



The cooperation of two governments Vietnam - China in security and maritime safety issues in the south china sea under Ming and Qing dynasties

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ABSTRACT

During Ming and Qing dynasties, China established cooperation with Vietnam to solve the many issues of maritime security and safety affecting the South China Sea. Based on historical sources discussing the two countries' feudalism, this article focuses on two major instances of cooperation: the fight against piracy and the rescue and salvage of ships at sea. This article explains the root causes and discusses the most prominent characteristics of the cooperation between China and Vietnam.

1. Introduction

The South China Sea is one of the largest seas in the world. It connects mainland Southeast Asia and South East Asian island, bridging the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean (Annual Report to Congress, 2009, p.4; Bronson Pervival, 2011, p.3; Hoang Viet, 2011, pp.14-15). It is surrounded by 10 countries and territories, including Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, and Taiwan. Because of this, the South China Sea has long been a common concern of many, both regionally and globally. Changes in the South China Sea, in turn, directly affect the maritime security and safety of every country concerned. A number of researchers in the world, including Vietnamese and Chinese researchers, have discussed different aspects of maritime security in the South China Sea during the Ming and Qing dynasties, such as: P. Maughan, "An Account of the Ladrões Who Infested the Coast of China" in *Further Statement of the Ladrões* (Maughan, 1812); Yung-Lun Yüan (Author), Karl Friedrich Neumann (Translator), *History of the Pirates Who Infested the China*

Sea from 1807 to 1810 (Yung-Lun Yüan, 1831); G. Devens, *Histoire des relations de la Chine avec l'Annam – Vietnam du XVIe au XIXe siècle* (Devens, 1880); Wang Gungwu: *The Nanhai Trade - A Study of the Early History of the Chinese Trade in the South China Sea*, *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* (Wang Gungwu, 1958); J.K. Wills, Jr., *Pepper, Guns and Parley* (Wills, 1974); Dian H Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast 1790-1810* (Murray, 1987); John Barrow: *A Voyage to Cochinchina* (John Barrow, 1975); Geoffrey Parker: *The Military Revolution, Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800* (Geoffrey Parker, 1996); David Cordingly, *Pirates– Terror on the High Seas from the Caribbean to the South China Sea* (David Cordingly, 1996); Konstam, Angus, *The History of Pirates* (Angus, 1999); Robert J. Antony, *Like Froth Floating on The Sea – The World of Pirates and Seafarers in Late Imperial South China* (Antony, 2003); and Li Tana, *A View from the Sea: Perspective on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast* (Li Tana, 2006)... In addition, many Chinese and Vietnamese scholars have discussed the security and safety of the South China Sea, such as: Hu Chieh-yu, *Hai Ying-P'an and the end of the ravages of the pirate Chang Bao-tsai* (Hu Chieh-yu, 1963); Na Yuncheng, *The collected memorials of Na-*

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yen-ch'eng 1834 (Na Yuncheng, 1974); Ma Dacheng, *China's Borderland History and Geography Studies* (Ma Dacheng, 2000); Zhang Wei & Fangcun, *General History of Chinese territorial waters* (Zhang Wei & Fangcun, 2003). . .

The above-mentioned studies address some of the typical problems that threatened security and safety in the South China Sea during the Ming and Qing dynasties: piracy, the flourish and decline of Vietnamese and Chinese naval forces, and disagreements and conflicts between the two countries. However, despite their differences and disputes over many issues, Vietnam and China cooperated during the fourteenth - nineteenth centuries to solve the security problems around the South China Sea. Both countries made great efforts to cooperate and address the common challenges they faced, and to reconcile their relationship between the national interests and the regional and international interests. What concrete results did that cooperation bring about the security and safety in the South China Sea at that time? During the period from the fourteenth century until the nineteenth century, from the establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368 to the Tianjin treaty of 1885 (Permanently terminating the relationship between the suzerain China and the vassal Vietnam)(Documents diplomatiques, 1885, pp.259-260), Vietnam was a vassal state of China, whether the cooperation between the two sides was equal or hierarchical. What is the nature of the partnership? These are the key issues that this paper focuses on.

2. Content.

2.1. Cooperation between the states of Vietnam and China in the struggle against sea invasions in the South China Sea during the fourteenth - the nineteenth centuries.

Known as the "Mediterranean of Asia" (Tetsuo Kotani, 2011; Tran Dai Nghia, 2007), the South China Sea attracted many boats for exchange and trade from very early on. As merchant ships developed, so did piracy. The Paracel Islands, an area of small islands, formed an ideal hiding place for pirates to repair ships and prepare food (John Crawford, 1830, pp.243-244; Von Carl Ritter, 1834, p.922; Taberd, 1837, p.745; Dubois de Jancigny, 1850, p.555). Piracy threatened the safety of seafarers and the livelihoods of the coastal people, adversely affecting the security, social order, and overall safety of the bordering countries, including Vietnam and China.

Beginning in the Han Dynasty, during the Chinese civil war and the chaos caused by warlords, pirates emerged along the coast. However, it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when merchant ships from other continents came to trade, that sea banditry began to flourish. Additionally, beginning in 1644 during the Qing dynasty, people who rejected the Qing dynasty and wished to recover the Ming dynasty were forced to leave their homeland. Many such people gathered into active pirate groups that operated in maritime locations between China and neighbouring countries like Vietnam. There were also many poor Chinese people who could not bear the oppression and exploitation under the Qing dynasty and became bandits and pirates. At times, fishermen worked as pirates when

they had the chance. Therefore, compared to the pirates of other countries, Tau O pirates (meaning pirates from China, also known as Qing pirates or Te Ngai pirates) (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, p.787; Gia Son Kieu Oanh Mau, 1963, p.9) were more aggressive and more frequent. Tau O territory covered the waters of Zhejiang, Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, Hainan in China, and north, central, and south Vietnam. This was discussed in *Dai Nam facing France and China from 1847 to 1885*: "Tau O invaders usually attacked Vietnamese boats carrying rice, especially from May to July. Vietnamese and Chinese border areas were full of Chinese bandits collecting bribery money from boats travelling down the Red River or robbing people's food and money" (Tsuboi, 2011, p.151). Many Vietnamese sea merchants and fishermen joined the Chinese pirates (Duong Van Huy, 2011, p.210). There were also pirates from European countries and some other countries in the region, such as Siam and Malaysia.

Among the pirates operating in the South China Sea, there were so-called pilfering pirates, often from the maritime areas of the south-eastern coast (Murray, 1987, p.6). They were economically troubled fishermen who took up piracy in pursuit of a better life (Downing, 1838, pp.106, 144, 210, 222, 223). In the summer when fishing was less profitable, they took advantage of the south wind to drive boats to the north and loot along the coast. Then, when the wind changed the direction, they would return to their homes in the south and resume fishing. As a result, piracy along the South China Sea increased in March and April lunar calendar. Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, pirates set up their headquarters outside the Chinese imperial border around Hainan Island and crossed the border into coastal cities like Chiang-p'ing, which belonged to Vietnam until 1885.

Besides pilfering pirates, there were also well-organised large groups. One particular group of pirates was so strong that they became a small court, like the pirate group of Zheng Cheng-gong, a Chinese-Japanese pirate leader. They operated in Philippine waters, with thousands of boats and a total of more than 70,000 people (Antony, 2003, p.20), taking them from "hit-or-miss, small-time operations" to "full-blown professional piracy" (Murray, 1987, p.32).

Piracy became an obsession for ships travelling the sea, seriously affecting many political and economic activities of Vietnam and China. Therefore, in addition to maintaining border security (Vu Duong Luan, 2008, p.167), Vietnam and China also implemented many other practical activities to work together to address piracy.

2.1.1. First, China gave decrees to the court of Vietnam to unify ways of dealing with sea invasion of enemies when the pirates of two sides run to the sea of each other.

For example, on the 9th of June lunar calendar in 1612 (July 7, 1612), under the reign of Emperor Wanli (who reigned from 1572-1620), Vietnamese boats (referred to as Di (Dongji), as recorded by Chinese historians in *Veritable Records of the Ming*) went inland via the South China Sea. The Ming dynasty drafted a decree that blamed the governor of Vietnam Le Duy Tan and forced Vietnam to issue a ban that forbade Di people

from wandering into the Coastal stations. The Vietnamese government accepted the offer. (Ho Bach Thao, 2010a, p.257).

On the 15th of October lunar calendar 1790 (November 21, 1790), Emperor Qianlong (who reigned from 1736-1795) gave a decree to the King of Vietnam, stating “the sea surface of Vietnam and Guangdong faces robbers who fled to the coast of the King. Order the officers and the generals to chase them. If they resist, just kill them. Not because they are Chinese but to be hesitant to slow down the stability of the sea” (Ho Bach Thao, 2010b, pp.235-236).

2.1.2. When examining the feudal historical records of China and Vietnam, the authors note that when Nguyen Dynasty captured invaders of Qing Dynasty, the invaders were handed over to the Qing Dynasty central or local government.

In September 1842, a group of Qing (Chinese) invaders ruled the coast of Thanh Hoa (Vietnam). They looted merchant and public boats on the sea from Ha Tinh (Vietnam) to the north. Under the guidance of Nguyen dynasty, the officers of Tinh Gia cooperated with officers of Bien Son, Bang, Han to urge people to arrest invaders. More than 100 invaders were tied up, and their guns and weapons were confiscated. Arrested criminals were assigned to Thanh Hoa province. The leader of the enemy, Kim Nhi Ky, and eight accomplices including Mai Mau Xuan, were brought to the capital and waited to be returned China (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp.414-415). In May 1846, Qing invaders, headed by Quach Huu Buc, fled to Quang Yen waters. The provincial mandarin sent people to the sea to arrest Quach Huu Buc and five others. The remaining invaders committed suicide in the river. King Thieu Tri rewarded the people with merit and the captured Qing enemy was ordered to Qinzhou in China for their trial (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.874).

In February 1847, Quang Yen province (known today as Quang Ninh province - Vietnam) captured five Qing invaders and collected their boats and weapons. King Thieu Tri ordered the criminals behanded over to Qinzhou for trial (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.981).

Five months later, in July 1847, three small Qing Dynasty boats were chased by Qinzhou officers hiding in Van Ninh (Khanh Hoa province - Vietnam). The local people assisted with the arrest, in which 3 invaders were beheaded and one was captured alive. King Thieu Tri rewarded the villagers with 30 coins and sent the captured invaders to Qinzhou (China) for trial (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.1052).

In September 1849, more than 70 Chinese invading ships sailed to the sea of Hai Duong province (Vietnam), looting and harassing. The chief, Nguyen Khoa Duc, urged troops to destroy the enemy, collecting the boats, guns, and weapons. King Tu Duc rewarded Nguyen Khoa Duc and people with merit and sent the arrested criminals and their belongings to Qinzhou (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p.140).

2.1.3. Vietnam and China worked together to fight pirates in Vietnamese waters.

On the first day of April 1566 lunar calendar (April 20, 1566), under the reign of Emperor Jiajing of Ming Dynasty (who reigned from 1521-1566), officers of Fujian and Guangdong chased Ngo Binh pirates. After suffering a defeat in Yang-jiang, Zhuangyang, the invaders ran to Vietnam. Commander Ngo Khue Phuong of the Ming dynasty went to Van Ninh District in Vietnam to coordinate the combat troops. The Ngo Binh army lost, many of whom were drowned. Overall, 398 enemies were killed or arrested (Ho Bach Thao, 2010a, p.232). Following the victory, Ming dynasty's military minister Duong Bac asked Emperor Jiajing to determine the merits and sins of each individual for rewards, punishments, and to take special consideration of Vietnam's support in the attack. Emperor Jiajing approved the proposal (Ho Bach Thao, 2010a, p.233).

In April 1690, during the reign of Emperor Kangxi, Yen Quang (also known as Yen Bang) invaders Phuong Van Long and Tan An Sung occupied the Van Ninh sea (Khanh Hoa province, Vietnam), recruiting many people for looting. A Longmen general of the Qing Dynasty, Diep Thang, sent letters to Vietnam asking for military support to defeat them. The imperial court of Vietnam sent Le Huyen to join forces with the Qing government and captured Tan An Sung and more than 200 accomplices to deliver to Diep Thang in Longmen. The Longmen region is 60 miles to the south of Qinzhou. Two mountains stand in the centre with a smooth stone column. Inside, there is a lot of water called the small sea. It is to the west of the Vinh Yen region of Vietnam. After Le Huyen brought his troops back, Diep Thang took the chance that they divided the troops to arrest the enemy and took his troops into Tien Yen (name of the Chau, under Hai Dong, now Hai Ninh) and Hoanh Bo (the Le called Hoanh Pho, later changed to Hoanh Bo, under Hai Dong District, now Son Dinh District) to harass people. The people could not bear the suffering. The court exposed this to the Guangdong governor and Diep Thang was sentenced to death (Internal Affairs of Nguyen Dynasty, 1993, 752). The coordination of Vietnam's and China's leaders brought about an important victory in the battle against the invaders led by Phuong Van Long and Tan An Sung.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Hai Ninh District army and its boats (now Quang Ninh province, Vietnam), together with officers of Qinzhou, fought invaders in the sea of Vinh Thuc Commune. The enemy was killed, and their guns were confiscated. King Tu Duc decided to reward mandarin Tran Quang Trong, giving four surviving captives and material evidence of the enemy to Qinzhou (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p.283).

2.1.4. Additionally, the Qing Dynasty sent letters to Nguyen Dynasty to ask for help to arrest Chinese fleeing pirates.

On June 4, 1791 lunar calendar (July 4, 1791), according to the words of Phuc Khang An to Emperor Qianlong, when the monarch of Vietnam received notification from the Qing on the capture of the pirates, he promptly dispatched the coastal stations to patrol and appointed Ngo Van So as Admiral of the Marine Corps. This dispersed his forces to patrol and arrest

Chinese pirates who fled to the land of Vietnam. Up until this point, the leader of the bandits, Ha Van Khoi (Ha Hy Van was of White Lotus Alliance, opposing Qing, so Qianlong called him a robber) eluded capture, as well as 16 accomplices: Vuong Tai Cao, Khong A Tich, Truong A Tu, Bo A Vang, A Tan, A Muoi, A Cuu, Ngo Thiem, Dai Dau Bong, Phuc Dai Phao, Luu A Nhi, Tran A Nhi, Tran A Luc, Truong Lao Nhi, A That, A Thang. A pirate group led by Ton Duy Ban eluded capture as well. The Qianlong King continued to order the King of Vietnam to hunt for sea invaders if they were in the area (Ho Bach Thao, 2010b, pp.241-243).

In March 1807, Man Province invaders (now known as Fujian Province of China) Thai Khien and Chu Phan were chased by Qing government and fled to the sea. The Governor of Liang-guang sent a letter to Nguyen Dynasty (Vietnam) saying that the enemy boat had blue sails and a red mast, and if it had fled to Vietnamese waters, Vietnamese officers needed to cooperate to catch them. Upon hearing of the news, King Gia Long immediately ordered the coastal provinces from Quang Duc back to the north to send military vessels to help Qing Dynasty to arrest the pirates (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, p.696).

A similar case took place in May 1848. When enemy ships in the Chinese sea harassed Qinzhou, the provincial governor sent messages to the provincial governor of Van Ninh (Mong Cai - Quang Ninh today) and hired many boats and soldiers to fight at the boundaries to prevent a sea invasion. The Quang Yen provincial government sent a report to Nguyen dynasty. Nguyen Dynasty approved the waterway and roads to be carefully guarded to help Qinzhou calm the sea invaders (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, 74).

In many cases, the Chinese government trusted vassal states like Vietnam to take control of the sea and security against coastal bandits. The Chinese court sent letters requesting states like Vietnam to perform their duties. In response, Vietnam was ready to cooperate, with a high sense of responsibility.

2.1.5. *Nguyen dynasty also asked the Qing dynasty to cooperate with them to defeat the enemy.*

In August 1842, Nam Dinh and Quang Yen (Vietnam) had a marine invasion, and many merchant ships were hampered. Officers were helpless before the enemy. King Thieu Tri sent troops from the capital to the south and from the capital to the north to hunt for the sea invaders, stating that if results were not satisfactory, the officers would be severely punished. King Thieu Tri appealed to the authorities of Guangdong Province (China) to assist them in repelling the invaders. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.395).

In some cases, the Qing dynasty demonstrated its attitude by telling the Vietnamese court to ignore or condone sea bandits or rewarding the Vietnamese army with meritorious services to help the "royal dynasty" to destroy pirates. For example, in 1666, Oboi, the supreme chief of Kangxi dynasty (Qing dynasty), sent a letter blaming Vietnam of condoning sea bandits and threatening to start a war if Dai Viet did not capture and deliver the pirates to them (Oxnam, 1975, 154-155). In 1790, Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty gave praise to General

Commander Pham Quanh Chuong of Vietnam. Pham Quanh Chuong was hunting pirates in the Guangdong province that were attacking the boats of businessman Tran Trieu Cau from Toai Khe district (Guangdong Province, China): "Pham Quang Chuong patrolled in the sea, saw the robbed domestic boats, bravely chased and killed the robbers, which is praiseworthy!". At the same time, Emperor Qianlong decided to reward General Pham Quang Chuong two sheets of brocade, requesting Guangdong governor to hand over to the King of Vietnam (Ho Bach Thao, 2010b, 235-236).

Are the above actions the reward-punishment of the "master" for the "vassal" in the process of "vassal" to perform their duties and responsibilities?

To prevent piracy, not only did the Chinese rely on the help of Nguyen dynasty, Nguyen dynasty relied on the Qing dynasty to destroy sea bandits in return. The cooperation between the two governments greatly limited the threat of pirates, increasing security for ships travelling back and forth in the sea.

2.2. *Suspensions in the cooperation between Vietnam and China while addressing security at sea in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century*

In researching the cooperative relationship between Vietnam and China during this period, the author finds that there was a short period in which the two countries grew suspicious of each other due to changes in the policy of construction and development the navy of Tay Son court.

Whereas other emperors in the history of Vietnam focused on building their army, Nguyen Hue, leader of Tay Son movement, focused on naval development. He believed the navy to be the spines that would increase the strength of the army. As a force from the Central Region of Vietnam, Tay Son understood more about the importance of this army. However, while boats and guns could be bought, it would take long-term training and experience in many battles to build elite navy. Therefore, to create a strong naval force to deal with threats both inside and outside, Nguyen Hue created a special plan: he used pirates to build his navy. He wanted to take advantage of the combat skills pirates had already learned.

In the years 1776-1785, when the government of Le Kings-Trinh Lords in Tonkin was not overthrown, the Tay Son movement gathered most of the pirates in Cochinchina. Nguyen Huu Chinh was assigned by Tay Son militia to take charge of conquering these pirates. Upon the capture of Tonkin, Tay Son intensified to subdue the great pirate force in the East and North Sea, most of whom were Chinese invaders. Vietnamese historiographers in the feudal period often called them "Te Ngoi sea enemy" or Tau O invaders. They were primarily poor fishermen from coastal South China or those who were dissatisfied with the Manchu government. When Nguyen Hue came to the throne, officially named Quang Trung, the Quang Trung government granted boats to captured pirates and ordained their leaders (usually called generals or commanders) (Ngo Gia Van Phai, 2015, pp.384-385), taking them on as independent armies of the Tay Son navy. Therefore, the pirates under the control of Quang Trung were *no longer outlaws* but a regular army with

a future and discipline. In the book *“Persistent Piracy: Maritime Violence and State-Formation in Global Historical Perspective”*, researcher Robert J. Antony stated: “Besides providing Chinese pirates with safe havens, ships, and weapons, the Tay Son leaders also offered them a semblance of legitimacy and respectability. Sponsorship transformed pirates from being mere robbers and outlaws into lawful naval forces (Antony, 2014, pp.113-130). Many pirates were quickly risen up the ranks to brigade general, to military governor. Even, some of them became important officials with the authority to recruit and grant titles to other pirates (Murray, 1987, p.55; Antony, 2003, pp.39,41; Dutton, 2006, pp.221-222, 226).

From 1789 onward, Tau O contributed greatly to the activities of the Tay Son navy. For example, in 1790, Tau O forces arrested four warships escorting a Chinese merchant ship. They discovered that the captain of the merchant ship had covertly carried the Western missionary’s secret letters. Those boats were taken to Phu Xuan in Vietnam and added to the Tay Son navy (Nguyen Viet, 2013).

Under Tay Son, there was no uniformity in the behaviour of pirates in Vietnamese and Chinese waters, especially considering the Tau O sea enemy. Whereas the Tau O invaders were dissatisfied with Qing government and turned to banditry, many of them were swallowed by Tay Son navy transformed into a professional, disciplined army that served the Tay Son government. Therefore, disagreements between the two governments over maritime security took place. The edicts issued by the Qing emperor at the end of the 18th century referring to Tay Son dynasty evidenced these disagreements.

Emperor Jiajing (1796-1823) of Qing Dynasty issued edicts to the high-ranking mandarins, expressing his suspicion of coordination between Tay Son and the Qing Dynasty to capture invaders. The edicts stated:

... According to the testimony of bandits, Tau O pirates had 12 commanders, more than 100 boats, and based on the captured documents, Tau O pirates were awarded with the titles of King (of Vietnam), the king must know their looting. So, if they were requested to coordinate to catch the robbers, would they obey? Furthermore, the inland people went out to sea as the pirates, the mandarins could not forbid them, not mentioning Di people (Dongyi)! If Vietnam took reasons to prevent or conceal, what would they take to? It was not worth aggression or bringing the troops to fight them! Cat Khanh should only order their subordinates to coordinate with each other to capture the enemy in the sea of three provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, Zhejiang. If you meet Dongyi bandits from the sea, then any official of An Nam would be strictly punished. (Ho Bach Thao, 2010b, pp.255-256).

In this edict, King Jiajing expresses doubts about the lack of cooperation from Tay Son in coordinating to catch the Chinese invaders, suspecting that Tay Son dynasty enticed the bandits that Qing was pursuing.

A few years later, Qing Dynasty expressed its dissatisfaction with the act of accepting invaders into the navy of the Tay Son court. On January 14, 1801 (December 19, 1801 lunar calendar), King Jiajing issued an edict to the high-ranking mandarins:

According to the words of Cat Khanh, the pirate Tran Thiem Bao brought his family, and submitted Vietnam’s ordination. According to the report (of Cat Khanh): “Tran Thiem Bao encountered storms when fishing, in the 48th year of Qianlong (1783) was arrested by Nguyen Quang Binh (i.e. the King of Vietnam), ordained as a general. It can be seen in many years, pirates that harassed the sea were harboured by Vietnam. When Nguyen Quang Binh was alive, captured the inland people, ordained titles, then launched into the sea for looting. Nguyen Quang Binh was personally grateful for the heavy favour of the Royal court that was unconscionable and inhuman...Regarding this megalomania, it was worthy to bring troops to fight them; this country is currently fighting with Nong Nai, so we should not cause them additional penalties. ... All of ordinations [by them] must be destroyed. The governor should strictly order the martial mandarins to patrol in the sea, if meeting the pirates of Vietnam, immediately hunt for punishment. People who confessed, along with the request of the Governor, arranged the accommodation in Nam Hung Palace (in chaozhou, Guangdong province of China) that was relatively away from the sea. Occasionally, they must be checked to prevent them from returning to the sea to harass. (Ho Bach Thao, 2010b, pp.259-260)

That grievance against Tay Son dynasty was also expressed in an edict dated August 6, 1802 lunar calendar (September 2, 1802) after Qing Dynasty was assigned by Nguyen Anh (King Gia Long, the first emperor of Nguyen Dynasty) with some of the robbers who had been accepted by Tay Son into the navy:

Recent years, the looting boats were detected in the Fujian Sea, Liang Guang Sea, sometimes with long-haired pirates, heard that this country [Tay Son] launched the piracy. I have not yet believed, I thought that long-haired ones may be the poor people in Vietnam who joined the bandits, so I ordered the country (Vietnam) to hunt, but they had not taken any of them! Now Nguyen Phuc Anh assigned to Mac Quan three guys, inquiring to testify that they were domestic robbery, this country (Vietnam) called them for surrender, ordained them titles: East Sea Lords, Generals... and ordered to them to the inland sea looting business travellers. Nguyen Quang Toan (the second king of Tay Son dynasty) did not only refuse to obey to arrest the robbers, but tolerated them, ordained them, allowed them to rob in the sea, it was ungrateful! Letters, ordinations given by the imperial court of the most importance must be respected, along with the country. Why Nguyen Quang Toan was not cautious... he would be subject to punishment. (Ho Bach Thao, 2010b, pp.260-261)

Therefore, under Tay Son court, due to pursuit of different goals, contradictory in the direction of building and developing navy between the two governments of the two countries have failed to achieve good cooperation stages as before and after.

2.3. Cooperation between Nguyen Dynasty and Qing Dynasty in the rescue of distressed ships in the South China Sea

The authors’ research on the cooperation of Vietnam and China in rescuing distressed ships owned by either country shows the spirit of international cooperation to ensure maritime security and safety. This paper discusses rescues made by either

country in aid of the other and does not address the rescue of privately owned ships.

In *Chronicle of Greater Vietnam, Veritable Records of Ming, Veritable Records of Qing*, the Chinese military oversaw chasing the enemy at sea or cruising in the unfortunate accident. Nguyen Dynasty offered support to China in times of need and vice versa. Listed below are some clear examples.

In 1833, a boat patrolling in China's Guangdong Province drifted to Tra Son-Quang Nam province (Vietnam) because of a wind storm. This was reported to King Minh Menh. King Minh Menh said, "It is a public-service boat. It is not like the merchant boats in distress. So, give them 300 coins and 300 buckets of white rice" (1 bucket of rice = 13 crates or 30 bowls) (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, p.636). The king then asked officer Le Truong Danh to visit, comfort the injured, and bring buffalos and wine to treat them. The damaged boats were repaired. Upon hearing that the damaged boat's weapons and cargo were no longer usable, King Minh Menh granted them 40 rifles (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2004b, p.454; Cao Xuan Duc, 2002, p.199).

In 1834, Tran Tu Long's fighting boat (officers of Guangdong Province, China) was stormed in the Y Bich estuary of Thanh Hoa (Vietnam). King Minh Menh provided rice and money, and sent the mandarin Ly Van Phuc and academy member Le Ba Tu to take a boat to escort the victims. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2004c, p.152)

In 1843, a ship of the Qing Dynasty patrolling in the sea of Qiongzhou (China) was hit by a storm and drifted to Bien Son, in the Thanh Hoa province (Vietnam). The boat was severely punctured, and the captain Ly Mau Giai hired workers to repair it. General Ton That Lan reported the case to King Thieu Tri. King Thieu Tri selected the place for the boat to land, supplying materials for repairs, 100 buckets of white rice, and 200 coins, granting Ly Mau Giai 20 taels of silver. King Thieu Tri also sent Nguyen Trach to visit and comfort, advising them to stay and wait; when convenient, he would send an escort to return them home. Ly Mau Giai thanked the King. King Thieu Tri granted them fabrics in his stock. Mau Giai refused to accept. In June of the next year, the Nguyen Dynasty sent Nguyen Nhuoc Son to take Ly Mau Giai to return to Guangdong (China). (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.544)

In 1844, seven cruisers of Qiongzhou town (China) encountered a storm and drifted to the Y Bich seaport (Thanh Hoa). The boats' owner, Quang Mien, asked for food and supplies to repair the boats. The governor of Thanh Hoa province (Vietnam), Ton That Luong, reported the cruisers to the King. King Thieu Tri selected a place for the boats and granted 100 taels of silver, 200 buckets of rice, and 300 coins. All damaged boats were repaired by the Nguyen Dynasty. The Nguyen Dynasty also ordered the minister of the Ministry of Rites Hoang Te My, to comfort them. When the Qing boats returned, the king sent an escort to take them out of the estuary. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p.641)

In 1860, the governor of Qiongzhou (China) sent people to the sea to patrol and arrest the enemy; unfortunately, the wind blew them into the Kim Bong station of Binh Dinh province (Vietnam). King Tu Duc sent the provincial government to give

them rice and money. In the boat, Dinh Quang, was a sixth-rank mandarin of the Qing Dynasty, who was stationed in Kim Bong to repair the boats. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p.664)

In 1864, Chinese boats headed by Hoang Dinh Quang met a typhoon. They docked in the Binh Dinh estuary (Vietnam) for repairs. King Tu Duc asked the officers to take buffalos, treated them to wine, granted them 200 taels of silver and 20 coins. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p.858)

There are also cases where the Chinese helped Vietnamese boats in distress. For example, in April 1843, when the army of Nguyen dynasty was dispatched to attack the pirates, the boats drifted into the sea of Qinzhou (China). The Qing government assisted in returning them back to the Quang Yen Province (Vietnam). (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, pp.491-492).

2.3.1. In addition to cooperating to rescue cruisers or prevent piracy, the two sides also successfully cooperated in the rescue of the boats sent abroad to work but subjected to accidents

. For example:

In 1829, the Chinese boats, led by Hoang Dao Thai, were carrying rice to Taiwan, but washed into the waters of Ha Tien (Vietnam). Gia Dinh officers reported to the King. King Minh Menh of the Nguyen dynasty sent people to help them; there was a broken rudder, the boats' masts needed wood, and a tax relief for the boats in distress, and had them wait for good weather to return. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2004a, p.920).

In 1849, a Qing boat suffering from wind of the Ngo Co Lan stayed at a public house, waiting for a chance to return. King Minh Menh wanted to express his gratitude to his neighbour, and sent Le Ba Dinh and Vu Tri with 18 men to help Ngo Co Lan's boat return home. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p.194)

In December 1877, Ngo Dich Van, the Officer of Longmen Town, Qing Dynasty, was washed into the estuary of Quang Binh (Vietnam). King Tu Duc sent money, rice, and silver, and sent people to take them back. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007c, p.271)

2.3.2. In turn, the Chinese government helped rescue Vietnamese ships in distress, then handed them over to the Vietnamese government.

For example:

On November 27, 1499 (29/12/1499 calendar), under the reign of Emperor Hongzhi of the Ming Dynasty (reigning duration: 1487-1505), a boat carrying an Vietnam delegation of 16 people drifted to Guangdong. Vice Commander heard this and reported to the Ming Dynasty to request food, to pay tribute, and to return them to their country. This proposal was approved by the King of the Ming Dynasty. (Ho Bach Thao, 2010a, pp.154-155)

On January 13, 1612 (or 16/12/1611 lunar calendar) under the reign of King Wanli (Ming Dynasty), the court of Zhejiang

Province reported to the King Wanli about the arrest of Vietnamese people, who drifted into the Chinese coast. The 12 first time: A group, led by Bui Phuc Ninh, included 73 people of the Ha Dong district, Thang Hoa (in the Quang Nam province, which is Vietnam today); these people were sent by the authorities to worship the god Hoang Cat, but were swept away by wind and storm. The second time: A group, led by Tran Danh Khoa, concluded 25 people of the Ha Dong district. The third time: A group, led by Ha Ngoc Bang, concluded 42 people of the Duy Xuyen district, Thang Hoa. All could not leave because of winds and storms; they were not looting criminals. Therefore, the Ming Dynasty decided, “according to old regulations, send to the Director General of Liangguang, return them to their country (i.e. Vietnam) to handle, demonstrating the soft policies of the imperial court” (Ho Bach Thao, 2010a, p.257). The saying “according to the old regulations” shows: this is not the first time encountering Vietnamese victims, and the Chinese authorities returned the victims to Vietnam, showing the cooperation between the two countries. Therefore, although no feudal historic record of the two sides reflects the Chinese government’s support for Vietnamese ships in distress in the South China Sea before 1611, this phrasing indicates the action of “returning the victims to Vietnam” under “the old regulations” of “Chinese imperial court” in the “compliant” diplomatic way with the “vassal states”.

2.3.3. *In some cases, the boats of Chinese mandarins sent to work (missions were not recorded in detail) on the waters of Vietnam were also helped by the Vietnamese government*

. For example:

On the 18th of December 1484 lunar calendar (January 16, 1484) under the reign of King Jinghua of the Ming Dynasty (reigning duration: 1464-1487), according to the words of the Guangdong mandarin, Tu Mao: China’s envoy was sent to Man Lat Gia with an accompanying troop of 28 people. Unfortunately, wind and storm damaged the boat, and they drifted to Vietnam. King Le Hao of Vietnam granted a boat and food for them to return, showing respect to the Chinese court. For the support to the Chinese troops, the Chinese Emperor praised him, and ordered the Guangdong Governor to send a letter to the King of Vietnam. (Ho Bach Thao, 2010a, p.127)

Similarly, in 1808, a boat from the Qing dynasty, crashed at the Sa Ky seaport (Vietnam). Quang Ngai officers (Vietnam) reported the incident to King Gia Long. King Gia Long granted them money and clothes, and took the road back to the country, and boat owner Tran Hoan was also provided with food and took the merchant ships home. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, p.717).

In February 1810, the boatman of Fujian Provincial High Commissioner Tieu Nguyen Hau drifted to the Cam Ranh seaport in Khanh Hoa province (Vietnam). More than a month later, the provincial governor reported the incident to the king. King Gia Long reprimanded him: “Why so slow?” and gave Tieu Nguyen Hau 30 coins, 4 silk sheets, 5 fabric sheets, 6 rice buckets. This is explained in King Gia Long’s edict: “Foreign boat in distress, the support was a statute. Tieu Nguyen Hau is

a mandarin of Qing Dynasty, we need to give additional incentives. You should announce this to them”. Then King Gia Long sent a letter calling Tieu Nguyen Hau to the capital, giving him 100 coins more, and let them take the road back to their country. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2002, p.782)

In 1855, the Qing’s mandarin, Sung Doan, asked to travel with a Chinese merchant ship to return to Guangdong. Sung Doan was the Qing’s general. In December 1854, Sung Doan’s boat drifted to the Thi Nai seaport (Binh Dinh province, Vietnam) with 300 soldiers. King Tu Duc sent officer Pham Huy to comfort and provided them with 60 taels of silver. Then, Doan asked for 800 coins per month. King Tu Duc agreed, giving Sung Doan 30 taels of silver and sailors in distress 15 taels of silver. When Sung Doan’s delegation returned to Guangdong (China), King Tu Duc again gave them money and rice. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, 375)

One year later (1856), when two boats of the Qing Dynasty were hit by a typhoon at sea, the Nguyen Dynasty continued to supply clothes, rice, and banquets, and let them return by boat. (National Historian Office of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p.425.).

There were so many different actions, from helping with food, money, and clothes, to repairing broken boats, arranging temporary shelter for the military and mandarin in distress, creating convenient conditions, and even escorting the boats in distress to safe waters. The two sides have clearly expressed the spirit of peaceful cooperation, and the common goal of maritime security and safety of the South China Sea.

Conclusions

Through examining the cooperative activities between the two states of Vietnam and China in the South East Sea in the nineteenth century, the authors find that the two sides achieved success in minimising the problem of robbery and rescue of state-owned boats on the journey to kill the enemy, patrol to rescue victims, or boats going for public service. However, although both countries displayed cooperative activities, the role and contribution of Vietnam was more prominent. According to the survey of major feudal historians from both countries, much of the Ming and the Qing sent letters requesting that the Vietnamese government assist in the fights against the invaders from China running to Vietnam. Even so, despite no correspondence from the Ming and the Qing, the Vietnamese government was ready to arrest Chinese invaders, and then handed them over to the Qing court; Vietnam also enthusiastically rescued ships of the Chinese military on the waters of Vietnam throughout the Ming and the Qing dynasties. Of course, to do that, the Vietnamese government cannot lack cooperation or consensus from the Chinese government. However, there was a very active and positive attitude of the Vietnamese court in its willingness to cooperate with the Ming and the Qing to settle problems in the South China Sea.

The active participation of the Vietnamese government in these cooperative activities is first a manifestation of international sense of responsibility in the South China Sea issue of Vietnam. These practical actions, since at least the 17th century, protected the interests of their people in this sea; the Nguyen

Dynasty also actively contributed to ensuring the legitimate interests and safety of ships travelling here, including China's ships (Nguyen Thi My Hanh, 2017, pp.32-41). To do so, the Nguyen Dynasty actively cooperated with the Qing Dynasty to solve common problems. Clearly, the Nguyen Dynasty succeeded in harmonising national and international interests, between the legitimate rights of their people and their responsibility for the outside world.

Moreover, in the historical context, when Vietnam was present as a "vassal state" in its relationship with "suzerain" China, it played the role of a "centre" of the "tributary order" in East Asia (Documents diplomatiques, 1885, pp.260-261), the activeness of the State of Vietnam is also the implementation of the "duty" of "vassal" under Righteousness, Morality, and Heaven will in relation to the "central" country China. Therefore, many times when having trouble at sea, the Qing Dynasty did not hesitate to immediately send a letter to the Nguyen Dynasty asking for a coordinated resolution, even issuing a "mandatory" edict to the government of Vietnam. Vietnam must be responsible for coordinating to capture the enemy (as indicated by King Wanli of Ming Dynasty on July 7, 1612) and the Vietnamese side was very enthusiastic in assisting the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty, both to ensure the collaboration between the two sides and to protect the security and safety of their own sea.

The activeness of the state of Vietnam in working with outsiders to solve problems in the South China Sea is very vivid evidence affirming the sense of establishing sovereignty in the South China Sea very early in Vietnam. If no previous sovereignty was established for this area, the Nguyen lords or the kings of the Nguyen Dynasty would not have been able to take the initiative in coordinating with the Ming and Qing dynasties for the removal of sea invaders or relief and rescue of foreign vessels in distress. In addition, all actions of the Vietnamese government prior to 1883 received the consensus and cooperation from the Qing Dynasty, while never formally encountering any objections from a third country.

The historical context is different from today, the relationship between Vietnam and China has had a lot of new developments. It is no longer a relationship between a "vassal state" and a "mother country", in which the "vassal state" *must* fulfil the obligations to the great nation China, but, clearly, the problems in the South China Sea are still there, seriously threatening the maritime security and safety of many countries in the region and in the world, beyond the control of one nation, and can only be resolved on the basis of goodwill, mutual assistance, and consensus among the parties concerned. Therefore, the *voluntary* cooperation between the two states in resolving mentioned problems is still in place and is becoming increasingly urgent.