong-son drums, bears witness to the grim strategic position of the Hong River plain as a point of demographic pressure in ancient times. This plain lay astride the only lowland corridor between the Tibetan highlands and the sea; it was consequently in the path of peoples moving between East and Southeast Asia. Those who chose to make this place their home faced frequent challenges from all directions. They, of necessity, had to arm themselves with weapons equal to these challenges. Other bronze weaponry uncovered from Dong-son sites includes blades for daggers, halberds, and swords; points for javelins and lances; arrowheads; and crossbow triggers.⁴²

Today, we can find the bronze pediform axe depicted in an artistic tradition inspired by Austronesian peoples. According to Vietnamese historical tradition, this axe was wielded in the name of a line of kings who bore an Austroasiatic title. Dong-son civilization was a cultural synthesis achieved by peoples inhabiting a single geopolitical environment. These peoples came from both the mountains and the sea. The society they shared eventually superseded their mutual differences. We can surmise that the Vietnamese people originated in a concerted human response by diverse peoples to a particular geographical setting, the plains of northern Vietnam.

The origin and significance of the bronze Dong-son drums has been

39. Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 44-45.

40. Ibid., p. 64 and fig. 144. Jeremy Davidson, "Archeology in Northern Vietnam since 1954," p. 104, reported that the bronze pediform axe was inspired by the stone-shouldered axe, but this seems to be a misunderstanding. For a comparison of a Dong-son bronze pediform axe with a similar axe found in Indonesia, see Trinh Sinh, "Vai net ve giao luu van hoa a thoi Dai Kim Khi trong boi canh lich su Dong Nam A," p. 56. On the "originality" of the Dong-son pediform axe, see Diep Dinh Hoa, "Tinh doc dao cua nguoi Viet co qua viec khao sat nhung luoi rui Dong-son."

41. Nguyen Phuc Long, p. 65.

42. L. Bezacier, *Manuel d'archéologie d'Extrême-Orient*, p. 104, fig. 35; Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 57-62.

discussed by several scholars, but no consensus of opinion has yet emerged.⁴³ While traditionally it has been thought that bronze casting spread into Southeast Asia from China,⁴⁴ recent research suggests the opposite.⁴⁵ According to ancient Chinese texts, bronze drums were used by southern peoples as symbols of wealth and influence.⁴⁶ The most convincing explanation of their origin is that they evolved from the rice mortar, for "pestle music" was cited by early Chinese writers as an important part of social life among southern peoples,⁴⁷ and modern Vietnamese anthropologists have found a remarkable similarity between depictions of drumlike vessels being pounded, found in Dong-son art, and scenes of rice pestling observed among both Vietnamese peasants and upland minority peoples in Vietnam.⁴⁸

According to the oldest descriptions of ancient Vietnamese economy and society, which survive in quotations from nonextant Chinese sources dating from the third to the fifth centuries A.D.,⁴⁹ the economy of the Hong River plain before the arrival of Chinese administration included paddy fields that were irrigated by taking advantage of the change in the level of the rivers in accordance with the tides. These fields were called Lac fields. We have seen that *Lac* is also the name of the culture hero to whom Vietnamese tradition ascribes the introduction of agriculture. Japanese scholars have suggested that the name *Lac* derives from the Vietnamese word *lach* or *rach*, which means "ditch, canal, waterway."⁵⁰ The construction of drainage ditches was certainly the first step toward making the swampy plains of northern Vietnam suitable for agriculture. Canals and ditches with water gates would have been essential for using the tides to control water. The Lac fields, as described in the texts, were surely dependent on some kind of water-control system. We must nevertheless bear in mind that the Chinese texts cite the practice of tidal irrigation by way of explaining the name *Lac* and that Lac society may well have been based on a diversity of agricultural methods, of which tidal irrigation was but one.

Lac is the earliest recorded name for the Vietnamese people. We can appropriately refer to the society of the Dong-son period as Lac society, for

43. Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 77–80.

44. Chikamori, pp. 65–96.

45. Clark D. Neher, "Arca News," p. 186.

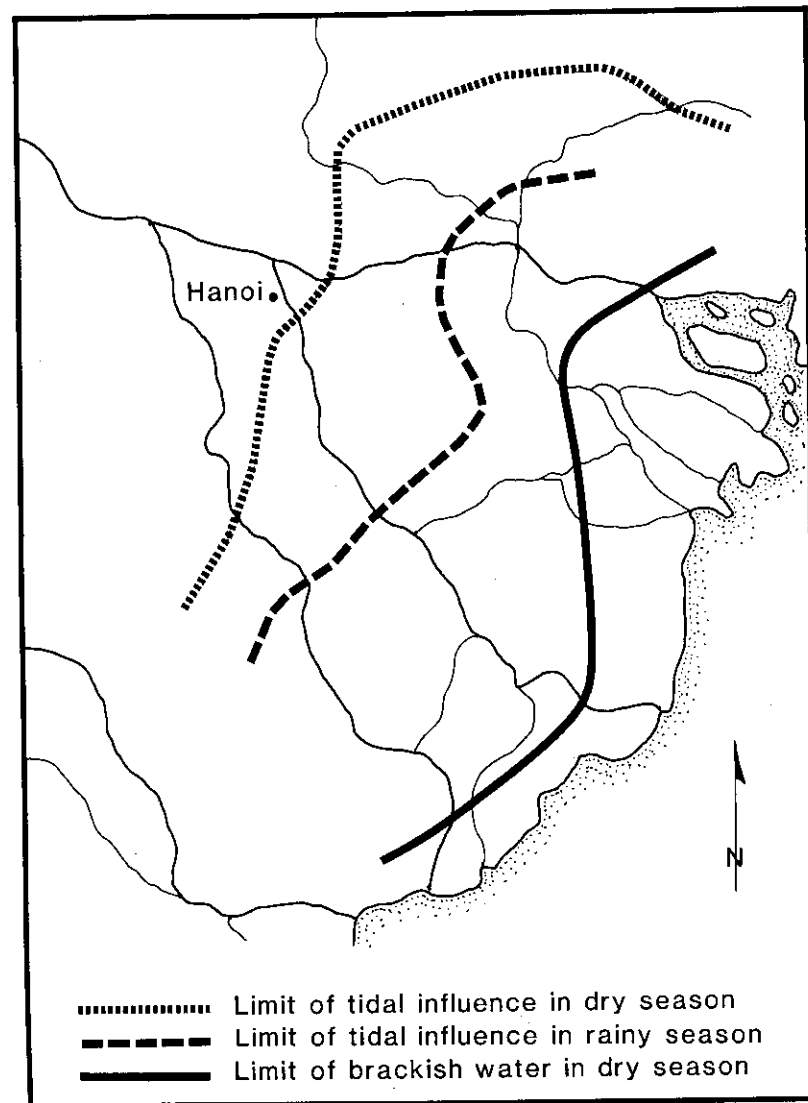
46. Matsumoto Nobuhiro, "Religious Thoughts of the Bronze Age Peoples of Indo-China," pp. 141–46. As late as the fourth century, Chinese merchants were illegally selling copper cash to aboriginal tribes in southern China, who melted it down to make bronze drums; see Yang Lien-sheng, "Notes on the Economic History of the Chin Dynasty," p. 181.

47. Matsumoto, "Religious Thoughts," pp. 152–53.

48. Nguyen Khac Tung, "Nghien cuu van hoa vat chat cac dan toc o nuoc ta," pp. 80–81.

49. Émile Gaspardone, "Champs Lo et Champs Hiong," pp. 467–68.

50. Gotō Kimpei, *Betonamu Kyūgoku Kōshō Shi*, p. 62.



Map 2. Tidal Influence in the Hong River Plain in Modern Times. Based on P. Gourou, *Les Paysans du Delta Tonkinois*, p. 78.

the one factor that united the legendary traditions of the Hung kings and the early historical period down to Eastern Han was the dominant position of the Lac lords as a regional ruling class.

The practice of tidal irrigation, as described in the texts that mention Lac fields,⁵¹ reveals a relatively advanced agricultural technology. Map 2 shows tidal influence in the Hong River plain in the 1930s. Two thousand and more years ago, we can assume that tidal influence penetrated even deeper than shown here, for alluvial deposits have extended the deltaic coast into the sea as much as ten miles during historical times.⁵² Tidal influence was greatest in the Tay-vu area, which lay outside the path of the Hong River.⁵³ A recent study of the ancient geography of this area suggests that this was where the Lac-field society was based.⁵⁴ Grains of the earliest strain of rice found in Asia, *Oryza fatua*, have been excavated from the oldest neolithic cultures in all parts of modern Vietnam.⁵⁵ Archeology has revealed that the ancient Vietnamese worked the land with hoes of polished stone; as early as the Go-mun archeological level, dating to the second half of the second millennium B.C., sickles and other reaping implements had bronze blades, and by the Dong-son period, hoes, plowshares, and scythe blades were made of bronze.⁵⁶ The skills of the farmers were sufficient to support a clearly defined ruling class.

The earliest surviving Chinese text to mention the Hung kings, from the fifth century A.D., explains the title *Hung* in terms of the Chinese word used to render it phonetically.⁵⁷ The Chinese word means "strong, virile," and the text develops this meaning by describing a fierce tropical climate and fertile soil. We can surmise that the Chinese explanation of the term *Hung* was prompted by the penetration into Chinese literature of oral lore from Vietnam about the legendary Hung kings.

According to tradition, the Hung kings were in direct control of the Me-linh area.⁵⁸ Beyond this area they were to some degree dependent upon

51. See Appendix B. Yumio Sakurai has recently conjectured that the description of Lac fields as tidal is simply a contrived elaboration to explain the name *Lac* and that ancient agriculture in Vietnam was based on agronomic expertise, not water-control engineering; this view deserves more study.

52. H. Maspero, "Le Protectorat general d'Annam sous le T'ang," pp. 674-80. See the map in Dinh Van Nhat, "Dat Me-linh," 190: 37.

53. Gotô, p. 68.

54. Dinh Van Nhat, "Vet tích của những ruộng Lạc đầu tiên quanh bờ Hồ Lang-bac và trên đất quê hương của Phu-dong Thiên Vương," pp. 24-37.

55. Ha Van Tan and Nguyen Duy Hinh, "Kinh tế thời Hùng Vương," pp. 145-46; Nguyen Duy Hinh, "Nghe trong lúa nước thời Hùng Vương," pp. 173-76; Chu Van Tan, "Cây lúa và nghe trong lúa xưa ở Việt Nam," pp. 43-51.

56. Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 71-73. On the Go-mun blades, see Nguyen Viet, "Buoc dau nghien cau phuong thuc gat lúa thời Hùng Vương."

57. Gaspardone, "Champs Lo," pp. 469-77.

58. Le Tuong and Nguyen Loc. On the Me-linh area in ancient times, see Dinh Van Nhat, "Dat Me-linh."

the cooperation of the Lac lords. The Hung kings seemingly protected the Lac lords against raids and invasions from the mountains, while the Lac lords supported the Hung kings with their manpower and wealth.

Henri Maspero, conjecturing from the upland society of northern Vietnam in his day, described this as a hierarchical society based on hereditary privilege, mutual obligation, and personal loyalty.⁵⁹ The people lived in villages or small kinship communities under the rule of Lac lords. The Lac lords enjoyed different levels of privilege and authority, from village headmen up to regional leaders who personally advised the Hung kings. The Hung kings maintained their prestige with a prosperous court life that facilitated peaceful relations with neighboring mountain peoples. Legendary traditions and excavated Dong-son tombs tend to confirm this picture of Lac society.

Women enjoyed a relatively high status in Lac society. As we shall presently see, when the Lac lords eventually rose up against increasing Chinese influence, they were led by women. According to Vietnamese tradition, the children of Lac Long Quan and Au Co were divided into two groups, with half following their father back to the sea and half going into the mountains with their mother. This division of the children into two groups appears to reflect a bilateral family system in which inheritance rights could be passed on through both maternal and paternal lines.⁶⁰

Lac society was relatively advanced and apparently self-contained. It had developed far from the expanding political centers of northern China and northern India and was equal to any threat arising from surrounding territories. This situation came to an end, however, with the arrival of Chinese power on the South China Sea.

Prologue to a New Age

In the last half of the third century B.C., the ancient Vietnamese entered a new era. For the first time in memory, their king fell before an invader, King An Duong, the first authentic historical figure in Vietnam. This was related to events occurring in the north, where the state of Ch'in was eliminating its rivals and treading the path of empire, scattering a host of disinherited princes ambitious for fresh thrones. To better understand this situation, it may be profitable to review its antecedents.

As is well known, the center of ancient Chinese civilization was in the valley of the Yellow River in what is now northern China. In the Yangtze River basin of central China, three major powers appeared among non-

59. H. Maspero, "Études d'histoire d'Annam," 18: 9.

60. Yamamoto, "Myths," p. 83. A Dong-son bronze drum unearthed in Yün-nan depicts a "chieftainess enthroned," according to Richard Pearson, "Dong-son and Its Origins," p. 28.

Chinese populations with ruling classes in the process of adopting Chinese culture. The state of Shu was located in Ssu-ch'uan, a fertile valley surrounded by mountains, where the Yangtze emerges from the highlands. The state of Ch'u lay along the central Yangtze, a land of lakes and plains. The state of Yüeh occupied the coast, where the Yangtze enters the sea. Shu was separated from the south by the rugged terrain of Kuei-chou, though the Yangtze led up to the Yün-nan Plateau, with routes going in all directions from there. Ch'u was by far the largest and most important of these semi-Chinese states; it was separated from the Hsi River valley of southern China by a chain of mountains pierced by five famous passes. Yüeh was in certain respects under the influence of Ch'u, yet it benefited from the many contacts made possible by its location on the sea. South of Yüeh lay the coastal enclaves of Wen-chou (Yung-chia), in southern Che-chiang, and Fuchien; these were separated from the Yangtze and Hsi River systems by mountains.

Little is known of southern China before the third century B.C. The Hsi River valley had important trading connections both with the state of Ch'u to the north and with seaborne peoples. Trade was well established between the coasts of the South China Sea and northern China as early as the second millennium B.C.⁶¹ These commercial contacts became an increasingly important part of the Chinese economy during the Chou dynastic period (1122–255 B.C.).⁶² Evidence suggests that Malayo-Polynesian peoples carried cinnamon by sea from southern China to East Africa, whence it found its way to the Mediterranean as early as the end of the second millennium B.C.;⁶³ when Ch'in eventually entered southern China, one of the three prefectures originally established there was named Kuei-lin, "Cinnamon Forest," in modern Kuang-hsi. The political situation undoubtedly revolved around the mouth of the Hsi River, where in modern times Canton, Hong Kong, and Macao continue to reflect an environment comprising both continental and seaborne influences. Five hundred miles to the southwest, the Hong River plain was separated from the expanding Chinese world by distance and terrain. In the last half of the fourth century B.C., this situation began to change with the destruction of two of the three Yangtze states.

In 333 B.C., Ch'u conquered Yüeh. Eighteen years later, the northern state of Ch'in conquered Shu. While a portion of the Shu ruling class eventually took refuge in Ch'u, the Yüeh ruling class scattered southward along the coast, where it established many small kingdoms and principalities that became known to the Chinese as the "Hundred Yüeh."⁶⁴

61. Charles O. Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, p. 65.

62. Cho-yun Hsu, *Ancient China in Transition*, p. 120.

63. J. Innes Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, pp. 42–47 and 153–79.

64. Leonard Arousseau, "Le Premier Conquête chinoise des pays annamites," pp. 181 and 254, n. 3; Jao Tsung-i, "Wu Yüeh wen-hua," p. 625.

Four of these realms are known to history. The Chinese called the largest of them Nan Yüeh, "Southern Yüeh"; it was centered on the mouth of the Hsi River in the vicinity of modern Canton.⁶⁵ Second in size was Min Yüeh in Fu-chien.⁶⁶ Eastern Ou, also called Yüeh of the Eastern Sea, was located in southern Che-chiang at modern Wen-chou (Yung-chia).⁶⁷ Western Ou lay in the upper basin of the Hsi River in modern Kuang-hsi.⁶⁸

Thus, after 333 B.C., the inhabitants of southeastern China fell under the rule of people bearing the name and the heritage of the state of Yüeh. Nan Yüeh was the center of this new order; Min Yüeh was of secondary importance. These were flanked by Eastern and Western Ou. The Ou realms are of particular interest, for, in the Hong River plain, the kingdom of Van-lang was superseded by the kingdom of Au Lac, and *Au* is simply the Vietnamese pronunciation of *Ou*.

The relationship between Eastern and Western Ou is not revealed in historical records, yet the names imply a common frame of reference.⁶⁹ This was apparently the world of the "Hundred Yüeh" with Nan Yüeh at its center; such, at least, was the view of later Chinese historians.⁷⁰ However, this does not explain the significance of the name *Ou* within the Yüeh realm.

The name appears to have originated in southern Che-chiang, where the capital of Eastern Ou was located on the banks of a river that has carried the name *Ou* into modern times.⁷¹ This area was an early center of the Yüeh culture that had contributed to the political state of Yüeh, and it had older and firmer ties with the traditions of that now defunct kingdom than did the larger centers of Min Yüeh and Nan Yüeh further south. Many small principalities that sprang up beyond the reach of the two major centers apparently chose to associate themselves with the venerable traditions of the Ou in order to increase their prestige with the more powerful kingdoms. The name *Ou* was recorded in reference to peoples on Hai-nan Island;⁷² there may have been other instances of which knowledge has not been preserved.

65. Arousseau, p. 259.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 257–59.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 255–57.

68. Jao Tsung-i, "Wu Yüeh," p. 625. The sole mention of Western Ou in the sources occurs in connection with events that could only have taken place in what is now Kuang-hsi between 219 and 214 B.C. (see the passage from the *Huai nan tzu* in Arousseau, p. 172). Confusion of the kingdom of Western Ou with the kingdom of Western Au Lac, which appeared in the year 180 B.C. (see the passage from the *Shih chi* in Arousseau, p. 196) and was located in northern Vietnam, is a common error in the secondary literature (Arousseau, pp. 176, 280; Sugimoto Naojirō, *Tōnan Ajiaishi Kenkyū*, 1: 42; Wang Gung-wu, "The Nan-hai Trade," pp. 8–10; C. Ch'en, "An Yō Ō no Shutsuji ni tsuite," p. 9). See Morohashi Tetsuji, *Dai Kanwa Jiten*, 10: 282.

69. C. Ch'en, "An Yō Ō," p. 11; Jao Tsung-i, "Wu Yüeh," p. 625.

70. Chang Shou-chieh's eighth-century commentary on the *Shih chi*; see Arousseau, p. 248.

71. Arousseau, p. 255.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 248, n. 6, and 255.

If the name *Ou* spread among the smaller and more isolated centers of the "Hundred Yüeh" in this way, it is conceivable that *Ou* signified a particular style of political leadership that had evolved along the frontier of the Yüeh realm. We might conjecture that *Ou* held the meaning of "borderland," and that the lord of Western *Ou* who resisted Ch'in's invasion of what is modern Kuang-hsi in 219 B.C. was a kind of march lord associated with Nan Yüeh.⁷³

The idea that the origin of the Vietnamese people lay in the arrival of migrating Yüeh people during the third century B.C.⁷⁴ is not supported by the sources.⁷⁵ During the course of the third century B.C., the peoples of what is now southeastern China became known to the Chinese as the "Yüeh," but this does not mean that the local peoples were overwhelmed by a migration from the old state of Yüeh. Geopolitical obstacles made such an event improbable. There were formidable mountains and rivers to be crossed; this was not a natural migration route as were, for example, the steppes of Inner Asia. The lowland indigenous peoples were not nomads organized in migratory tribes capable of maneuvering around newcomers; in the plains, settled peoples would have forced outsiders to compromise their identity.

From what is known of comparable migrations in historical times, we can assume that, when Yüeh was conquered by Ch'u in 333 B.C., most of the Yüeh population remained where it was, and only the ruling class with its servants and retainers fled south, perhaps as bands of armed fugitives rather than as a conquering army. Such small, predatory groups were able to impose their rule and name over the southern peoples because they were experienced in war and possessed prestigious symbols of authority related to the political traditions of northern China. A similar process is documented during the seventh century A.D. in the Balkan Peninsula, a region of mountains and valleys comparable to southeastern China, when Iranian Serb and Croat princes with personal armies asserted their authority over the indigenous Slavic peoples, drawing on the prestige of Byzantium to legitimize their rule.⁷⁶

The concept of migrations in ancient times has been reevaluated in recent years, and it is increasingly clear that many so-called migrations involved a relatively small group of ruling-class people, whose mastery of

73. According to the passage from the *Huai nan tzu* in Arousseau, p. 172, the Chinese killed the lord of Western *Ou* after Ch'in armies dug a canal through the mountains to assure supplies during their penetration of the Yüeh lands; this was the Hsing-an Canal in the westernmost of the five traditional passes into the south, which entered directly into Kuang-hsi (Arousseau, p. 175, n. 3; P. A. Lapique, "Note sur le canal de Hing-ngan," pp. 425-28).

74. Arousseau, pp. 245-64.

75. See Appendix E.

76. Francis Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 268-304.

political and military affairs was felt throughout the linguistic and cultural scene. The most significant evidence of this comes from linguistic studies that suggest the current distribution of languages in mainland Southeast Asia resulted not from mass migrations but from the response of indigenous peoples, governed by political expediency, to small but influential groups of upper-class immigrants. A recent investigator envisages the spread of Thai into Southeast Asia as the result of "a migration into northern Thailand consisting only of a royal court and small standing army."⁷⁷

This brings to mind the arrival of King An Duong with his army of thirty thousand that, according to historical sources, brought the line of the Hung kings to an end late in the third century B.C.⁷⁸ As we will presently see, this was the opening wedge for "Yüeh" influence in the Hong River plain. But there is no evidence that the rise of King An Duong left any mark on the Vietnamese language, and it is clear that there was no major demographic change. Recent studies in physical anthropology reveal a remarkable continuity of racial evolution in northern Vietnam from earliest prehistoric times to the present. A marked racial connectedness from one era to another rules out any large-scale, sudden migration of sufficient magnitude to account for the origin of a people.⁷⁹

King An Duong

In 222 B.C., Ch'in conquered Ch'u, and in the following year, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, the "First Emperor of Ch'in," ordered half a million soldiers into the Yüeh lands. The earliest surviving record of the campaign was written less than a century after it occurred and is worth quoting:

Ch'in Shih Huang Ti was interested in the rhinoceros horn, the elephant tusks, the kingfisher plumes, and the pearls of the land of Yüeh; he therefore sent Commissioner T'u Sui at the head of five hundred thousand men divided into five armies. . . . For three years the sword and the crossbow were in constant readiness. Superintendent Lu was sent; there was no means of assuring the transport of supplies so he employed soldiers to dig a canal for sending grain, thereby making it possible to wage war on the people of Yüeh. The lord of Western *Ou*, I Hsü Sung, was killed; consequently, the Yüeh people entered the wilderness and lived there with the animals; none consented to be a slave of Ch'in; choosing from among themselves men of valor, they made them their leaders and attacked the Ch'in by night, inflicting on them a great defeat and killing Commissioner T'u Sui; the dead and wounded were many. After this,

77. D. T. Bayard, "Comment," pp. 279-80.

78. Gaspardone, "Champs Lo," p. 473.

79. Nguyen Duy, p. 23.

the emperor deported convicts to hold the garrisons against the Yüeh people.⁸⁰

The five armies marched south in 221 B.C. One army sufficed to subdue Eastern Ou and Min Yüeh; two armies marched against Nan Yüeh. The remaining two armies entered Kuang-hsi, where Superintendent Lu was sent to solve the problem of supply. The canal he built was the Hsing-an Canal through the westernmost of the five passes into the south; it linked the river system of the Yangtze with that of the Hsi.⁸¹

Ch'in attacked Western Ou after the completion of the canal, in 219 B.C., and gained initial success with the death of I Hsü Sung, lord of Western Ou. But there followed several years of warfare, culminating in a serious defeat and the death of T'u Sui, the Ch'in commander. These events were remembered by the Chinese as follows:

The Yüeh people fled into the depths of the mountains and forests, and it was not possible to fight them. The soldiers were kept in garrisons to watch over abandoned territories. This went on for a long time, and the soldiers grew weary. Then the Yüeh came out and attacked; the Ch'in soldiers suffered a great defeat. Subsequently, convicts were sent to hold the garrisons against the Yüeh.⁸²

The Ch'in advance thus bogged down in the mountains and forests of Kuang-hsi. It was in 214 B.C. that convicts were deported to hold the garrisons; with them went "all the inveterate vagabonds, the lazy, and shopkeepers" to settle in the occupied lands.⁸³ Commissioner Chao T'o was sent to impose a military occupation;⁸⁴ he requested that thirty thousand maidens and widows be sent south as wives for his men.⁸⁵

In the next few years, the Chinese and the Yüeh bitterly contended for the south. Officially, the Chinese divided the Yüeh lands into prefectures, and it is recorded that "the princes of the Hundred Yüeh, their heads bowed and with ropes about their necks, delivered their fates to the subordinate Ch'in officials."⁸⁶ These words were probably too optimistic, for a Chinese historian writing about a century later affirmed that the Ch'in

remained at loggerheads with the Yüeh. Soldiers were stationed at worthless locations; having advanced, they were unable to retreat. During more than

80. This passage is from the *Huai nan tzu* of Liu An, a grandson of the founder of the Han dynasty, who died in 123 B.C. See Arousseau, pp. 169-72. All translations in this book are mine.

81. Lapique, pp. 425-28.

82. From the *Huai nan tzu*; see Arousseau, p. 206.

83. From the *Shih chi*; see Arousseau, p. 180.

84. Ibid.; see Arousseau, p. 207.

85. Ibid.; see Arousseau, p. 201.

86. Ibid.; see Arousseau, p. 181.

ten years, the men carried the sword while the women saw to provisions. Along the routes could be seen those who were unable to endure their suffering and hanged themselves from the trees. Then, it happened that the Emperor of Ch'in died and the empire fell prey to great rebellions.⁸⁷

Ch'in Shih Huang Ti died in 210 B.C. His imperial ambitions had fallen on the Yüeh lands like an angry beast, sending a wave of violence that shattered the prehistoric solitude of the ancient Vietnamese.

The last of the Hung kings was dethroned by a man who imposed his authority over the Lac lords, founded the kingdom of Au Lac, and took the title King An Duong. King An Duong's antecedents are cloudy; the only clue provided by historical records is that his family name was Thuc, which is Vietnamese for Shu, and his personal name was Phan.

Who Thuc Phan was and where he came from are major problems in early Vietnamese history.⁸⁸ His family name suggests that he was related to the old ruling class of the state of Shu in Ssu-ch'uan; this was the traditional view of Chinese and Vietnamese historians. But even if this were the case, Ssu-ch'uan had been under Ch'in control for a century, and Thuc Phan's family must have been established in some other place during this time.

An oral tradition, but recently recorded, links the Thuc family with the strategic valley of Cao-bang, where the Hsi River system of southern China communicates with the Hong River plain.⁸⁹ According to this account, which is of doubtful authenticity, at the end of the time of the Hung kings, the Thuc family ruled over a kingdom named Nam Cuong, meaning "Southern Border," comprising Cao-bang and adjacent portions of Kuang-hsi to the north. When his father died, Thuc Phan was still a boy;

87. Ibid.; see Arousseau, p. 186.

88. King An Duong is identified in Chinese sources as "Son of the King of Shu" (*Chiao chou wai yu chi* in Arousseau, p. 211, and *Kuang chou chi* in Arousseau, p. 213); Vietnamese sources agree, adding the detail of his personal name Phan (*VDULT*, 36; *LNCQ*, 22; *TT*, 1, 7b; *VSL*, 1, 1a). This appears to link him with the state of Shu in Ssu-ch'uan, which was conquered by Ch'in in 315 B.C. Yet nearly a century had elapsed between 315 B.C. and the time of King An Duong. Dao Duy Anh has made the most strenuous attempt to associate King An Duong with the defunct state of Shu; his theory has been reviewed by C. Ch'en, "An yō Ō," p. 2, who faulted it for "excessive conjecturing." Dao Duy Anh's idea is that remnants of the Shu ruling class found refuge first in Ch'u and then, after Ch'u's demise, with a king in Yün-nan; from there, King An Duong presumably followed the Hong River down to the sea. The connection with Yün-nan seems to be strengthened by a theory put forward by Nguyen Linh, who cited a reference in the *Hou Han shu* to the land of "Western Shu" in Yün-nan. Perhaps the strongest objection to this line of reasoning has been made by Nguyen Duy Hinh, who argued that, in ancient times, Yün-nan was the route to India, not China, and King An Duong's kingdom of Au Lac was oriented toward the north (Tran Quoc Vuong and Do Van Ninh, "Ve An Duong Vuong," p. 373).

89. The source of this tradition is Le Dinh Su, an inhabitant of Cao-bang of Thai ancestry born in 1916 (Pham Nhu Ho and Do Dinh Truat, "Vai y kien quanhuyen thuyet 'Cao Chua Cheng Vua,'" pp. 395, 396).

however, his unusual cleverness enabled him to retain his father's throne. As Nam Cuong grew in strength, Van-lang became weak; subsequently, Thuc Phan conquered Van-lang and founded the kingdom of Au Lac.

That the Thuc family was established on the frontier of Van-lang for several generations is supported by a detail in the legend of the battle between the Mountain Spirit and the Water Spirit as recorded in a fourteenth-century quotation from a ninth-century source.⁹⁰ According to this source, a forebear of Thuc Phan had asked to marry a Hung princess; although the Hung king was willing, the Lac lords refused, saying, "He only intends to spy on our land." Another fourteenth-century source cites this episode to explain that Thuc Phan later conquered Van-lang to gain revenge for his rebuffed ancestor.⁹¹ A poem written about the Me-linh area by a fourteenth-century Vietnamese official contains the line: "Ah! Van-lang's radiance, shining upon Thuc's mountains and rivers."⁹² This suggests a remembrance of the Thuc family as ancient neighbors of the Vietnamese realm.

That the Thuc family ruled a kingdom named Nam Cuong is supported by circumstantial evidence. Geographically, Cao-bang and neighboring areas comprised the natural "southern border" of the Western Ou (Kuang-hsi) realm. As a family, the Thuc may have traced their lineage back to the state of Shu in Ssu-ch'uan, but the political realities of their time and place surely forced upon them some association with the Ou Yüeh lords of Kuang-hsi.

When Ch'in armies entered Kuang-hsi, killed the lord of Western Ou, and sent the people fleeing into the wilds, the Thuc domain was a natural place of refuge. As the Ch'in occupation progressed, the Thuc family probably attracted dispossessed Ou lords anxious to recoup their fortunes, and through their influence the Thuc grew strong and bellicose toward their southern neighbor in the fertile Hong River plain. The ensuing conquest produced a fusion of the invading Ou (Au) lords and the resident Lac lords, thereby forming the kingdom of Au Lac.⁹³

Our knowledge of the kingdom of Au Lac is a mixture of legend and history. King An Duong is the first figure in Vietnamese history documen-

90. *VDULT*, 36.

91. *LNCQ*, 22.

92. O. W. Wolters, "Assertions of Cultural Well-Being in Fourteenth-Century Vietnam," 11: 74.

93. This is the general interpretation suggested by Tran Quoc Vuong and Do Van Ninh, p. 370. C. Ch'en, "An Yō Ō," p. 11, also points in this direction. The *VSL*, 1, la, says that Thuc Phan "expelled and replaced" the Hung king at the end of the Chou dynasty; this is apparently what prompted the *TT*, 1, 6a, to assign this event to the year 257 B.C., one year before the abdication of the last Chou king.

ted by reliable sources,⁹⁴ yet most of what we know about his reign has survived in legendary form. Me-linh remained a center of Lac power. The new Au overlords established their headquarters in Tay-vu, where they built a large citadel, known to history as Co-loa or Co-loa Thanh, "Old Snail City"; this name comes from the fact that the walls were laid out in concentric rings reminiscent of a snail shell. The archeological remains at Co-loa reflect heavy northern influence in architecture, yet the pottery and the large stores of bronze arrowheads are simply developments of local industries.⁹⁵ The events associated with the building of Co-loa have been remembered in the legend of the golden turtle.⁹⁶

According to this legend, construction of the citadel was stalled because each day's work was mysteriously undone during the night by the spirits of the land; these spirits were assisting the son of the previous king to gain revenge for the loss of his inheritance. The local spirits were led by a thousand-year-old white chicken perched on nearby Mount Tam-dao. A golden turtle appeared, subdued the white chicken, and remained with King An Duong until the citadel was completed. When he departed, he gave one of his claws to be used as the trigger of the king's crossbow, with the assurance that with it he could destroy any foe. King An Duong commissioned a man named Cao Lo to construct the crossbow and christened it "Saintly Crossbow of the Supernaturally Luminous Golden Claw."

The crossbow, along with the word for it, seems to have been introduced into China from Austroasiatic peoples in the south during the third or fourth century B.C.⁹⁷ This weapon quickly became part of the Chinese arsenal; its trigger mechanism was capable of withstanding high pressure and of releasing an arrow with more force than any other type of bow.⁹⁸ Two bronze trigger mechanisms have been excavated in Vietnam; most mechanisms were probably made of bamboo.⁹⁹ The turtle claw used as a trigger mechanism indicates the military nature of King An Duong's conquest and suggests that his rule was based on force or the threat of force.

94. The earliest surviving source for King An Duong is the Chin dynasty *Kuang chou chi*. C. Ch'en, "An Yō Ō," p. 7; Auroousseau, p. 213; Gaspardone, "Champs Lo," p. 473.

95. Nguyen Duy Chiem, "Tim dau vet cua An Duong Vuong tren dat Co-loa," pp. 387-88, and Do Van Ninh, "Ve mot vai khia canh cua van hoa vat chat thoi ky An Duong Vuong," pp. 389-94. One problem in the archeology of Co-loa is that it was rebuilt in Later Han times; this, along with subsequent renovations, has clouded evidence from the earliest levels (Tran Quoc Vuong and Do Van Ninh, pp. 375-79; Truong Hoang Chau, "Phat bieu them ve nien dai Co-loa," pp. 383-86).

96. *LNCQ*, 22-24.

97. Norman and Tsu-lin Mei, pp. 293-94.

98. Homer Dubs, "A Military Contact between Chinese and Romans in 36 B.C.," pp. 70-71.

99. Bezacier, *Manuel*, p. 128; Nguyen Phuc Long, p. 62.

The building of Co-loa and the legend of the golden turtle are reminiscent of the building of Ch'eng-tu in Ssu-ch'uan by Ch'in after the conquest of Shu, a century earlier.¹⁰⁰ Efforts to rule from Ch'eng-tu during the third century were also remembered in connection with the power of water spirits.¹⁰¹

The underlying theme of King An Duong's legend is the test of strength between the white chicken and the golden turtle. The chicken is an indigenous symbol of great antiquity. A bronze statue of a chicken dating from the turn of the first millennium B.C. was excavated in Me-ling.¹⁰² On the other hand, the turtle is a symbol of the Chinese god of war, Chen Wu.¹⁰³ These totemic associations reflect shifting political fortunes. In a separate legend from this period, King An Duong is depicted as a golden chicken spirit and the Lac lords as white monkey spirits.¹⁰⁴ Having subdued the white chicken with the assistance of the golden turtle, King An Duong is here portrayed as having appropriated the chicken spirit to himself, changing its color to that of the turtle; the color white remained symbolic of indigenous power, although it had become descriptive of monkeys.

The perspective of the golden turtle legend belongs to the conqueror King An Duong; it is about the building of Co-loa and the suppression of forces bent on preventing its construction. The golden turtle was borrowed from the imperial juggernaut to the north as a symbol of military supremacy. Yet, as this legend has been handed down, the golden turtle appears to be an incarnation of Lac Long Quan, with its home in the waters of the Hong River plain.¹⁰⁵ This represents the perspective of the Lac lords as they fitted the new political order into older themes of their mythology. Similarly, the name *Au Co* was probably introduced into Lac mythology at this time to symbolize the political union of Au and Lac as the marriage of Au Co, who arrived with a northern intruder, and Lac Long Quan, the local culture hero. The original Au Co, mother of the Hung kings, may perhaps more correctly be associated with Ngu Co, the celestial deer in the version of the myth that has been passed down by the Muong, upland cousins of the Vietnamese.¹⁰⁶

The legend of Ly Ong Trong is the only indication of contact

100. Cheng Te-k'un, *Archaeological Studies in Szechuan*, p. 9.

101. HYKC, 3, 4-6.

102. Uy Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi Viet Nam, *Lich su Viet Nam*, 1: 43; Nguyen Phuc Long, figs. 127, 148; Trinh Sinh, p. 56. Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China*, p. 423, reported an ancient cult of a divine chicken that lived in a cave in southern Kuang-hsi.

103. Tran Quoc Vuong, "Tu tu duy than thoai," p. 404, and Gustave Dumoutier, *Le Grand Buddha de Hanoi*.

104. VDULT, 29.

105. Yamamoto, "Myths," p. 90.

106. Nguyen Linh and Hoang Xuan Chinh, p. 103, and Jean Cuisinier, *Les Muong*, p. xii.

between King An Duong and the Ch'in empire. Ly Ong Trong was a Vietnamese giant supposedly sent as tribute from King An Duong to Ch'in Shih Huang Ti; after a distinguished career fighting the Hsiung-nu on the empire's northern frontier, he returned to his native village and died there. However, Ly Ong Trong's cult was established by a ninth-century Chinese governor in Vietnam, so it probably had little to do with events in the time of King An Duong.¹⁰⁷

The career of King An Duong reflects an era of transition. He came from the north and built a great citadel. Although he subdued the Lac lords, he did not disinherit them. He was absorbed into the legendary traditions of the people he had conquered. Eventually, he fell prey to stronger forces coming from the north.

Chao T'o

In the brief moment of Ch'in hegemony, the kings of Eastern Ou and Min Yüeh were reduced to vassalage. But after the death of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti and the dissolution of his dynasty, they regained a measure of independence under Han suzerainty. Further south, affairs evolved differently.

When Ch'in Shih Huang Ti died and the empire collapsed, the Chinese sent to occupy the Yüeh lands in the Hsi River basin were stranded in hostile territory. In the words of an ancient writer, they "suffered insupportable misfortunes" and their leaders "doubted among themselves."¹⁰⁸

According to surviving records, when the governor at Canton was on his deathbed, he summoned the only man he trusted, Commissioner Chao T'o. He cautioned Chao T'o against getting involved in the civil wars taking place in the north, and stressed the remoteness of Canton, saying, "With the many Chinese people here, one has the means to become an independent sovereign and to found a kingdom." After the governor's death, Chao T'o assumed command. He sealed the mountain passes leading north and eliminated all officials not personally loyal to him. He gained control of the entire Hsi River basin and proclaimed himself King of Nan Yüeh.¹⁰⁹

Chao T'o's success rested not only on his ability to rally the Chinese immigrants in the south, but also on his popularity among the non-Chinese

107. The VDULT, 15-16, account of Ly Ong Trong does not mention King An Duong; it only cites an unnamed local king, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, and two Chinese governors who later patronized the giant's cult. The LNCQ, 18-19, cites both a Hung king and King An Duong; this version is more detailed than the VDULT.

108. From the *Shih chi*; see Aurousseau, p. 185.

109. Ibid.; see Aurousseau, p. 188. The same information is found in abbreviated form in VSL, 1, 1b, and TT, 1, 9b.

population. In 196 B.C., an envoy of the newly established Han Empire arrived with a seal recognizing Chao T'o as King of Nan Yüeh;¹¹⁰ Chao T'o received the envoy according to the manner of the local people, "hair in chignon and squatting." The envoy accused Chao T'o of forgetting his true ancestry and of daring to stand apart from the empire. Chao T'o excused himself by saying that after so many years of living in the south he no longer remembered the proper usages of the north.¹¹¹

In fact, Chao T'o won the loyalty of the local peoples of the south by his resistance to Han. This was demonstrated in 185 B.C. when Empress Lü of Han grew fearful of Chao T'o's power and forbade the sale of iron, gold, weapons, horses, and cattle to Nan Yüeh. Chao T'o responded by seizing two Han provinces in what is now Hu-nan. He furthermore took the title of emperor, thereby ending the recognition of Han suzerainty implicit in his acceptance of the royal seal in 196 B.C. Empress Lü sent an army against him, but it was ravaged by a cholera epidemic. When she died in 180 B.C., the soldiers sent against Nan Yüeh were recalled. It is recorded that "with his military power, Chao T'o inspired fear on the frontier; with rich presents, he gained Min Yüeh and Au Lac as vassals."¹¹²

Au Lac and Min Yüeh temporarily acknowledged the suzerainty of Nan Yüeh, but rather than meaning that Nan Yüeh had any real control over them, this simply represented anti-Han solidarity. In 179 B.C., when peaceful relations with Han were restored, Nan Yüeh's influence over Au Lac and Min Yüeh lapsed. Both Nan Yüeh and Min Yüeh again recognized Han suzerainty; thus, their mutual relations were under the watchful eye of Han. However, if Nan Yüeh chose to enforce its suzerainty over Au Lac, there would be no response from the north, for Au Lac lay beyond Han influence. This was apparently what prompted Chao T'o to march his armies against King An Duong. Having mobilized his forces for war with Han and having gained success without serious battle, Chao T'o found the conquest of Au Lac both tempting and feasible.¹¹³

110. From the *Shih chi*; see Arousseau, p. 202.

111. Ibid. See Arousseau, p. 184; Gustave Dumoutier, "Étude historique sur Trieu-vo-de (Tchou-wou-ti) et sa dynastie," pp. 417-18; *TT*, 2, 1a-2b.

112. From the *Shih chi*; see Arousseau, p. 196. Dumoutier, "Trieu-vo-de," pp. 414, 420-21, 424; *CL*, 82-83; *TT*, 2, 3a-b. According to an eighth-century commentator, Au Lac was called Western Au Lac in the *Shih chi* because it was west of Nan Yüeh (Arousseau, p. 248.)

113. Dumoutier, "Trieu-vo-de," pp. 421-22; *TT*, 2, 3b-6a; *CL*, 40, 82-83. If the conquest of Au Lac by Nan Yüeh took place prior to 180 B.C., according to the dating of *TT*, 1, 8b-10b, and the interpretation of Arousseau, pp. 232-44, then Nan Yüeh would not have gained the vassalage of Au Lac in 180 B.C. by means of "rich gifts" unless we theorize that sometime after the conquest and before 180 B.C. Au Lac regained its independence, for which there is no evidence. We know that the dating of the *TT* for this early period is arbitrary and often in error (Cao Huy Giu and Dao Duy Anh, *Dai Viet su ky toan thu*, p. 317, n. 9). Arousseau, pp. 196-99, accepted the *TT* date only by rejecting the *Shih chi* date; this is

The details of the campaign are not authentically recorded.¹¹⁴ However, they inspired a legend whose theme is the transfer of the turtle-claw-triggered crossbow from King An Duong to Chao T'o. According to this legend, possession of the crossbow conferred the right and power to rule. In the words of Cao Lo, the man who constructed it, "He who is able to hold this crossbow rules the realm; he who is not able to hold this crossbow will perish."¹¹⁵

Unsuccessful on the battlefield against the supernatural crossbow, Chao T'o asked for a truce and sent his son Shih Chiang to the court of his foe; Shih Chiang won the confidence of King An Duong and the heart of An Duong's daughter My Chau. Gaining entrance to the armory with the aid of My Chau, Shih Chiang stole the turtle claw, rendering the crossbow useless. Then he returned to his father. Chao T'o renewed hostilities and was victorious. King An Duong fled to the sea, where he was greeted by the golden turtle, who guided him into the watery realm.¹¹⁶

The practical effect of this legend was to legitimize Chao T'o's rule. The ancient Vietnamese entered the world of kingdoms and empires with the reign of King An Duong. Before this time, in the view of one ancient Chinese writer, the Vietnamese lived "beyond the hellish wilderness."¹¹⁷ Now the long prehistoric era of relative isolation was over; the Chinese were at the door. The legend of the turtle claw made into a magic crossbow as a symbol of political ascendancy was a way to grasp conceptually a shifting world.

Chao T'o divided the conquered lands of Au Lac into the two

conceivable only in the context of his overall interpretation of the period, about which see H. Maspero, "Bulletin critique." If the absorption of Au Lac by Nan Yüeh did not involve armed conflict but was instead effected peacefully, according to the interpretation of H. Maspero, "Bulletin," p. 392, then we must ignore the *Kuang chou chi* ("Chao T'o, King of Nan Yüeh, attacked and vanquished King An Duong"; Arousseau, p. 213, and Gaspardone, "Champs Lo," p. 473) and the *Chin Tai K'ang ti chi* ("the King of Nan Yüeh attacked [King An Duong]"; Jao Tsung-i, "An Yō Ō," p. 38).

114. The *TT*, 1, 8b-10b, account, derived from *LNCQ*, 23-24, appears to draw on the details of Ma Yüan's expedition in A.D. 42 (Gaspardone, "Champs Lo," p. 466, n. 1a), as well as on the events of the sixth century, when the Hong River plain was divided by agreement between two local lords (Durand, "La Dynastie," pp. 444, 451). By dating this narrative to 210-8 B.C. the *TT* wished to associate the incorporation of Au Lac into Nan Yüeh with the initial formation of the kingdom of Nan Yüeh; this served the traditional perspective of official Vietnamese historiography, which emphasized Nan Yüeh as the first national kingdom to successfully resist northern pressure..

115. This quotation is from the *Chiao chou wai yu chi*, as cited in *SCC*, 37, 7a. *CL*, 25, contains an abbreviated version of the quotation. The only other source in which this quotation appears is the *Chin Liu hsin ch'i Chiao chou chi* (Jao Tsung-i, "An Yō Ō," p. 38).

116. See Appendix F.

117. *SCC*, 37, 4a.

prefectures Giao-chi and Cuu-chan. Giao-chi was located in the Hong River plain, and Cuu-chan lay in the smaller plain of the Ma River to the south. The name *Giao-chi* was plucked from the *Li chi* (Records of Rituals), an early Chinese text, where it appears as a term used to describe the communal sleeping habits of "southern barbarians." *Giao-chi* means "intertwined feet" and refers to the custom of sleeping in groups with each person's head extending outward, while all feet came together in the center.¹¹⁸

This does not mean that the ancient Vietnamese practiced such a custom, for the term appears under the Cheng family in the *Li chi*, and the Cheng ruled in Ho-nan from 774 to 500 B.C. In that time and place the "southern barbarians" would have been the people in the Yangtze basin or, at furthest, the Hsi basin, but not in a place so remote as the Hong basin. Nevertheless, as the *Li chi* came to be included among the classics of Chinese literature, its phraseology gained a special authority that was indiscriminately applied by later generations to conditions in their day.

The origin of the name *Cuu-chan* is more obscure, for no literary precedent survives. It can be translated as "the nine verities" and probably derived from some philosophical term.

Thus, these two names originally derived from the intellectual heritage of Chinese civilization. Yet, as fixtures of Vietnamese political geography for centuries after, they assumed new, more localized meanings and gave rise to newer usages. For example, in the sixteenth century, *Giao-chi* was rendered *Cochin* in the Portuguese tongue, thereby producing the term *Cochinchina*.

Chao T'o sent two legates to oversee his Vietnamese prefectures.¹¹⁹ The traditional Lac order remained intact, for a royal court continued to exist at Co-loa, under which the Lac lords ruled as before, only now as vassals of Nan Yüeh; the legates appear to have presided over developing commercial centers that were the focus of Chinese interest.¹²⁰

For the first time in their history, the Vietnamese people were part of a kingdom encompassing all of southern China. This kingdom was stamped with the personality of its founder Chao T'o; it is recorded that Chao T'o ruled for more than seventy years and died in 136 B.C. at the exceedingly ripe age of one hundred and twenty-one years. He was succeeded by a seventy-year-old grandson named Hu.¹²¹

Chao T'o was remembered by later Vietnamese historians as a king

118. *LC*, 4, 10b; Asami Shōzō, "Kōshi to iu Koshō," pp. 64-67.

119. From the *Chiao chou wai yu chi* in *SCC*, 37, 4a, and the *Kuang chou chi*; see Arousseau, p. 213.

120. Gotō, pp. 59-60; Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and Expansion in Han China*, pp. 7-8.

121. Dumoutier, "Tricu-vo-de," p. 427; *VSL*, 1, 2a; *TT*, 2, 7b-8a, 8b-9a.

who defended their lands against Chinese aggression.¹²² His spirit cult was eventually honored in many parts of northern Vietnam.¹²³ His kingdom of Nan Yüeh stimulated imaginations for centuries. The memory of Nan Yüeh provided inspiration to local rebels, who were unable to resist proclaiming themselves king of Nan Yüeh.¹²⁴ At the same time, Chinese scholars visiting the south often dedicated a line or two of poetry to the memory of Chao T'o, the first Chinese ruler of this remote region.¹²⁵ The popular image of Chao T'o as a great ruler in antiquity survived in the Canton area well into T'ang times.¹²⁶

Chao T'o had a foot in both worlds, the expanding empire and the shrinking frontier. The Chinese remembered him as a maverick imperial official, and the Vietnamese remembered him as a great anti-Han king. He was the last ruler to find a place in ancient Vietnamese mythology. His possession of the magic turtle claw signified his legitimacy in the minds of the Vietnamese and explained his ascendancy over King An Duong. But, after his death, Nan Yüeh fell increasingly under Han influence.

The Coming of Han

As Han influence spread southward, survivors of the old Yüeh ruling class felt increasingly endangered. At the time of Chao T'o's death, the kingdom of Min Yüeh in Fu-chien was responding to the threat of extinction with growing belligerency. Fear of Min Yüeh prompted the less bellicose people of Eastern Ou in southern Che-chiang to migrate, between 138 and 135 B.C., to a safer location within the Han empire. In 135 B.C. Min Yüeh attacked Nan Yüeh, hoping to shake it out of its passively pro-Han policy. But Nan Yüeh did not dare to raise an army in its own defense and, instead, simply informed Han in the capacity of a loyal vassal.¹²⁷ The dependence of Nan Yüeh's King Hu on Han in the Min Yüeh crisis was characteristic of Nan Yüeh's developing relationship with Han.

In 124 B.C., Hu died and was succeeded by his son Yung Ch'i. As a young man, Yung Ch'i had served at the Han court, where he had married a

122. O. W. Wolters, "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China," pp. 73-74, 77-78.

123. Nguyen Khac Dam, "Cuoc noi day chong nha Han cua La Gia," p. 58.

124. See, for example, *TCTC*, 213, vol. 11, 870-71.

125. For example, see *CL*, 157.

126. Edward Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird*, p. 97.

127. The Han army dispatched against Min Yüeh was recalled when the king of Min Yüeh was killed by a brother; Min Yüeh was thereafter partitioned between this brother and a son of the assassinated king until the final Han conquest in 110 B.C. (Arousseau, pp. 256, 257-58; *CL*, 50, 57; *TT*, 2, 9a-11b).

Chinese courtesan named Ku. Upon Yung Ch'i's accession, Ku became his queen; upon his death in 113 B.C., she became the queen regent and ruled in the name of her young son Hsing.¹²⁸

It is recorded that after Yung Ch'i's death, Han sent a former lover of Ku's as ambassador to the Nan Yüeh court; the ambassador resumed his liaison with Ku, and she fell under his influence. The pro-Han faction then moved to enforce Han laws in Nan Yüeh and proposed sending the young king to the Han court. However, the army remained in the hands of Lü Chia, a "Yüeh person" whose family had served Chao T'o from the founding of the kingdom and had intermarried with the royal family in each succeeding generation; it is recorded that the "Yüeh people" trusted and loved the Lü family more than they did the king.¹²⁹ As Lü Chia stood up against the growing Chinese presence, the court split into two armed camps. Han responded by sending two thousand soldiers to protect the pro-Han faction gathered around the queen regent and young King Hsing.¹³⁰

Hearing of the Han expedition, Lü Chia mobilized his forces and killed all the Chinese he could lay his hands on, including King Hsing. He then raised to the throne his son-in-law, an elder half-brother of Hsing. He sent his soldiers to man the frontiers, but Han answered with five armies under the command of Lu Po-te, bearing the title "Wave-Calming General." The year was 111 B.C., and it saw the end of Nan Yüeh.¹³¹ Lü Chia's resistance to Han expansion was remembered by the Vietnamese, and a temple was later built for his spirit in Me-linh.¹³²

When Lu Po-te arrived in the vicinity of Giao-chi, he was met by the two legates who had been appointed by Nan Yüeh; they reportedly presented him with one hundred head of cattle, one thousand measures of wine, and the population registers of their jurisdictions. Lu Po-te recognized the legates and confirmed their authority with the title of prefect; the Lac lords continued to rule the people as before.¹³³

The information about cattle, wine, and population registers should

128. Dumoutier, "Trieu-vo-de," p. 428; *VSL*, 1, 2a; *CL*, 112-14; *TT*, 2, 11b-12b.

129. *CL*, 141-42.

130. Dumoutier, "Trieu-vo-de," p. 429; *VSL*, 1, 2b.

131. Dumoutier, "Trieu-vo-de," pp. 430-34; *VSL*, 1, 3a; *TT*, 2, 13a-17b; *CL*, 114.

132. Nguyen Khac Dam, pp. 65-68.

133. *SCC*, 37, 5b. *CL*, 57, cites a *Giao chau ky* (Chinese *Chiao chou chi*) as the source of a quotation that speaks of three lords in place of two prefects. The third lord is from Nhat-nam, a prefecture organized at this time, or shortly after, south of Cuu-chan. The quotation ends with: "The Lac king and the Lac lords ruled the people as before." This source may be the *Chiao chou chi* written by Liu Hsin-ch'i in the late fourth or early fifth century (O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, p. 81), or perhaps it is the *Chiao chou wai yu chi*, which the *SCC* cites for the same information. *TT*, 2, 17a, also speaks of Nhat-nam and three, rather than two, legates in this context.

be treated carefully.¹³⁴ Cattle and wine pose no problem, for there is no reason to doubt Giao-chi's ability to supply these things. Meeting an advancing army with food and drink is a venerable method of initiating an accommodation. But the mention of population registers implies some kind of stable administrative control. Whatever this control may have been, we can be sure that it did not have a very wide application over Lac society, for the Lac lords largely remained in control of the land and people during this time.

The Nan Yüeh legates appear to have been chiefly interested in overseeing the trade routes and presiding over commercial centers.¹³⁵ Their administrative sphere of action was almost certainly confined to the immediate vicinity of the market towns where they resided. Perhaps the legates' authority extended to some of the surrounding fields, and the population of that area may have been formally identified in some way. But we should bear in mind that the possession of population registers was a kind of legitimizing credential for ancient Chinese officials; consequently, their value as an indication of effective control over the population must be treated with caution, particularly in the context of events such as those just discussed, where local officials sought to legitimize their position in the eyes of an invader.

Behind the legates, the Lac lords also had an interest in preserving the prevailing state of affairs, and we can assume that the meeting of the legates with Lu Po-te was part of a common policy pursued by the Lac lords and the legates toward the Han expeditionary force. This is clear from the information that, after submitting to Han, "the Lac lords ruled the people as before."¹³⁶

The transfer of suzerainty from Nan Yüeh to the Han empire was not entirely peaceful, for in 110 B.C. a certain "General of the Left of Old Au Lac" received a title from Han as a reward for his having killed the "King of Tay-vu."¹³⁷ This king was apparently a monarch established at Co-loa as a vassal of Nan Yüeh; with the demise of Nan Yüeh, he may have resisted overtures from Han and attempted an uprising. The "General of the Left" was perhaps a high-ranking lord who foiled this attempt with the support of the legates, or he may have killed the king on Han instructions simply to get him out of the way. The life of the people was undisturbed by these events, however, and the position of the Lac lords remained unchallenged.

The brief mention of the "King of Tay-vu" in 110 B.C. is the first

134. Gotō, p. 59, says this reference is "doubtful" but does not explain.

135. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60; Khong Duc Thien, "Tu su tham gia cua nhan dan Vu-ninh vao cuoc khai nghia Hai Ba Trung," p. 59; Ying-shih Yü, pp. 181-82.

136. *SCC*, 37, 5b.

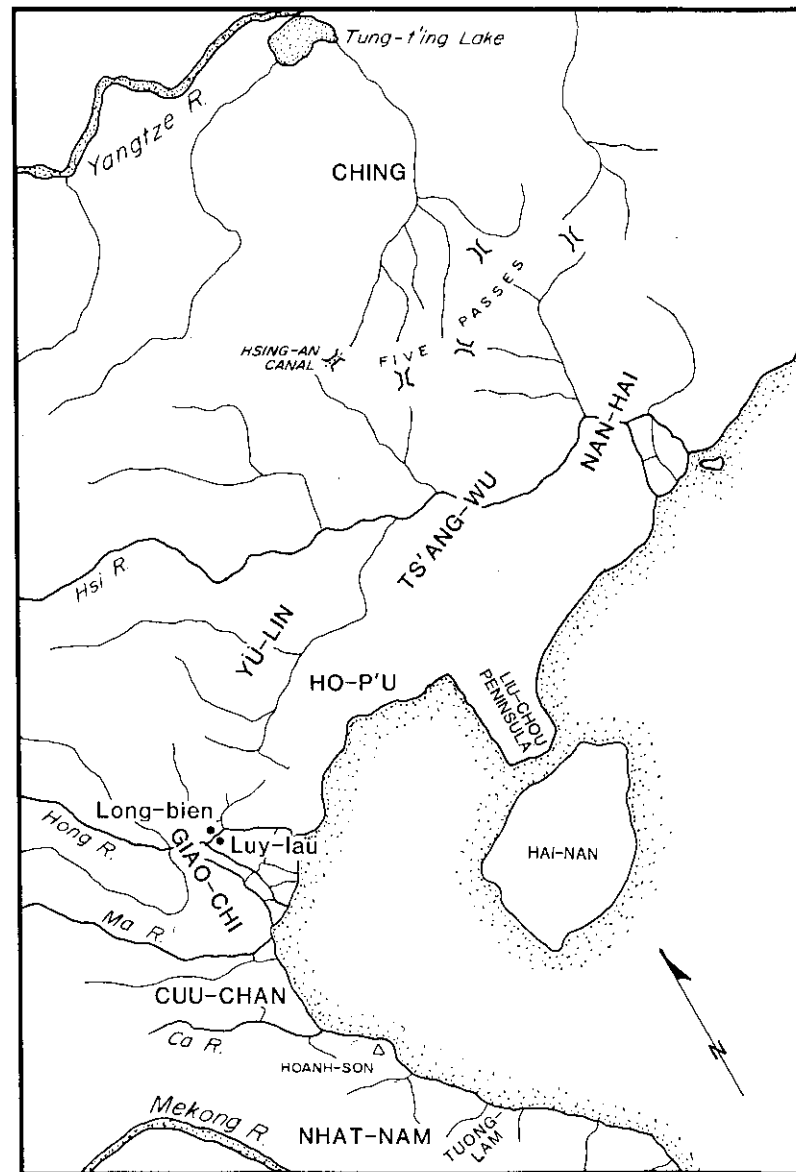
137. H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 11.

instance of the name Tay-vu in Vietnamese history. We have already used this name as a toponym for the region where Co-loa was built. After 111 B.C., Han referred to this area as Tay-vu District. In A.D. 43, when the Lac lords were dispossessed, it was divided into two new districts, and the name Tay-vu was suppressed. It seems reasonable to associate the name Tay-vu with the heritage of the kingdom of Au Lac. It was a lord of "Old Au Lac" who killed the king of Tay-vu, and the name endured only as long as did the political posterity of Au Lac, for it finally disappeared when the Lac lords were subdued by Han soldiers. Although the exact origin of the name is not known,¹³⁸ it can be associated with a royal tradition established at Co-loa by King An Duong, and it probably had some connection with the Western Ou.

The shift in overlords from Nan Yüeh to the Han Empire left no mark on the legendary traditions of the Vietnamese people; unlike the fall of Au Lac, the fall of Nan Yüeh did not loom in the collective memory of the Vietnamese. The traditional date of 111 B.C. as the beginning of Chinese rule does not accurately reflect the continuing authority of the Lac ruling class up to A.D. 42, a date that more properly represents the arrival of direct Chinese rule.

Han organized the old lands of Nan Yüeh into seven prefectures.¹³⁹ Nan-hai, Ts'ang-wu, Yü-lin, and Ho-p'u were located in modern Kuang-tung and Kuang-hsi; the other three were in Vietnam. In addition to Giao-chi and Cuu-chan, Nhat-nam was established further south, beyond the Hoanh-son massif. *Nhat-nam* means "south of the sun," and the prefecture was so named because it was in fact south of the sun during the summer months.

The five passes that had marked the northern border of Nan Yüeh were placed under the jurisdiction of provinces to the north, thereby depriving the south of its strategic frontier.¹⁴⁰ The seven prefectures in the south were organized into Chiao-chih (Vietnamese Giao-chi) Circuit, which was placed under the authority of a governor.¹⁴¹ The governor's residence was initially at Luy-lau in Giao-chi Prefecture, but in 106 B.C. it was moved to the more central location of Ts'ang-wu in modern Kuang-hsi.¹⁴²



Map 3. Chiao-chih Circuit

138. On theories about the etymological origins of *Tay-vu*, see C. Ch'en, "An Yō Ō," pp. 9-10.

139. Two additional prefectures were theoretically established on Hai-nan Island but were later abolished (Cao Huy Giu and Dao Duy Anh, p. 318, n. 1; Émile Gaspardone, "Materiaux pour servir à l'histoire d'Annam," p. 82, n. 4, nos. 1-3; Aurousseau, p. 204; Rolf Stein, "Le Lin-i," pl. 3).

140. Aurousseau, p. 242.

141. Cao Huy Giu and Dao Duy Anh, p. 318, n. 2; Ozaki Yasushi, "Gokan no Kōshi Shishi ni suite," pp. 140-43.

142. Gaspardone, "Materiaux," p. 32, n. 4, no. 4.

The removal of the governor's seat from Luy-lau, in the middle of a heavily populated plain, to Ts'ang-wu, in a narrow upland valley, was apparently a recognition that Chinese administration would be quickly swallowed up by Vietnamese society unless it was located in a relatively isolated spot. The names of only three governors have been preserved from the Former Han period: one each from the reigns of Han Wu Ti (140–87 B.C.) and Han Chao Ti (86–74 B.C.),¹⁴³ and one from the Wu-feng reign period (57–54 B.C.).¹⁴⁴

Luy-lau became the administrative center of Giao-chi Prefecture. Unlike the earlier political centers of Me-linh and Tay-vu, whose importance derived from their proximity to the mountains, Luy-lau lay well within the plains. This reflected the spread of settlement deeper into the plains, as well as the developing political importance of the riverine and coastal route to China. Luy-lau seems to have been the legate's residence from the beginning of Giao-chi under Nan Yüeh and was important primarily as a trading center.¹⁴⁵

In addition to the prefectural seat at Luy-lau, Han established a military outpost under a commandant in Me-linh,¹⁴⁶ probably to oversee the routes leading into the mountains. Small garrisons of Han soldiers were established at Luy-lau and Me-linh, but their sphere of action was apparently limited to protecting Han property and personnel.¹⁴⁷

Ten districts are recorded for Giao-chi Prefecture, all concentrated in the northern and western part of the plain.¹⁴⁸ Further south, Cuu-chan Prefecture consisted of seven districts and included the residence of a commandant; Nhat-nam Prefecture was composed of five districts.¹⁴⁹ Rather than implying direct administrative control, these districts should be understood as representing areas familiar to the Chinese with which some form of commercial and tributary relationship existed.

The early Han outposts were primarily commercial centers. Han was not yet interested in establishing a full-scale administration in this remote, isolated place but, rather, wanted only to secure the southern trade routes and to gain access to the tropical luxury goods of the south seas. There would

143. *VSL*, 1, 3a–b; *TT*, 3, 1a.

144. *CL*, 85.

145. Khong Duc Thien, p. 59. On the commercial activities of Han outposts, see Ying-shih Yü, pp. 92–99.

146. Gaspardone, "Materiaux," p. 82, n. 4, no. 2. On the probable location of this outpost, see Dinh Van Nhat, "Dat Me-linh," 191: 47–48.

147. H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 11–12.

148. Gaspardone, "Materiaux," p. 82, n. 4, no. 2a; Madrolle, map opposite p. 272; Jennifer Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation of Northern Vietnam*, pp. 23–53; Dinh Van Nhat, "Dat Me-linh," vol. 190, map on p. 37.

149. Gaspardone, "Materiaux," p. 82, n. 4, nos. 2b–c.

have been no profit in trying to change the prevailing pattern of life. Sending soldiers was too costly.¹⁵⁰

Although the Lac lords continued to rule as they had in the past, their status nevertheless underwent a subtle, yet significant change. Han "established" prefectures and districts in Lac society, which meant that the Lac lords were formally recognized as prefectural and district officials. By payment of regular tribute, they received "seals and ribbons," which legitimized their authority in the eyes of Han and enhanced their prestige in the eyes of their peers. The old aristocratic hierarchy under a monarchy, whether of the Hung kings, of King An Duong, or of the "King of Tay-vu," was officially replaced by bureaucratic relationships based on the theory of prefectural and district administration. So while Han informally allowed the Lac lords to rule in their accustomed manner, the principle of prefectural and district administration was established as an official policy.¹⁵¹

No information about political events in Vietnam survives from the first century B.C., but we can assume that the Lac lords accepted their designated role in the theoretical context of Han prefectural and district administration. This assumption is supported by the census of A.D. 2, according to which the three Vietnamese prefectures contained 143,643 households and 981,755 people; this represented 67 percent of all households and 72 percent of all people registered in Chiao-chih Circuit for that year (see table 1). These statistics are an indication of the extent to which the Lac lords participated in Han administration, for this registration of households and people was surely accomplished through the assistance of the Lac lords and can be taken as a reflection of Lac society at that time.

This census coincides with the tenure of Hsi Kuang as prefect of Giao-chi. He served during the reign of Emperor P'ing (A.D. 1–5) and is reported to have opened schools, enforced Chinese-style marriage rites, prescribed the wearing of hats and sandals, and "instructed the people in justice and ritual."¹⁵² Hsi Kuang's reforms show that Han officials were beginning to pursue a more aggressive policy toward the indigenous way of life. This policy gained momentum in the following years with the arrival of a large number of Han refugees in the south.

In A.D. 9, a high minister named Wang Mang usurped the Han throne. Wang Mang's unsuccessful administrative and economic reforms provoked a vast peasant rebellion that led to restoration of the Han in A.D. 23. During this brief but violent interlude, many refugees fled into southern China,

150. Gotō, pp. 59–60; Hans Bielenstein, "The Census of China during the Period 2–742 A.D.," pp. 141–42.

151. Gotō, pp. 62–63; Ying-shih Yü, pp. 71–72, 79–80.

152. *HHS*, 76, 6b, from which are derived *CL*, 85, and *TT*, 3, 1b. Also the *T'ung tien* as cited by H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 12, n. 5.

where conditions remained peaceful. The governor of Chiao-chih, Teng Jang, refused to recognize Wang Mang and closed his borders against the anarchic situation in the north.¹⁵³ Large numbers of Han ruling-class people found refuge in the south; these newcomers strengthened the position of local Han officials and encouraged a less tolerant attitude toward the local society.

The most famous Han official in Vietnam during the Wang Mang era was Jen Yen, who was appointed prefect of Cuu-chan in A.D. 25. According to his biography,¹⁵⁴ Jen Yen found that the people of Cuu-chan did not use draft animals for agriculture. As a result, productivity was very low, and grain had to be purchased from Giao-chi. The local economy was based on hunting and fishing, and Jen Yen presumably found it difficult to collect taxes. He therefore ordered the production of iron field implements and supervised the opening up of new lands for farming. The land under cultivation was expanded year after year, and the life of the people became more secure. Jen Yen also found that there was no stable family system in Cuu-chan. Men and women joined at random, and there was no concept of husband and wife, parent and child. He therefore ordered all men between the ages of twenty and fifty and all women between the ages of fifteen and forty to pick a partner. Local officials were ordered to pay the wedding expenses of those too poor to afford them. Jen Yen introduced Chinese-style marriage observances and is reported to have married one thousand couples on a single occasion. Many children of these marriages were named after Jen Yen, and, after his return north, the people were said to have erected a shrine to his memory.

All of this information comes from Jen Yen's official biography, so we must bear in mind that it is a one-sided view that almost certainly gives an exaggerated estimation of his accomplishments.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, it was common for officials to paint as meritorious a picture as possible of their administrative skills as a means of advancing their careers. This would especially have been the case in Cuu-chan, an extremely remote place where the claims of officials were nearly impossible to verify and where resident Han officials were very anxious to be promoted elsewhere.

Jen Yen's biography is often cited as evidence that the use of iron implements and draft animals for agriculture was introduced into Vietnam at this time. This is a hasty judgment, for Jen Yen's activities were confined to Cuu-chan, a relatively backward locale. If Giao-chi could produce a surplus of grain sufficient to supply Cuu-chan, agriculture in the Hong River plain must have been well developed.

153. *CL*, 85.

154. *HHS*, 76, 6a-7a.

155. *Gotō*, p. 72.

Bronze Dong-son plowshares have been uncovered in the Me-linh area,¹⁵⁶ and the bones of water buffalo have been excavated at sites in the Me-linh area dating from the second millennium B.C.¹⁵⁷ We have already seen that one hundred head of cattle, probably water buffalo, were presented to the Han army in 111 B.C. Two bronze objects from the Dong-son period uncovered in the Me-linh area appear to be models of plows that could have been pulled by draft animals.¹⁵⁸ While this evidence is not strong enough to support the assertion that water buffalo were used to pull bronze plows in the pre-Han period, it nevertheless shows that the use of draft animals at such an early date was not impossible. Plows can be pulled by people, but common sense suggests that draft animals will be used if they are available in sufficient quantities.¹⁵⁹

The use of draft animals becomes more certain with the introduction of iron agricultural implements, for iron plows are too heavy to be easily pulled by people. We have seen how in 185 B.C. Empress Lü of Han forbade the export of iron and cattle, among other things, to Nan Yüeh. This is the earliest textual evidence of iron in the south. Presumably, if the iron trade was stopped at this time, it had been going on for some time before. Gotō Kimpei has conjectured that iron was first brought into the south by merchants, who traded it for the rare tropical luxury goods that were coveted by ruling-class Chinese.¹⁶⁰

Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that iron plows and draft animals were used in the Hong River plain prior to 111 B.C. Here, the Lac fields supported a society that was sufficiently advanced to apply technical improvements in agricultural methods. Any technique that would increase agricultural productivity, and thereby produce a larger surplus, would have been to the advantage of the Lac lords.¹⁶¹ It is hard to believe that, with representatives of Nan Yüeh residing in their midst, the Lac lords would not have heard of iron plows and, furthermore, that they would not have taken advantage of this new implement once they had heard of it.

The texts that mention Lac fields do not seem to apply to Cuu-chan. There, the development of agriculture was apparently slower than in Giao-chi. The information about Jen Yen's reforms implies that his primary aim was to collect taxes. A subsistence economy of hunting and fishing produces no surplus. By encouraging the use of iron plows and draft animals and by bringing more land under cultivation, Jen Yen was aiming at a more stable

156. Nguyen Phuc Long, pp. 71-72.

157. Nguyen Duy Hinh, p. 181.

158. Nguyen Phuc Long, p. 72; Bezacier, *Manuel*, pp. 174-75.

159. Nguyen Duy Hinh, pp. 181-82.

160. Gotō, p. 71. See also Ying-shih Yü, pp. 7-8.

161. Gotō, p. 72. On the development of iron agricultural implements and the spread of new methods of cultivation on the Han frontiers, see Ying-shih Yü, pp. 21-22, 24-26.

source of tax revenue. His efforts to reform the family system served the same purpose, for the people could not be registered and taxed unless they could be identified as members of what the Chinese recognized as a clearly defined kinship group.

We must nevertheless remain skeptical of the claim in Jen Yen's biography that he introduced agriculture to Cuu-chan, for the census of A.D. 2 records a registered population of 35,743 households and 166,013 people for Cuu-chan. Registered households imply a settled agrarian life. The truth may be that Jen Yen increased the amount of land under cultivation and tried to make farming more efficient by manufacturing iron implements, thereby making them more readily available.

The marriage reforms of Hsi Kuang and Jen Yen reveal a great difference between the family systems of ancient Vietnam and China. A society's concept of marriage is a direct reflection of its family system. The Vietnamese family, with its loose authority, its individualistic tendencies, and its bilateral character, was an early target of Chinese administrative policy. The Chinese concept of political authority was based on a tightly controlled patriarchal family system. The Vietnamese family was by its nature inhospitable to the Chinese concept of government, for it lacked the disciplined relationships that made the Chinese family system the cornerstone of Chinese government and political authority. Only to the extent that the Vietnamese could be made to conform to the Chinese family system could they be ruled according to orthodox concepts of government and thereby be fully incorporated into the Chinese world. The Chinese sought to encourage stable, monogamous marriage as a basis for their type of government.¹⁶² The failure of China's efforts to change the Vietnamese family system during several centuries of political control ultimately meant the failure of China's effort to rule Vietnam.

Chinese policy in Vietnam during the early decades of the first century A.D. had two aims. One was to develop the agrarian economy as a stable source of tax revenue. The other was to establish a patriarchal society based on monogamous marriage that would be capable of responding to Han-style government. These two aims were related. Raising agricultural productivity meant increasing the role of men in agriculture, which encouraged Chinese concepts of marriage and society; with the use of iron plows and draft animals, the role of men in agriculture increased, as did productivity.¹⁶³ Furthermore, clearly defined monogamous family units were easier to register and tax.

These policies represented a change in the Chinese attitude toward Vietnam. Instead of simply collecting rare goods and letting the Lac lords

carry on as before, Han now tried to develop agriculture and collect taxes. This new point of view seems to have been the result of a growing Han awareness of Vietnam's agricultural potential. This awareness was probably aroused by the success of the Lac lords in gathering a sizable surplus from the Lac fields. This success can reasonably be accounted for by the political stability of the Han peace, as well as by improvements in agricultural technology stimulated by contact with the Chinese.¹⁶⁴

The reforms of the Wang Mang era posed a challenge to the Lac lords. If local officials were in fact required to pay for the Chinese-style marriage observances of those unable to do so, as reported by Jen Yen's biographer, it would mean that the Lac lords were being forced to subsidize the extension of Chinese influence over their own people, for the Lac lords were themselves local officials by virtue of the "seals and ribbons" given to them by Han.¹⁶⁵ As Chinese concepts of marriage and etiquette spread through Lac society, cultural supports for the traditional authority of the Lac lords began to crumble. Lac lords and Han officials competed for control of the Lac fields and of the people who tilled them. As discrepancies between the old principle of aristocratic hierarchy and the new principle of prefectural and district administration became increasingly evident, the Lac lords were faced with the choice of becoming subordinate officials in Han government or of taking their case to the battlefield.

The Trung Sisters

In A.D. 29, after the Han restoration, Teng Jang, the governor who had kept Chiao-chih loyal to Han during the Wang Mang era, led the prefects of his jurisdiction to the Han court to be recognized and rewarded.¹⁶⁶ Many, perhaps most, of the Han refugees appear also to have returned north at this time. The reforms of the Wang Mang era in Vietnam had been carried out by talented officials, who probably would not have been in the south except for the disorders in northern China. With the Han restoration, men of ability were eager to go back north to pursue their careers near the centers of Han power, and the south was left in the hands of lesser men. Su Ting, the new prefect of Giao-chi, was reportedly greedy and inept;¹⁶⁷ he was thus portrayed according to the traditional Chinese historiographical stereotype of the bad official who provokes a rebellion. During his tenure the Lac lords began to test Chinese authority, and in doing so grew increasingly bold.

164. Gotō, p. 74.

165. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

166. *HHS*, 76, 74; *CL*, 85; *TT*, 3, 1a.

167. *CL*, 86; *TT*, 3, 1b.

162. Miyakawa Hisayuki, "The Confucianization of South China," p. 32.

163. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

The Lac lord of Me-linh had a daughter named Trung Trac; her husband was Thi Sach, the Lac lord of Chu-dien, a short distance down-river.¹⁶⁸ According to Chinese records, Thi Sach was "of a fierce temperament," and Su Ting attempted to restrain him with legal procedures, literally "tied him up with the law." Trung Trac, "of a brave and fearless disposition," stirred her husband to action and became the central figure in mobilizing the Lac lords against the Chinese.¹⁶⁹

Su Ting was in no position to cross swords with the Lac lords. According to a later report on the uprising, "Su Ting opened his eyes to money but closed them when it came to punishing rebels; he feared to go out and attack them."¹⁷⁰ In the spring of A.D. 40, the Chinese settlements were overrun, and Su Ting fled. Cuu-chan, Nhat-nam, and Ho-p'u joined the uprising. Trung Trac established a royal court in Me-linh and was recognized as queen by sixty-five strongholds. It is recorded that for two years she "adjusted the taxes" of Giao-chi and Cuu-chan.¹⁷¹

The information that Trung Trac "adjusted" the taxes for two years should be understood to mean "abolished." She ruled from her ancestral estates, and it is unlikely that her authority was exercised by means of Chinese-style taxes. Her fellow aristocrats recognized her as queen and undoubtedly showered her with gifts that could be interpreted as tribute. But the movement she led was a restoration movement, an effort to bring back a simpler state of affairs more congenial to traditional values. The "taxes" she abolished were apparently tribute exactions levied on the Lac lords by Han in return for formal recognition of traditional rights. From what little is known of taxation in Vietnam during the Former Han, we can surmise that these exactions were mainly in the form of corvée and tropical luxury products; there is specific mention of officials appointed to collect oranges.¹⁷² The Lac lords resisted the tax-collector mentality that lay at the heart of Chinese government. Rather than taxes enforced by legalistic notions, the Lac lords preferred the exchange of gifts based on hereditary rights and mutual benefit.

Trung Trac and her younger sister Nhi, who gained fame as the queen's constant companion, have been remembered with affection by the Vietnamese, and through the centuries much popular lore has grown up

168. On the location of Chu-dien, see Appendix H.

169. *HHS*, 24, 12a.

170. From Ma Yüan's report following his suppression of the uprising; see Bui Quang Tung, "Le Soulèvement des Soeurs Truong," p. 76.

171. *SCC*, 37, 6a.

172. Katakura Minoru, "Chugoku Shihaika no Betonamu," pp. 21-22. On the exchange of "tributary products" and "imperial gifts" in sino-barbarian relations, see Ying-shih Yü, pp. 36-39.

around them.¹⁷³ Later Vietnamese historians favored the idea that Thi Sach was killed by Su Ting, thus provoking his wife to rebellion.¹⁷⁴ There is no evidence for this idea; surely it came from the patriarchal bias of later centuries, which could not countenance a woman leading a rebellion and being recognized as queen so long as her husband still lived. The Chinese sources make it clear that Thi Sach followed his wife's leadership.¹⁷⁵ The matriarchal flavor of the time is further attested by the fact that Trung Trac's mother's tomb and spirit temple have survived, although nothing remains of her father.¹⁷⁶ The names and biographies of over fifty leaders of Trac's uprising are recorded in temples dedicated to her cult; a large percentage of these were women.¹⁷⁷

At the beginning of A.D. 41, one of the empire's best generals, Ma Yüan, fresh from suppressing a rebellion in An-hui, was appointed, at the age of fifty-six, to march to the far south.¹⁷⁸ He was given the title "Wave-Calming General," which had been held by Lu Po-te during his conquest of Nan Yüeh a century and a half earlier. With eight thousand regular troops and twelve thousand militiamen from the eastern prefectures of Chiao-chih Circuit, he marched to the port in Ho-p'u where the maritime route to Giao-chi originated. When the fleet commander died, it was discovered that the two thousand ships available were insufficient to transport the army. Ma Yüan thereupon began an arduous advance along the coast, building a road as he went and depending on the fleet for supply.

Ma Yüan's advance was unhindered until he entered the strategic region of Tay-vu, where the ancient Vietnamese traditionally met their enemies in battle.¹⁷⁹ His progress was checked before Co-loa, and he withdrew to the heights of Lang-bac, a short distance to the east, where he established a base camp. The heights of Lang-bac overlooked the southern shore of an ancient lake of that name; Lake Lang-bac was a natural reservoir

173. See Appendix K.

174. *TT*, 3, 2a; Bui Quang Tung, pp. 76, 83.

175. H. Maspero "Études," 18: 13, n. 1.

176. Nguyen Ngoc Chuong, "Buoc dau gioi thieu mot so nguon tu lieu xung quanh de tich lich su thuoc ve cuoc khoi nghia Hai Ba Trung," pp. 23-25.

177. Vu Tuan San, "Cuoc khoi nghia Hai Ba Trung tai thu do Ha-noi," pp. 41-50; Nguyen Khac Xuong, "Ve cuoc khoi nghia Hai Ba Trung qua tu lieu Vinh-phu," pp. 41-49.

178. *HHS*, 8, 9, and 24, 12. H. Maspero's confused dating led him to assign Ma Yüan's appointment to A.D. 42. Although the correct year, A.D. 41, appears in his "Études," 18: 14, n. 1, he miscorrects it to A.D. 42 in the "erratum" at the end of fasc. 3 to accord with the dates and conclusions found elsewhere in his text. He concludes: "It was necessary to wait nearly two years before it was possible to organize an expedition" (18: 18). Although it was two years before the expedition reached its destination, it was apparently organized within a year of the uprising. Maspero's article contains several genuine or typographical errors in dating.

179. Dinh Van Nhat, "Vung Lang-bac ve thoi Hai Ba Trung," pp. 50-54.

attached to the Cau River. Ma Yüan's supply fleet probably ascended the Cau River and anchored in the lake.¹⁸⁰

It was now the spring of A.D. 42, and the wet season had begun. Unaccustomed to the heat and the monsoon humidity, the Chinese paused, perhaps intending to wait for the dry season before returning to the offensive. In Ma Yüan's words: "When I was between Lang-bac and Tay-vu and the rebels were not yet subdued, rain fell, vapors rose, there were pestilential emanations, and the heat was unbearable; I even saw a sparrowhawk fall into the water and drown."¹⁸¹

However, with a Chinese army in their midst, the Lac lords, according to the interpretation of a fifteenth-century Vietnamese source,¹⁸² began to lose heart. Apparently realizing that inaction would only encourage disaffection among her followers, Trung Trac gave battle to the Chinese. She was badly defeated; several thousand of her partisans were captured and beheaded, while more than ten thousand surrendered to the Chinese. Trac and her most loyal retainers retreated to the foot of Mount Tan-vien in Me-linh, where her ancestral estates were located;¹⁸³ others fled to Cuu-chan. Ma Yüan proceeded to Me-linh and, by the end of the year, succeeded in capturing Trung Trac and her sister Nhi; in the first month of the new year, their heads were sent to the Han court at Lo-yang.¹⁸⁴

The nature of Trung Trac's authority is clearly shown in these events. So long as she could maintain a momentum of success, her followers stood by her. When she suffered a reverse, she was quickly abandoned. She was forced into a hasty battle simply to keep her partisans in the field. She did not have a disciplined army. Rather, she was followed by a collection of Lac lords with their retainers, each looking to his or her own best interests and as ready to go over to the Chinese as to stay with her if it should be to their advantage. This reveals that the century and a half of Han overlordship had seriously eroded the moral authority of traditional values. One element of disaffection with Trung Trac's leadership was undoubtedly the growing influence of the patriarchal values preached by the Chinese. The fifteenth-century *Dai viet su ky toan thu* interpreted these events as follows: "Trung

180. Khong Duc Thien, pp. 55-56.

181. HHS 24, 13a-b; CL, 25; H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 16, n. 1.

182. TT, 3, 26.

183. See Dinh Van Nhat, "Dat Cam-khe, can cu cuoi cung cua Hai Ba Trung trong cuoc khoi nghia Me-linh nam 40-43."

184. HHS, 8, 9b-10a, and 24, 12b-13a. According to VDULT, 11, and TT, 3, 3a-b, the sisters were abandoned by their followers and "died in battle." VSL, 1, 3b, says that Trac was "killed by Ma Yüan." CL, 58 and 148, follows the HHS and says that the sisters were "beheaded" by Ma Yüan. There are several popular traditions according to which the sisters committed suicide by drowning themselves in a river, died of illness, or disappeared into the clouds (Bui Quang Tung, pp. 75, 82-83).

Trac, seeing that the enemy was strong and that her own followers were undisciplined, feared that she could not succeed . . . her followers, seeing that she was a woman, feared she could not stand up to the enemy and consequently dispersed."¹⁸⁵ The mentality of fifteenth-century ruling-class Vietnamese may be reflected in these words, but they probably contain a core of truth.

Ma Yüan spent most of the year 43 laying the foundations for direct Han rule in the Hong River plain. We will look at his reforms in detail at the beginning of the next chapter. Near the end of the year, he loaded his two thousand ships with men and supplies and set out for Cuu-chan, where recalcitrant Lac lords had taken refuge.¹⁸⁶ Following the major river channels of the Hong River plain, he arrived at its southern extremity and advanced into the plain of the Ma River. There, he swept his enemies before him. Some fled up the river valleys into the mountains; others fled south along the coast. Ma Yüan divided his command and sent half in each direction. The army sent south went as far as modern Nghe-an Province, at that time southern Cuu-chan. Between three and five thousand persons were captured and beheaded; several hundred families were deported to southern China.¹⁸⁷ In the spring of A.D. 44, Ma Yüan departed Giao-chi for the north; in the following autumn he arrived at the Han capital to a hero's welcome.¹⁸⁸

Yüeh and Viet

The expedition of Ma Yüan was a major event in Vietnamese history. With it, Dong-son culture came to an end, and the Lac lords, who had prospered with that culture, are not heard of again.¹⁸⁹ The ancient Vietnamese had to learn new ways of doing things from foreign officials. The Vietnamese had long been familiar with the Chinese, but suddenly Chinese rule was made more direct, while traditional barriers to Chinese power were removed. The Vietnamese were deprived of their traditional ruling class, and the struggle for cultural survival became closely identified with the more basic problem of physical survival under an exploitative, alien regime. Unlike Japanese culture, for example, which

185. TT, 3, 2b. J. Holmgren used ethnographic data to argue that Ma Yüan can be associated with a "reduction of female power in Yüeh society" (pp. 18-21).

186. SCC, 37, 9a.

187. H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 22-23.

188. HHS, 24, 14a; H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 27.

189. Nguyen Duy Ty, p. 84; Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Viet-Nam*, p. 103; Le Van Lan, "Tai lieu khao co hoc va viec nghien cuu thoi ky Hai Ba Trung," pp. 35-40; H. Maspero, "Études," 18: 18.

grew up beyond the reach of external threats, Vietnamese culture has preserved very little that is not directly related to national survival.

The Chinese assumed that the different "barbarian" peoples who were fortunate enough to have been conquered would eventually be "civilized"—in other words, would become Chinese. Any name expressing a people's distinctive identity, such as *Lac*, was diluted with broader terms, such as *Yüeh*, which were employed as synonyms of "barbarian." Chinese historians writing of Ma Yüan's expedition referred to the ancient Vietnamese as the "Lac Yüeh" or simply as the "Yüeh"; one Chinese scholar, commenting on Ma Yüan's biography, went so far as to write: "Lac is another name for Yüeh."¹⁹⁰

"Yüeh" had become a category of Chinese perception designating myriad groups of non-Chinese peoples in the south. It began with the Yüeh culture of Che-chiang and Fu-chien and the heritage it bequeathed to realms along the southeastern coast of China. This heritage was political. It provided a tradition of kingship on the southern frontier of the Chinese imperial world; the name *Ou* (*Au*) simply represented a militant fringe of this tradition. Although Yüeh culture itself never extended south of Fu-chien, elements of its political heritage reached as far as northern Vietnam in the baggage of ruling-class refugees.¹⁹¹

According to Chinese historical tradition, the Yüeh were not completely barbarian. The *Shih chi* declares that King Kou Chien (505–465 B.C.), who ruled the state of Yüeh during the time of its greatest power, was a descendent of Yü, the founder of the mythical Hsia dynasty, through a concubine of Shao K'ang (2079–58 B.C.), a great-great-grandson of Yü.¹⁹² The Yüeh were thus regarded as a degenerate branch of the civilized world, a people who had fallen into barbarism through long residence among barbarians.

With the Chinese conquest of the south, "Yüeh" was applied indiscriminately to all conquered peoples along the south coast. Thus, the category "Yüeh" came to express the conquered peoples' place in the conceptual world of Chinese empire and civilization. Naturally, it was but a temporary category for those peoples destined to become Chinese, but for those whose connection with China would eventually be broken, it became a permanent identity expressing both their place within the Chinese world view and their distinctness from it.

The Chinese considered the Lac to be a "Yüeh" people, and it was customary to attribute certain clichéd cultural traits to the Lac in order to identify them as "Yüeh." These traits, with the exception of tattooing, were

190. HHS, 24, 143.

191. Eberhard, p. 432.

192. SC, 41, 1.

simply hackneyed opposites of what the Chinese considered proper civilized usage; thus, they were no more than a literary elaboration of the concept "barbarian."¹⁹³

As Chinese rule became a long-term affair, the ancient Vietnamese imbibed the terminology of their overlords and came to regard themselves as one of the "Yüeh" peoples. *Yüeh* was a term that the Chinese understood; they could accept it as a legitimate cultural designation even if, for them, it designated those who had slipped beyond the realm of civilization. *Lac* had no meaning for the Chinese; Chinese writers using the name *Lac* had to couple it in hybrid fashion with *Yüeh*, as in *Lac Yüeh*, or else explain that *Lac* was merely "another name for Yüeh."

In coming to terms with their imperial masters, the ancient Vietnamese found that the name *Lac* was of no account, whereas the name *Yüeh* carried some weight. As the ancient Vietnamese became increasingly aware of the empire that had conquered them, their sense of identity shifted to take account of their new position. The legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co was revised to make their progeny the Hundred Yüeh, thereby enhancing the status of the ancient Vietnamese in Chinese literature.¹⁹⁴

This does not mean that there was no cultural or linguistic relationship between the ancient Vietnamese, or Lac, and the peoples of southeastern China that were known to the Chinese as Yüeh. Recent linguistic research suggests that all the Yüeh peoples of ancient southeastern China, along with the ancient Vietnamese, were Austroasiatic speakers, and that the Chinese term *Yüeh* may have referred to a language group.¹⁹⁵ For example, the following non-Chinese words in the Min dialect of Fu-chien are shared with Vietnamese and other Austroasiatic languages: "shaman" (Vietnamese *dong*), "child" (*con*), "damp, wet moist" (*dam*), "a type of crab" (*sam*), "to know, to recognize" (*biet*), "scum, froth" (*bot*), "duckweed" (*beo*), "a kind of small fish" (*ke*).¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the earliest references to the Vietnamese language, in Chinese sources of the second century A.D., identify the Vietnamese word for "to die" (*chet*) as a "Yüeh" word and the Vietnamese word for "dog" (*cho*) as a "Nan Yüeh" word.¹⁹⁷

Considering this evidence, we can reasonably assume that the ancient Vietnamese were part of a broad linguistic-cultural world that included so-called Yüeh peoples in southeastern China. The name *Yüeh* arrived in northern Vietnam as a Chinese perception of the ancient Vietnamese as members of this larger world; the term was not indigenous to Vietnam.

193. Aurousseau, p. 247, n. 1, and 248, n. 2; Gaspardone, "Champs Lo," p. 461, n. 3, and 462, n. 2; Jao Tsung-i, "Wu Yüeh," pp. 620–25.

194. Yamamoto, "Myths," p. 84.

195. Norman and Tsu-lin Mei, p. 295.

196. Ibid., pp. 296–99.

197. Ibid., pp. 277–80.

"Viet" is the Vietnamese pronunciation of *Yüeh* and thus was derived the name of a people. The modern name of Vietnam dates from 1803, when envoys from the new Nguyen dynasty went to Peking to establish diplomatic relations. They claimed the name *Nam Viet* (*Nan Yüeh*). But the Chinese objected to this invocation of Chao T'o's rebellious realm in antiquity and changed the name to *Viet Nam*. This Chinese adherence to the formalities of imperial theory was resented at the time, but in the twentieth century the name *Vietnam* has acquired general acceptance among the Vietnamese.¹⁹⁸

198. Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, pp. 120-21.

2 The Han-Viet Era

Ma Yüan's Legacy

After the Trung sisters were dead, Ma Yüan spent most of the year 43 building up Han administration in the Hong River plain and preparing the local society for direct Han rule. His activities followed three steps. First, he suppressed what remained of the pre-Han political heritage. Second, he firmly rooted Han officialdom at prefectural and district administrative levels. Third, he bound the local people to this new state of affairs with a personal covenant.

Ma Yüan found that Tay-vu District contained 32,000 households. This was more than a third of all households registered for the Hong River plain in the census of A.D. 2. Tay-vu district surrounded the ancient royal seat of Co-loa and had been an important political center since the days of King An Duong. A "King of Tay-vu" had been killed in 110 B.C., when Han authority was first established in Giao-chi. Furthermore, the Trung sisters had made their first stand in Tay-vu. Ma Yüan, noting that it was disproportionately large in comparison with other districts, suppressed Tay-vu and divided it to make two new districts.¹ In addition to equalizing the size of districts, this measure was aimed at erasing any memory of the political heritage of the area.²

It is recorded that "wherever he passed, Yüan promptly established prefectures and districts to govern walled towns and their environs, and ditches were dug to irrigate the fields in order to benefit the people living in those places."³ This information contains two points worth considering.

One is the implication that Han soldiers were settled to protect Han officials. The mention of walled towns and their environs and of newly dug irrigation ditches suggests soldier-farmers. A wall is of little use without soldiers to man it, and soldiers unable to grow their own food would have been a fiscal burden beyond the means of this isolated administration.

1. *HHS*, 24, 13b-14a; H. Maspero, "Études d'histoire d'Annam," 18: 18.

2. Gotō Kimpei, *Betonamu Kyūgoku Kōsō Shi*, p. 80.

3. *HHS*, 24, 14a.