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Controversial border and territory issues between the Mac dynasty (Dai Viet) and Ming dynasty (China)

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In 1527-1541, the Mac dynasty was at risk of invasion from its northern neighbor in China and had to fight consecutively with the Revival Le dynasty in Dai Viet. Therefore, in relations with China, the Mac dynasty during this period tried to maintain peaceful relations and avoid war between the two sides. Owing to the return of several former Chinese lands to China during this period, many people, especially historians of medieval Vietnam, have condemned the humility of the Mac dynasty, especially the humility of border and territorial issues, and said that it was the surrender and betrayal of their national interests. However, based on specific evidence from both Vietnamese and Chinese sides, the current article proves that the modesty of the Mac dynasty was only a formality and strategic ploy; in essence, the Mac dynasty was independent in relation to China at that time.

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Introduction

1527–1541¹ was the period from when the Mac dynasty was founded (1527) until before the Ming Dynasty officially recognized the Mac dynasty through the event that Mac Thai To (reign: 1527–1529) was conferred the title of General Governor and was granted with a silver seal that engraved with the word *Annam General Governor*² in 1541. As the Ming Dynasty had not officially recognized the Mac dynasty's existence, in this period of 1527–1541, the Mac dynasty faced many difficulties and challenges and felt “vulnerable” (Womack, 2004, pp. 351–366) in the relationship with the Ming dynasty.

From ancient times to the present day, border and territorial issues have been the cause of many conflicts. It is an extremely sensitive topic in the world and in the relationship between the two neighboring countries, Vietnam-China. However, studies of Sino-Viet relations have traditionally focused on Chinese aggression and Vietnamese resistance or have assumed out-of-date ideas about Sinicization and the tributary system (Kathlene, 2016). In fact, settling territorial issues was one of the most critical issues of Vietnamese-Chinese diplomatic relations. This was no exception under the Mac dynasty. In addition to the geographical proximity of the two countries, many other factors affected border issues. At that time, the intention of the Chinese army to invade Dai Viet³ was also stimulated and intensely aroused by the constant demand for assistance from the Revival Le dynasty⁴ side (Dai Viet). This critical political factor pushed the Mac dynasty to be under constant threat of Chinese invasion. This situation meant that the Mac dynasty faced a much more challenging task than previous regimes in preserving peace and territory. In such a situation, the Mac dynasty could only choose one of the following three options to deal with the Chinese threat:

The first was to fight stubbornly until the end and refuse to surrender to the Ming Dynasty. The second was to surrender unconditionally.

The third was to skillfully submit to the Chinese to keep the peace by reducing their desire to disrupt the peace and harmony in the region.

If they had chosen the first option, there would have been bloodshed and fatalities on both sides. Also, this option contrasts with the efforts of the Mac dynasty to build a peaceful and prosperous life for their people. Furthermore, the Ming-Ho dynasty war (1407–1427) at the beginning of the fifteenth century proved to be a valuable lesson in the dangers of fighting the Chinese. The Mac dynasty understood that their regime was newly established, and there was little public support for conflict. They were not nearly strong enough to compete against the Chinese.

The second option would have meant surrendering without taking action to deal with the threat of external invasion and accepting total dependence on China. If the Mac dynasty chose this option, they would have eradicated their lineage, denied the efforts of generations to build the dynasty, and trampled on the independence of the nation that the predecessors had built. If this option had been chosen, the Mac dynasty would not have continued ruling for much longer and would eventually have been wiped out.

Therefore, the Mac dynasty could only choose the third option. The Mac dynasty was not strong enough to defeat the Chinese; it was inevitable that the Mac dynasty had to be subdued in order to deter the ambitions of invasion by the Chinese state. Many strongly criticize the Mac dynasty's humility and argue that it was an act of treason. Representatives of this line of reasoning are famous scholars such as Ngo Si Lien and Le-dynasty historians in *Complete Annals of Dai Viet* (Lien, 1993) or Tran Trong Kim in *Outline History of Vietnam* (Kim, 2008). Even, many Vietnamese

historians placed the Mac dynasty in the position of a puppet regime along with the Ho dynasty, the Tay Son dynasty (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 1998; Lien, 1968; Kim, 1971). What is the nature of this problem? What are the reasons for the choice of policy of the Mac dynasty in diplomatic relations with China at this time? Did the modesty and flexibility on the border and territorial aspects of the Mac Dynasty in its relations with China at that time threaten the supreme principle of national independence and peace for the people or not? Those are the important issues that this article focuses on analyzing.

The position and correlation of forces between Dai Viet and China in the first half of the sixteenth century

In 1527, after overthrowing the Primal Le dynasty, Mac Dang Dung was crowned King, marking the start of a new dynasty in Dai Viet known as the Mac dynasty. Taking power based on destroying the Primal Le dynasty was challenging because the Primal Le dynasty had won the hearts of the people and had protected and liberated the country. Furthermore, Mac Dang Dung was a military mandarin who had devoted much of his life to the Primal Le dynasty. Naturally, Mac Dang Dung's attempt to overthrow the Primal Le Dynasty met with resistance, especially from the former mandarins of the Primal Le dynasty and the Ming dynasty (China). During the first phase (1527–1541), the Ming dynasty did not acknowledge the official existence of the Mac dynasty in Dai Viet, and the Mac dynasty faced opposing actions (both enticement and military threat) of the Ming dynasty. Therefore, it is apparent that the Mac dynasty was in a challenging situation when it was founded. However, for the first 65 years (1527–1592), the Mac dynasty was still considered a legal dynasty. The legitimacy in the first phase helped the Mac dynasty reform politics, the economy, culture, and education. They also achieved considerable success in civil security by creating a peaceful life for their citizens. These actions led to the enthusiastic support of people for the Mac dynasty, especially from northern people.

Meanwhile, after the Le dynasty was re-established in 1533 (the Revival Le dynasty), conflicts between the Mac and Revival Le dynasties became fierce, developing into the South-North War for more than 50 years of Dai Viet (1527–1592). The Revival Le dynasty often sent people to the Ming dynasty to denounce the Mac dynasty and ask for reinforcements to fight the Mac dynasty. For example, in 1529, Trinh Ngung and Trinh Ngang, the former mandarins of the Primal Le Dynasty, came to the Ming Dynasty to denounce Mac Thai To as an invader and asked for reinforcements to repel him (Don, 1976, pp. 331–332; Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, pp. 102–103). In 1533, when the Revival Le Dynasty had not recovered the North of Dai Viet, King Le Trang Tong (1514–1548) sent Admiral Trinh Duy Lieu to China on a Guangdong merchant ship to ask China to invade the Mac dynasty to punish Mac Thai To for stealing the throne. However, at the time, the Ming court was skeptical and did not entirely believe the claims. (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p. 109). Not receiving news from Trinh Duy Lieu's delegation, in 1536, King Le Trang Tong continued to ask Trinh Vien to follow Yunnan's route to the Ming rulers to tell them about the incident and to ask the Ming army to attack the Mac dynasty (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p. 110). In 1537, Uong Van Thinh, the patrol of Yunnan, also invoked the former officer of the Primal Le Dynasty, Vu Van Uyen. After Mac Thai To took the throne, Vu Van Uyen brought 10,000 soldiers from Tuyen Quang province (Dai Viet) to join the Ming army. Vu Van Uyen also gave Uong Van Thinh a map to assist with the attack (Thao, 2010, p. 199). Furthermore, on April

22, 1538, the Ming Dynasty was given specific information on the number of troops and the best way to attack the Mac dynasty by the Revival Le dynasty (Thao, 2010, pp. 203–204).

On the side of the Ming dynasty, in 1534, the Ming dynasty sent two Generals, Cuu Loan and Mao Bowen, to lead troops to the border, claiming to attack the Mac dynasty. By February 1537, the Ming dynasty continued to allow General Cuu Loan's army to move close to the border, but once again, the Ming was hesitant to enter Dai Viet (Don, 1976, p. 335). However, from that, the relationship between the Ming and the Mac dynasties became tenuous. In April of the same year, the Senior Lieutenant of the Revival Le dynasty and the Senior Lieutenant-General of the Ming dynasty discussed preparing an expedition to punish the Mac dynasty, together to accuse Mac Thai To of killing the king of the Primal Le dynasty and usurping the throne. Even the king of the Ming Dynasty offered prizes everywhere for those who caught Mac Thai To and his son (Thao, 2010, pp. 195–196). At the same time, the Ming dynasty chose talented people to use and mobilize appropriate people for the invasion of Dai Viet (Thao, 2010, p. 189; Li Guoxiang, 1991, p. 794).

So, during this time, the Ming dynasty used military strength that acted as a big stick, along with threatening rhetoric designed to repress the opponent's spirit into surrender. They fundamentally wanted to force the Mac dynasty into submission to avoid the occurrence of war. Clearly, this action meant that the Mac dynasty had two choices: one was war with the Ming dynasty, and the other was the humility of surrender.

Meanwhile, many other continuous difficulties came to the Mac dynasty. In April 1537, a Mac General, Tay An, the head of seven districts in Thanh Hoa, brought troops to Ai Lao with King Le (Lien, 1993, p. 120). In September of the same year, Vu Van Uyen, a former servant of the Primal Le dynasty, led about ten thousand troops to surrender to the Ming Dynasty. Not only that, Vu Van Uyen also gave the Ming dynasty a map to attack the Mac dynasty (Thao, 2010, p. 199). Next, Vu Van Uyen himself brought troops to fight the Mac army, capturing the border gate and the barracks (Thao, 2010, p. 203).

Moreover, the military forces of Lao Qua and Xa Ly, Bat Bach—which were three small countries located in the West and Northwest of Dai Viet were ready to join forces with the Ming Dynasty to attack Dai Viet. The Ming dynasty agreed to let them govern any place that they captured. (Thao, 2010, p. 202).

Furthermore, Dai Viet was also at risk of encroachment from the sea by Champa. Champa became a significant player in the Ming plan to take over Dai Viet. On April 6, 1538, the Kham Lam Hy Nguyen officer presented to Emperor Jiajing the strategy of using Champa to attack Dai Viet from the sea (Thao, 2010, pp. 211–212).

In the context when the threat of opposition to overthrow the Mac dynasty from the Revival Le dynasty was always permanent and the ambition to expand from the north of the Chinese feudal dynasties never ceased, plus the many other difficulties mentioned above, it is understandable that the Mac family could not have enough strength to cope with these “heavyweight” opponents at the same time. The Mac Dynasty realized the need for assistance from a force “strong enough” to curb the “ambition” of the Revival Le dynasty. In that isolated context, on the journey to find an ally besides the Ming dynasty, who could the Mac dynasty rely on at this time? Therefore, the Mac dynasty chose to subdue the Ming dynasty and become a member of the Chinese tribute system. Moreover, the Ming dynasty itself was also gradually weakening at this time. Therefore, although many times they wanted to expand the power to the South to show off their prestige when the internal government was not peaceful, the Ming dynasty itself was trying to maintain a calm position in relations with surrounding countries, including Dai Viet.

Therefore, more than ever, the Ming dynasty always wanted to take advantage of the division within Dai Viet to weaken the Vietnamese country's potential to prepare for a long-term expansion scheme. However, it did not immediately use force to cause war.

If we divide Premodern Sino-Vietnamese relations into four states of interaction: Strong China/Weak Vietnam, Weak China / Strong Vietnam, Strong China/Strong Vietnam (Anderson, 2013, pp. 259–280), and Weak China/Weak Vietnam, Vietnam's submission to China only takes place when the two countries are in the second state (Weak China/Strong Vietnam), third state (Strong China/Strong Vietnam) and the 4th state (Weak China/Weak Vietnam). Only when in the state of 2, 3, or 4 will China become Vietnam's “benevolent big brother” (Tuong Vu, 2016, p. 53). Apparently, in the period 1527–1541, the relationship between the Mac and the Ming dynasties was in this 4th state (Weak China/Weak Vietnam). Therefore, after a period of not recognizing the Mac dynasty until 1541, the Ming dynasty did not refuse the Mac dynasty's submission, officially recognized the Mac dynasty, and conferred the title of General Governor to the head of the Mac Dynasty. This was a ploy to turn the Mac Dynasty into a relative counterbalance in the war against the Revival Le dynasty, and maintained long-term division in Dai Viet.

The nature of the relationship forms the basis for evaluating the true nature of the diplomatic activities of the Mac dynasty at that time. However, what were the consequences of the relationship? Did the relationship between the vassal (Mac dynasty) and the suzerain (the Ming dynasty) help the Mac dynasty withstand the challenges they faced at the time? How did that relationship affect the independence and autonomy of the nation and people?

The issue of Quy-Thuan lands in Dai Viet—China relations

In June 1527, Mac Thai To was enthroned King. Soon after assuming the throne, Mac Thai To began paying attention to maintaining a peaceful relationship with China. In February 1528, the Mac dynasty sent a mission to Beijing to announce, “The Primal Le dynasty's descendants could no longer inherit power. Mac family temporarily governs the country and rules the people...” (Lien, 1993, p. 111). This was the first time the Mac sent a mission to China, which laid the foundation for the future relationship between the two dynasties. However, even after the mission, the Mac dynasty did not receive the complete trust of the Ming dynasty. The Ming dynasty sent a mission to Dai Viet to investigate and discover the truth about the Mac family's throne. Although Mac Thai To and his subjects bribed the envoy with gold and silver and asked them to protect and allow the Mac dynasty to rule (Don, 1976, pp. 331–332; Lien, 1993, p. 111), the Ming dynasty was not convinced and covertly assisted Primal Le dynasty's descendants in their efforts to re-establish.

According to notes in *Complete Annals of Dai Viet*, when faced with this attitude from the Ming dynasty, “Dang Dung was afraid of being asked for sin by Ming dynasty, and he planned to cut land to offer the people of Quy and Thuan prefectures two statues of gold and silver with jewels, and strange things” (Lien, 1993, p. 112). The Ming dynasty announced, “From now, the south and north have a mission to go back and forth” (Lien, 1993, p. 112).

The *Systematic historical Dai Viet* book also notes this event but does not record the Mac dynasty's offer to the Ming dynasty two prefectures of Quy and Thuan. (Don, 1976, p. 330).

So, how is this problem really?

In the *Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting The History Of Viet*, Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty

refers to the events of 1528 and denies the views of Primal Le dynasty's historians in *Complete Annals of Dai Viet* by stating that the Mac dynasty did not cut land and the people of Quy and Thuan prefectures. At the same time, the Nguyen dynasties also relied on *Shèngyú Dizhǐ* and *Dai Qing Yi Tongzhi* to argue that:

“The Ming dynasty admitted that in the second year of Mac Minh Duc, which is the 7th year of Ming Jiajing (1528), historical notes show that Mac Dang Dung was afraid of being asked for sin by the Ming dynasty, and he planned to offer land to the people of two prefectures Quy and Thuan. Since then, Vietnam and China have gone back and forth. But now, looking at our country map, we have Quy Hoa prefecture and Thuan prefecture. These two prefectures are now in Hung Hoa province. In “*Dai Qing Yi Tongzhi*”, although it is noted that the Quy and Thuan prefectures were initially in Tran An, Guangxi province. The two areas formerly known as Quy and Thuan are now probably the prefectures of Quy Hoa and Thuan Chau.

In 1538, Mac Dang Dung was told that the Ming dynasty's army had come to fight. He was afraid, and he ordered the mission to haul down their flag and lied by saying that the Primal Le dynasty had no successors. Mac Dang Dung and his son were credited for exemplary service to the country and were rewarded with commendations. Mac Dang Dung did not offer the petition to the mission because Lang Son province (Vietnam) had previously been occupied by Tran Cung, causing an obstruction to the border areas and keeping the frontier passage closed. From the 7th year (1528) to the 17th year (1538) of Jiajing, there had never been a mission to go back and forth. Nevertheless, in the 7th year of Jiajing, the Nguyen dynasty's history book hastily recorded that: “Mac Dang Dung contemplated cutting the land to submit to two prefectures Quy and Thuan, from which the south and the north has a mission to go back and forth. In this regard, the things the old historians wrote were all false, so they withdrew and copied them here for reference” (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, pp. 116–117).

According to the above records, the Nguyen dynasty's historians denied that Mac Dang Dung cut land from Quy and Thuan prefectures. They initially pointed out the difference in the location of the two prefectures in Vietnamese and Chinese documents. The Vietnamese map confirms the presence of the Quy Hoa and Thuan Chau prefectures in Hung Hoa province, while the Chinese report states the communities were located in Guangxi province.

Regarding the events 1528, Vietnamese scholar Dao Duy Anh stated in the *Complete Annals of Dai Viet* (Lien, 1968):

“In *Ming's history*, volume 321 only wrote: (Usurped the throne) over a year, (Mac Dang Dung) sent a mission to Lang Son city to pay tribute but the mission was beaten and returned, they did not write that Dang Dung submitted two prefectures of Quy and Thuan. Besides, the areas of Quy and Thuan were initially taken from the Ly dynasty (1009–1225).

The two prefectures formerly known as Quy & Thuan are now Quy Hoa and Thuan An. A dictionary of Chinese place names said that during the rule of the Song dynasty, Quy Hoa was in the district of Nghi Son, Guangxi province. The Song dynasty located Quy Hoa prefecture at Vat Duong land, submitted by Nung Tri Hoi. Song Dynasty located Thuan An prefecture at Vat Ac land, which Nung Ton Dan submitted, and the land of Loi Hoa, Ke Thanh and Wen Nhuan. These two prefectures later became the Quy–Thuan prefecture of Guangxi Province” (Lien, 1968, p. 347).

In 1993, when Ha Van Tan annotated *The Complete Annals of Dai Viet*, once again, he concurred with the view of Dao Duy Anh: “Regarding the submission of land, it is not noted in Ming's history. The Song dynasty took two prefectures from the Ly dynasty, which were Quy Hoa and Thuan An”. By the time of the

Mac dynasty, these two prefectures became Quy–Thuan prefecture of Guangxi province.” (Lien, 1993, p. 112).

According to the above argument, the two prefectures of Quy and Thuan were the land of Vat Duong and Vat Ac before they were submitted to the Song dynasty by Nung Ton Dan and Nung Tri Hoi of the Ly dynasty. Later the areas became the Quy–Thuan prefecture of Guangxi Province (China). This also coincides with the Chinese version of events. For example, in *The Xu Zizhi Tongjian*, Ly Tao of the Song Dynasty copied the petition that Hung Ban sent—the Governor of Guangxi—“In 1057, Nung Ton Dan submitted the prefecture of Vat Ac, and the king named it Thuan An district. In 1064, Nung Tri Hoi submitted the prefecture of Vat Duong and the king named it Quy Hoa district.” (Long, 2001, p. 79). In the chapter “Guangyuan district” found in Song's history book, this event is explained in detail: “The Nung also had a man named Ton Dan, who was violent and cunning, serving as the chieftain of Loi Hoa prefecture. In 1057, Ton Dan brought troops for a marauding raid on Song land. Tieu Co was the governor of Que Chau district that enticed Ton Dan into surrender and confirmed Ton Dan as the Lieutenant General. He appointed his son Nhat Tan the leader of the On Nhuan prefecture. In the year of 7th Gia Huu (1062), Ton Dan and his son took the prefectures of Loi Hoa and Ke Thanh depending on the hinterland (followed to rely on Song Dynasty) and asked to return them to Lac Chau to be a permanent part of the Song dynasty. The court allowed Ton Dan to govern Thuan An district and gave buffaloes, salt, silk, and cloth. That year, the Nung Ha Thanh, Nung Binh and Nung Luong were also from Mac Ma hamlet to follow to rely on. Later Nhat Tan (Nung Ton Dan's son) looked after the taxes in Ung prefecture.” (*History of Song Dynasty*—Guangzhou district 495, biographies 234, vol. 4, pp. 5752–5754).

So, the prefecture of Vat Duong was submitted by Nung Tri Hoi to the Song dynasty, who changed the name to the Quy Hoa prefecture. The area of Vat Ac was submitted by Nung Ton

Dan to the Song dynasty, who converted it into the Thuan An prefecture. As two local Vietnamese leaders of the Ly dynasty, Nung Tri Hoi and Nung Ton Dan, brought land and people fled to the Song dynasty, the kings of the Ly and Tran dynasties (Dai Viet) tried many times to bring their troops to the Song dynasty aimed at retaining these lands. Song dynasty records state:

“In the 8th Yuanfeng year (1085), Jiāozhǐ brought troops to destroy the Quy Hoa prefecture by pretending that he was arresting Nung Tri Cao. He ordered the mandarin Le Van Thinh (1084) to Guangxi to determine the boundaries of the Thuan An and Quy Hoa prefectures.” (*History of Song Dynasty* 488, vol. 4, 5634–5663); “At that time, the court assigned Thuan Chau (in Guangyuan) to Ly Can Duc, and because the boundary was not properly divided Jiāozhǐ invaded the Vat Duong prefecture and chased out Nung Tri Hoi and Tri Hoi. Ly Can Duc asked for his withdrawal and said his mistake was to ask for forgiveness” (*History of Song Dynasty* 334, biographies 93, vol. 4, 4072–4073); “Ly Can Duc submitted a memorial to the Yuanyou dynasty (1086–1093) to reclaim the land of Vat Ac and Vat Duong, but the Song Dynasty disagreed (*History of Song Dynasty*, biographies 147, vol. 4, 5654–5663). Many attempts to reclaim the land of Vat Ac and Vat Duong of the Ly Dynasty were unsuccessful.

According to the *Records on administrative systems of successive dynasties* book, following the Ly Dynasty, in the Tran dynasty (1226–1400), King Tran Anh Tong (reign: 1293–1314) continued to claim land. He ordered more than 30,000 troops to go suddenly to the Tran Yen land and again assigned troops to take over the Quy–Thuan prefecture” (Chu, 2007, p. 647). This event was later confirmed. “The Yuan dynasty re-defined the territory to the north clearly, and Tran Yen's chairman of the Yuan dynasty

(Trieu Giac) arrested people from Ta Lang district, took one pot of gold and encroached on more than 1000 fields. The King (Tran King) sent troops to fight in the Quy–Thuan and Duong Loi prefectures of the Yuan Dynasty” (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 560).

According to the above reflections, the land in Quy and Thuan prefectures belonged to the Song dynasty, the Yuan dynasty and later the Ming dynasty. Although the Ly and Tran dynasties of Dai Viet repeatedly asked for land, they were unsuccessful in their requests. Therefore, during the Mac dynasty, Quy and Thuan prefectures were still owned by China and were located in Guangxi province. Consequently, it appears that the affirmation recorded by the Revival Le dynasty that the Mac dynasty cut land from Quy and Thuan prefectures to give to the Ming dynasty in 1528 is incorrect. It was just the act of returning land that did not belong to Dai Viet for a long time.

The Mac dynasty returned the old land of Qinzhou

On November 3, 1540, Mac Thai To and his subjects came to the border to submit their petitions and submission to the Ming. This event was recorded in both Vietnamese and Chinese records.

The historical documents of the Revival Le dynasty specifically discuss the event: “In the winter of November, Mac Dang Dung with his grandchild, Van Minh, and his subjects Nguyen Nhu Que, Do The Khanh, Dang Van Tri, Le Thuyen, Nguyen Tong, To Van Toc, Nguyen Kinh Te, Duong Duy Nhat and Bui Chi Vinh, went to Nam Quan town (i.e., Friendship Pass). Each took a long stick and tied the rope around their necks. They were barefoot to prostrate themselves at the Mac palace of Ming Dynasty. They knelt, bowed their heads and submitted the petition for surrender, along with documents about their land, people, the army and mandarins of the nation. They offered the six *dong* (i.e., village) of Te Phu, Kim Lac, Co Sam, Lieu Cat, An Luong, La Phu in the Vinh An and Yen Quang and asked for the incorporation of these places into Qinzhou” (Lien, 1993, p. 121). According to the above records in *Complete Annals of Great Viet*, in 1540, the Mac dynasty surrendered to the Ming dynasty. It carved up the land in 6 villages (Te Phu, Kim Lac, Co Sam, Lieu Cat, An Luong, La Phu of Vinh An district, Yen Quang town) to offer to the Ming dynasty.

During the Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945), it was recorded in *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet* that: “Mac Dang Dung went to the border of Ming territory to surrender and he offered five villages to bribe the Ming dynasty” (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p. 113). It is notable that *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet* based on *The Record of Qinzhou* mentions that only five were offered to the Ming dynasty, rather than the six villages recorded in the Revival Le Dynasty’s documents: “Mac Dang Dung surrendered to the Ming dynasty and gave control of Te Phu, Kim Lac, Co Sam, Lieu Cat, La Phu and An Luong villages in Vinh An district and An Quang to Qinzhou. The Record of Qinzhou of the Qing dynasty states that in the Gia Tinh reign (1522–1566), Mac Dang Dung submitted five villages, which were Te Phu, La Phu, Co Sa, Lieu Cat and Kim Lac. There is no mention of An Luong. At present, An Luong village is located on An Luong street in the Van Ninh district of Dai Viet. It is possible that An Luong was never submitted and that the historical documents are inaccurate” (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p. 116).

Chinese records of the event show a different perspective. According to *Ming Shilu*, the Chief of Qinzhou Lam Hy Nguyen submitted a memorial to Emperor Jiajing to ask Dai Viet “to

return four villages” (Thao, 2010, p. 211) because Dai Viet had previously usurped. Moreover, according to *Ming Shilu*, “I (i.e., Mac Dang Dung) have heard recently that Lam Hy Nguyen claims that Ty Lam, Kim Lac, Co Sam, Lieu Cat belonged to Nhu Tich, Thiep Lang capitals, which belonged to Qinzhou. If that is true, I would like to obey” (Thao, 2010, p. 216). *Ming records* state, “Mao Bowen is stationed at the border and gave the orders to entice the Jiaozhi people into capturing Mac Dang Dung and his children by rewarding them generously. Mac Dang Dung was frightened, so he pledged to tie himself up and receive punishment, to return four villages of Qinzhou district, and to accept inferiority by serving and paying tributes to the Ming forever” (*Ming History*, vol. 48, 67a–74a, sheet 74, 148).

Unlike *The Complete Annals of Dai Viet* and *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet*, Chinese historical records such as *Ming History*, *Ming Shilu* did not think that Mac Thai To carved up the land of Dai Viet to gift to the Ming dynasty. Instead, they believe he was “returning the land of Qinzhou district”, formerly part of China, to the Ming dynasty. They did, however, re-affirm the surrender of Mac Thai To.

What are the facts and fiction of this event? Did the Mac dynasty carve up their land, or did they return the Ming dynasty’s ancient land? Which villages were included in that land?

In terms of the number of villages

The number of villages returned or carved and offered to the Ming Dynasty was recorded inconsistently in different sources.

The inconsistencies regarding the event are presented in the *Complete Annals of Dai Viet*, where it states that Mac Thai To “submitted the land of 6 villages” to the Ming dynasty (Lien, 1993, p. 121), but then also points out that Mac Thai To “returned the land of four seized villages” on page 122 (Lien, 1993, p. 122).

Meanwhile, *The Systematic Historical Dai Viet* recorded that Mac Dang Dung submitted four villages: Tu Lam, Kim Lac, Co Sam and Lieu Cat in Yen Quang and Vinh Yen districts to Qinzhou (Don, 1973, p. 43). In the *Rules of the Dynasties Recorded in Categories*, Phan Huy Chu has the same opinion and states that the Mac Dynasty offered two districts and four villages to the Ming dynasty. “At dawn, the Mac dynasty offered two districts and four villages to the Ming dynasty (Chu, 2005, p. 32). Also, in *The National History of Vietnam*, Phan Boi Chau states that the Mac dynasty carved up two districts and four villages to offer to the Ming dynasty: “Mac Dang Dung usurped the throne of the Primal Le dynasty; afraid of being held to account by the Ming dynasty; he carved up two districts: Thach Tich and Niem Lang, and four villages: Co Sam, Tu Lam, Kim Lac, Lieu Cat to offer to the Ming dynasty.” (Chau, 1982, p. 112).

In contrast, in the *Outline History of Vietnam*, Tran Trong Kim said that the Mac dynasty had carved up five villages rather than four or six. “By November 1540, seeing that the Ming army was prepared to fight, Mac Dang Dung was frightened, so he let Mac Phuc Hai stay to safeguard the country while he went with Vu Nhu Que and 40 subjects to tie themselves and surrender at Friendship Pass. They vowed to submit land, field records and records about the citizens. They offered the land of 5 villages: Te Phu, Co Sam, Kim Lac, Lieu Cat, La Phu, the Qinzhou district land, and silver and gold for the Ming dynasty only.” (Kim, 2008, pp. 294–295). *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet* also states that Mac Dang Dung pledged to return the land of five villages, including Te Phu, Kim Lac, Co Sam, Lieu Cat, La Phu in the Vinh An district, Yen Quang was to be independent in the Qinzhou district of the Ming dynasty.” (Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007b, p. 116).

According to the above information, even the number of villages carved up or returned to the Ming Dynasty of the Mac Dynasty was not recorded consistently.

In 1540, did Mac Thai To offer or return the land to Ming Dynasty?

According to records of the Ming dynasty, during the Primal Le dynasty, the two prefectures of Thiep Lang and Nhu Tich were the land of Qinzhou and not of Dai Viet. Verbatim: on January 19, 1435: “Two prefectures of Nhu Tich and Thiep Lang are adjacent to the Van Ninh District (Jiaozhi), before Le Loi’s reactionary, the people including Hoang Khoan are forced, assisting Barbarians. Recently, due to the grace of being enlightened, the Khoan is willing to follow the enemy and disobey” (Thao, 2010, p. 236). Also recorded in the diplomatic document that the Ming dynasty sent to the Primal Le dynasty in 1442:

“... April 18, 1442

The envoy of Annam, Le Quyen retired. The crown, headband, and knitted clothes were given to King Le Lan. “I am obliged to serve Heaven and treat the people of domestic and foreign worlds as the red children of the imperial; I want everywhere to be wealthy, not contrary to Heaven. Our deceased emperor can follow Heaven, ignore battle matters, and treat people well. The previous generation desires to make you King of Annam after your father. It is also to follow the desire of the heavens, with the love of people. Last year: Hoang Kim Quang, a member of Qinzhou-Guangdong, was seduced by the people of your country to do wrong things, giving two prefectures Thiep Lang and Nhu Tich to Annam. Your father (Le Loi) was persuaded to set up the guards in Nha Cat village. Forcing 281 households to follow, and invade the border area, you and your father did not know. Usually, these 281 households do not cause damage to this place and would be useful in other places, but the one who values the truth cannot lie to Heaven, the ordination was sent to Hoang Khoan to put 281 households under the management of Qinzhou. Their sin was also forgiven without investigating; the setup defense must be removed as before, to express respect to Heaven, to worship the great country, you will enjoy peace forever. Approved!” (Thao, 2010, pp. 28–29).

According to the above document, Thiep Lang and Nhu Tich belonged to the Qinzhou district under the Ming dynasty. The document was created to express the displeasure of the Ming dynasty when Le Thai To invaded the border area and forced 218 households to follow him.

However, in the *Geographical Gazetteer* of the Song dynasty (960–1276), Nhu Tich is said to have belonged to Qinzhou since the Song dynasty. *Ling wai dai da* states in the “Qinzhou, Hépǔ Xiàn prefecture patrol” part of Chu Khu Phi (周去非), which was written in 1178, that Nhu Tich was a key position at the border from the time of the Song dynasty (Zhou, pp. 17–18).

Based on *The Complete Annals of Dai Viet*, and *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet*, Nhu Tich belonged to Qinzhou and the Song dynasty from the tenth century onwards and not from the XII century as reflected by *Ling wai dai da*. The *Complete Annals of Dai Viet*, referring to the Early Le Dynasty in 996 stated, “In the past, the Van Dung people were in Trieu Duong, they rebelled and killed people then ran to Nhu Tich, which belongs to Qinzhou district of the Song dynasty (Nhu Tich town is adjacent to Nhu Hong town). The King ordered Trieu Duong’s general, Hoang Thanh Nha, chasing Van Dung. Lenh Duc exarch refused to return. When Nghien Tau arrived, Nhu Tich found the cause of the harboring, bringing all the hidden boys and girls, young people of 113 people, calling Hoang Thanh Nha to hand them over. The King thanked the Song dynasty and sent the missionary to thank.” (Lien, 1993,

p. 229; Historiography Institute of Nguyen Dynasty, 2007a, p. 250).

In Literally Abbreviated Records of Annam during the Tran dynasty, Le Tac indirectly affirmed that Nhu Tich belonged to Qinzhou district when writing, “Quanzhou district has three towns near the coast: Nhu Am (Nhu Tich), Nhu Hong, and Xung Bo. Previously, the Van Dung people of Trieu Duong under Jiaozhou were sentenced to murder, then escaped with his family to Nhu Am town (Nhu Tich)” (Le, 2012, p. 359). Van Dung found a way to escape to Nhu Tich during the Tran dynasty, which confirms that before the Mac dynasty, Nhu Tich was the land of Qinzhou province in China (Le, 2012, p. 359).

According to *Qinzhou history*, in the northeast border area (China), just outside Nhu Tich, there are two more towns called Thoi La and Chiem Lang with seven villages, Chiem Lang, Thoi La, Tu Lam, Lieu Cat, Co Sam, Kim Lac and La Phu. The villages of Tu Lam, La Phu, Lieu Cat and Kim Lac belong to Nhu Tich, while Co Sam and Chiem Lang villages belong to Chiem Lang. Thoi La village is also part of the town of Thoi La (Lin Xi Yuan, 1982, 10a). When comparing this account with the records from 1540, except for the Chiem Lang village, the remaining six villages listed in Qinzhou are the same as those documented in the *Complete Annals of Dai Viet*, *Rules of the Dynasties Recorded in Categories*, and *The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet*.

Moreover, in the Yuan dynasty, the chief of Tu Lam village was Hoang The Hoa. Owing to his contribution to preserving border security, he was granted the seal to manage the seven villages. Then in 1368, when the Ming dynasty was established, two Generals, Luu Vinh Trung and Chu Luong To, were sent to Qinzhou to consolidate the new regime’s power.

They changed the position from “head” to “chief” and granted a new seal. The population here was relatively high during this period, particularly in 1427. The four villages of Tu Lam, Co Sam, Kim Lac and Lieu Cat had 29 hamlets with 292 households (Cac and Claudine Salmon, 1998, p. 47). These records show that under the Yuan dynasty (China), which is equivalent to the Tran dynasty in Dai Viet, these villages belonged to Qinzhou (China). Why did the Yuan dynasty have the right to send people to govern these villages if not?

Qinzhou History mentions that “In 1427, the chief of Tu Lam villages was Hoang Kim Quang, and the chief of Co Sam village was Hoang Khoan, together with Hoang Tu Kieu and Hoang Kien, ruled over four villages with 29 hamlets and 292 households to Annam” (Lin Xi Yuan, 1982, pp. 10–11). Thus, in 1427, the chiefs of the four villages mentioned above followed the Primal Le dynasty. Tu Lam, Kim Lac, and Lieu Cat villages belonged to Nhu Tich, while Co Sam belonged to Chiem Lang. When examining the Primal dynasty, three villages of Nhu Tich were classified into the Van Ninh ward, while Co Sam village belonged to the Tan Yen ward of Dai Viet at that time (Sieu, 1997, p. 397). The Primal Le dynasty also granted titles to these chiefs. Because of this event, in 1442, the Ming dynasty sent a sensitive document to the Primal Le dynasty shortly afterwards, expressing their disapproval (Thao, 2010, pp. 28–29). After that, the Ming dynasty tried to seduce and buy off these chiefs several times but failed. In September 1440, a royal adviser of Chu Giam brought three mandarins to Qinzhou to advise Hoang Kim Quang, Hoang Khoan, Hoang Tu Kieu and Hoang Kien. However, not all of them turned up for the meeting, so Chu Giam eventually left (Lin Xi Yuan, 1982, 11b).

All attempts by the Ming dynasty to bribe them to return to China before 1540 were unsuccessful. From 1427 to 1540, the villages of Tu Lam, Co Sam, Kim Lac and Lieu Cat still followed the Primal Le dynasty (Dai Viet).

In 1540, the situation changed, and the Ming dynasty was threatened directly by military actions against the descendants of

these chiefs so that they would leave Dai Viet and return to China. This threat was confirmed in the report of Mao Bowen—Army General, in 1540. “The executives of the four villages: Tu Lam, Co Sam, Lieu Cat and Kim Lac of Qinzhou were former titles of Annam..., so please follow the standard of Qinzhou’s book and the present preference. Three years later, the salary will be given according to the rank”. (Yan Congjian, 1993, p. 229)

Thus, at the end of 1540 and before the events that the Revival Le dynasty recorded as the “surrender” of Mac Thai To, the four villages were returned to China and are logged in Qinzhou’s book as being under Ming control. Therefore, there is no such thing as the four villages being offered to the Ming dynasty. In the context that the chiefs of villages had followed the Ming dynasty in advance, the Mac dynasty could only acknowledge what had previously been answered by the Emperor of Song: “The lands occupied by the Song dynasty will be returned to Jiaozhi, but the lands that its leader returned by himself cannot be returned.” (Han, 1994, p. 246). In a letter submitted to the Emperor of the Ming dynasty in 1540, Mac Thai To also acknowledges that: “The guard of Qinzhou said that the villages of Tu Lam, Kim Lac, Co Sam and Lieu Cat of 2 prefectures of Nhu Tich and Chiem Lang are the old land of Qinzhou. If that is the case, then those lands were mistakenly taken by the previous dynasty (The Primitive Le dynasty). Now, I would like to offer these lands to Qinzhou”. (Yan Congjian, 1993, p. 227).

As the villages no longer belonged to the Mac dynasty, it is impossible to say that the Mac dynasty cut the land for the Ming dynasty. Instead, it was the returning of land that did not belong to them anymore.

The Mac’s substantive independence in its relations with China at this time

The Mac Thai To offering/returning land to the Ming dynasty received severe condemnation and criticism from the historians of the Revival Le dynasty and the Nguyen dynasty (Vietnam), even, later, the Vietnamese historian Tran Trong Kim in *Outline History of Vietnam* also said: “Being a king but not keeping his reputation fully, so that he had to strip himself naked and tie himself to pray for his own riches, he was a person who does not know integrity. For the King is a rebellious god, for the country is treason, for the human way of living there is no dignity, who is such a person who admires? An inheritance built up by such vile wickedness will never be enduring” (Kim, 2006, p. 145).

Is it difficult to identify a better solution that may have existed for the Mac rulers at that time?

The most considerable risk that the Mac dynasty faced was the attempt to invade by the Ming dynasty. With the title of “rescue Primal Le, destroy Mac”, the Ming waited for an opportunity to send troops to Dai Viet to punish the Mac rulers for taking over the throne, being rebellious, and not offering tributes, as detailed in the report of General Ha Ngon and the Emperor’s response: “Annam has not paid the tribute for 20 years. Dang Dung and Tran Cao were rebels. If they were wrong, send people to investigate, find the major sin in advance. If the road is not usable, then the envoy cannot go, and it should be postponed.” Emperor of Ming dynasty replied, “The rebellion in Annam is clear, so it was urgent to send the officers to investigate, the Emperor discuss with Ha Ngon and the army to bring troops to fight Annam.” (*History of Ming* 321, pp. 104–105).

However, in the context when the internal Ming court was seriously divided by the two factions (war party and peace party), when the Ming dynasty itself was under tremendous pressure from the continuous rebellion of peasants, Mongol harassment and piracy raging throughout Jiangsu, Fujian, and

Guangdong... the Ming dynasty chose the solution of amplifying prestige, military threats in combination with recruitment (Thao, 2010, pp. 210–214). At this time, through Cuu Loan and Mao Bowen, the Ming dynasty “propagated” to Dai Viet to seduce and force the Mac dynasty to agree: “If anyone brings the district to surrender, they will be assigned to be the main ruler of that district. Killing or arresting Mac Dang Dung and his son will get a reward of 20,000 (tael?) gold”, “Mac Dang Dung and his son do want to tie up their hands to commit the crime, fully charge the people’s civil status, pay tribute, obey the destiny, will be forgiven crime of death” (Thao, 2010, pp. 210–214). This is really an optimal solution for the Ming dynasty at this time.

It is worth mentioning that the Mac dynasty faced the Chinese risk in the north and also from Lao Qua, Xa Ly, and Bat Bach, small nations located in the west and northwest of Dai Viet (Thao, 2010, p. 202). Furthermore, Dai Viet was also at risk of encroachment from the sea by Champa. Champa became a significant player in the Ming plan to take over Dai Viet. (Thao, 2010, pp. 211–212).

In such an urgent situation, Dai Viet was divided and in turmoil. The opposition from the old mandarins of Primal Le dynasty and especially the revival of the Revival Le dynasty from 1533 became a permanent danger from inside for the Mac dynasty.

Generally, the Mac now falls into a more dangerous situation because of the threat from domestic and foreign forces. In particular, there was the threat that the five internal and foreign forces mentioned above could work together to attack the Mac dynasty at the same time.

Facing such a disadvantageous situation, Mac Thai To chose not to fight because victory was improbable, and the country could fall into the hands of the northern enemy. Not resisting would have been the same as giving themselves to China. Therefore, the Mac dynasty chose a strategy of fighting and surrendering simultaneously. They pretended to surrender by giving up the titles, offering to follow the calendar Ming Dynasty, returning the land of four villages, and offering tributes (Lien, 1993, p. 122). While doing these activities, the Mac dynasty prepared to protect the country if war broke out.

The Mac dynasty rushed to “repair the camp and prepare the navy. They solicited all the former officers and generals to discuss the country’s matters.” (Don, 1976, p. 343). From here, the atmosphere of preparing for the war was everywhere: “people were picking poison for their swords, putting the pulp in the water stream, cutting the copper pipe buried in the ground to stop the horse’s legs. They announced that a scout team had gone the sea to ambush Guangdong” (Yan Congjian, 1993, p. 132). The people and the Mac dynasty’s army had a fierce warrior spirit. A large naval force landed on the coast of China, secretly scouting Ming’s combat objectives to try and beat the enemy from behind (though unsuccessfully). Therefore, there is the following event: In 1543, the Ming sentenced the Mac armies that had been sent to scout in 1537 to the death penalty (Thao, 2010, p. 224). The Mac dynasty also used people to monitor the military activities of the Ming dynasty closely. For example, the Nguyen Canh officer was sent in 1537 and arrested by the Ming army while trying to collect information (Thuan, 2001, p. 233). That is not to mention a system of fortified border posts that the Ming called “bandit camps”.

So, one of the crimes committed by the Ming Dynasty against Mac Dang Dung was to set up the military at the border gate (Deng, 1937, pp. 24–27). At the border, the Mac dynasty placed troops in strongholds and at gates to defend themselves from attack. The remnants of the citadel that have lasted until today from the Mac dynasty are Lang Son, Cao Bang, Hoa Binh, Hung Hoa, Bac Ninh, Bac Giang, Tuyen Quang, Hoanh Bo, Cam Pha

and Dam Ha, Quang Yen, Quang Ninh, Cat Ba, Thanh Den, Thuy Nguyen, and Hai Phong citadels. They are proof of the careful preparation of the Mac dynasty to respond to the attacks of the Ming army.

The Mac dynasty's willingness to fight to protect national independence was one of the reasons why the Ming dynasty, from July 1536 to October 1540, sent the Mao Bowen with the army and Cuu Loan to approach the border of Dai Viet but ordered them not to attack immediately. When the Mac dynasty submitted and tied themselves up in Friendship Pass to maintain peace between the vassal and the suzerain, the Ming Dynasty had an excuse to let Mao Bowen withdraw troops without denting their pride. Moreover, the Ming dynasty "ordered the soldiers to retreat... and appointed Dang Dung as Annam Governor," although, in fact, "Dang Dung has not received the title of Governor" (History of Ming Dynasty 102, 67a–71a). The Ming dynasty also acknowledged, "Dang Dung is an insidious person, knowing China does not want to use the military (Mac Dang Dung) only brought tributes to the imperial once, then he stopped paying tribute, and he has the freedom to control the country" (History of Ming Dynasty 120, 61a–66b). Thus, while the Revival Le dynasty was recognized by the Ming Dynasty in 1597, right from 1540, the Mac Dynasty was acknowledged by the Ming Dynasty. This recognition shows the legitimacy that the Mac dynasty had at that time. From this moment on, the situation on the northern border of Dai Viet stabilized, and the Mac dynasty no longer faced the threat of the Ming Dynasty.

Conclusion

Mac Thai To used a flexible strategy to bolster Mac dynasty's strength and sacrificed his honor to preserve independence and peace for the country and its people. With the combined policy of fighting and showing humility and flexibility, the Mac dynasty was able to reduce the threat posed by the Ming dynasty by allowing them to withdraw troops from the border without denting their pride. It allowed the Ming dynasty to escape the expectations of the militant faction regarding conflict with Dai Viet. Also, it made the Ming reluctant to look down on the military power of the Mac dynasty. Accordingly, all attempts and schemes to impose Dai Viet from the internal militant forces of the Ming dynasty at this time were inactivated by the Mac dynasty's peaceful, non-war methods.

As the Mac were weaker than China, they chose a solution of humility and obedience and returned the land to cool down the ambitions of the Chinese to invade. These behaviors were the actions of a wise smaller country with a larger, stronger neighbor. Therefore, a nominally "obeying" (or "pretending" as per Keith W. Taylor's statement, Keith, 1993, p. 271) and accepting the role of the vassal obviously benefits Dai Viet more than war.

We will see a fundamental difference between the act of submitting to China from the Mac dynasty and the Revival Le Dynasty. Many people identified the Mac dynasty's submission with requesting the Chinese army to bring troops to assist in the long war against the Mac dynasty of the Revival Le dynasty. However, let's look deeper into the essence of the matter. The Revival Le Dynasty repeatedly requested Chinese assistance to attack and destroy the Mac dynasty. Whereas the Mac kings only sought support to avoid isolation in an unequal battle, but they never asked China to send troops into Dai Viet. Upon discovering the weakness of the Revival Le dynasty and the Chinese plot to dissolve and weaken Dai Viet, the Mac dynasty took advantage of them to maintain a balance of power with the Revival Le Dynasty for a long time. Mac Ngoc Lien's final statement attested to the desire not to invite Chinese troops into Dai Viet to avoid the people falling into the war (Lien, 1993, p. 189).

Furthermore, after 1540, the head of the Mac dynasty was appointed the role of General Governor by the Chinese Emperor (i.e., the governor of a region). However, Mac Thai To, Mac Thai Tong, Mac Hien Tong, Mac Tuyen Tong and the Mac Muc Tong were the kings of a country that was independent and self-reliant. Even the Mac kings also proclaimed Emperor, using gold seals, making all the right decisions to grant titles to his children. For example, in 1537, he appointed his child, Kinh Dien, as King. Also, others were assigned according to their level (Lien, 1993, p. 120). In 1542, Mac Hien Tong granted the title of King to Kinh Dien and his children (Lien, 1993, p. 123). This also confirmed the Han "cultural resistance" trend (Woodside, 1988, p. 13) and substantive independence (Tsuboi, 1992, p. 43) of the Mac Dynasty in the diplomatic relations with China at that time.

Data availability

All data analyzed are contained in the article.

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Notes

- 1 The Mac Dynasty in period 1527–1541 was under the leadership of the following kings: Mac Dang Dung (Mac Thai To) (reign: 1527–1529), Mac Dang Doanh (Mac Thai Tong) (reign: 1530–1540) and Mac Phuc Hai (Mac Hien Tong) (reign: 1541–1546).
- 2 During the Chinese domination period (Vietnam was colonized by China), the Tang Dynasty in China named Vietnam (corresponding to present-day northern Vietnam) as Annam. After gaining independence, Vietnamese kings often had to receive Chinese ordination, the title of king of Annam (since 1164). Since then, the Chinese have often referred to Vietnam as Annam, regardless of the country's name. The name Annam used by the Chinese was gradually followed by Europeans. In modern history, "Annam" was used in French to refer to the central part of Vietnam ruled by the Hue court of the Nguyen Dynasty under the auspices of France. Nowadays, Vietnamese people often understand the word "Annam" in a negative sense (DeFrancis, 1977), implying national disdain and therefore do not like to use it (Christopher, 1995).
- 3 Dai Viet is the national title of Vietnam since the Ly dynasty, starting in 1054, when King Ly Thanh Tong ascended the throne, to 1804, through the Ly, Tran, Primal Le, Mac, Revival Le and Tay Son dynasties, about 743 years. This national title existed intermittently, interrupted for 7 years during the Ho Dynasty and 20 years under the domination of the Ming Dynasty.
- 4 The Revival Le dynasty (1533–1789) was the later period of the Primal Le Dynasty (1428–1527) in Vietnamese history.

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Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Ethical approval

This research did not involve human participants.

Informed consent

This research did not involve human participants.

Additional information

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