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Ancient history of Vietnam and Champa : summary

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SUMMARY

Ancient History of Vietnam and Champa

The book deals with history of the northern part of the contemporary Vietnam as a birthplace of the Vietnamese statehood from the very beginning of the written history till the end of the rule of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông (1460–1497), who created a unified realm ruled by an Orthodox Confucian government, which constituted a golden age of premodern Vietnam before the consequent disunion of the country in the 16th century. To a lesser extent, we tried to resume also the very long historical development of the Southern part of the present Vietnam, known under the name of Champa, as well as to include a concise introduction to pre-angkorian political agents who also shared a part of the current Vietnamese territory. As far as the end of 15th century brought an end to the political independence of Champa, we have also resumed the development of Chams in the following centuries till the complete suppression of their regional autonomy under Minh Mạng's rule.

The introduction presents some general reflections mainly concerned with the history of Vietnam in the first millennium, during the so called First, Second, and Third periods of Chinese domination. We tried to argue the traditional simplified regard, that this period meant just an oppression of the Vietnamese by the Chinese, and to indicate, that the later political thought leading to the creation of relatively stable local dynasties since the 11th century grew from a long-term experience with the Chinese administration. Understanding the multifaced nature of Chinese migration into the Vietnamese area during the first millennium is crucial to the evaluation of the Chinese influence on the political growth of Vietnam.

Although in the first millennium Vietnam was a peripheral region of the Chinese imperial world, it was as much an important and cosmopolitan intersection of international routes of trade and cultural exchange. The best evidence is found in the development of Buddhism in Vietnam. Even though our knowledge is founded only

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on indirect Chinese testimonies and later Vietnamese hagiographical tradition, it is evident, that thanks to Vietnam's (or Jiaozhi's) situation on the pilgrimage routes from India, the Buddhism came to Vietnam even earlier than to some parts of China.

Four centuries of the rule of dynasties Lý and Trần are presented as a narrative based mainly on the annalistic records of the traditional Vietnamese chronicles, particularly the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (Complete Annals of Đại Việt). A lack of other written sources, as well as the absence of specialized studies to this period in the world Vietnam studies does not allow us to overpass the course of events around the imperial court. Despite of ephemeral struggles for power led by individuals or clans, more general political tendencies and social changes can be deduced. As for the central government, in the period of Lý dynasty we can observe a slow shift from an administration based upon a large Buddhist monkhood to a gradual formation of the layer of intellectuals obtaining official ranks through the civil service examination system. A further increasing preference for the Confucian education over the Buddhist piety can be observed by the Trần dynasty resulting in the definite and engaged embracement of the Confucian orthodoxy in the case of Hồ Quý Ly. As for the legitimation of power, importance of clans of the queen mothers during the Lý dynasty, and the struggle for power exclusiveness of the ruling clan and emphasise on the internal solidarity by the Trần were underlined. All of the critical contests with the Northern neighbours (Song dynasty in 1070s, Mongols in the second part of 13th century, and the defeat of Ming occupation in 1420s) led to the repeated increase of a military élite in the government. A poor experience with the élite veterans' rule resulted again in the general support of the civil service within the Confucian order.

Concerning the Champa, we were unable to provide a comprehensive information of this rich civilisation. By means of a concise historical narrative we tried to support the now predominant opinion, that Champa has never had a united and centralised authority, but represented a grouping of culturally interrelated but independent local polities.