

BARBARIANS AND THE *KINH - TRẠI* SEPARATION: PERCEPTIONS OF THE ĐẠI VIỆT DYNASTIES ON THE UPLANDS (11TH-16TH CENTURIES)

Đỗ Thị Thùy Lan*

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Abstract

In the studies of Vietnamese territorial expansion, the perception of the 'March to the South' has become overwhelming in scholarship. Beginning in the 16th century and in collaboration with the group of Nguyễn Lords, the southward movement turned out to be most active and was able to reach the end of the long coast-line forming the shape of the letter S that characterizes modern Vietnam's territory. Ever since then, the Việt people have been dominant in the Central region, the Lower Mekong and have even touched the Central Highlands in the West. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese history of going up to the mountains and going west started much earlier and it was another part of the history that has not been covered to any depth in Anglophone publications, despite a number of excellent works, especially in recent years (Anderson 2007, Churchman 2016, Baldanza 2016, Davis 2017, Anderson & Whitmore 2017, Lentz 2019, and others). While these authors so far have focused on the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands and the Northeast uplands, mostly over a limited period, this article offers an overview of the relationship between the Đại Việt central state and the entire upland regions through a '*longue durée*' approach, from the Pre-Modern to the Early Modern periods. The Northwest region will be the focus both spatially and chronologically. Firstly, I seek to answer the following question: What were the conceptualizations that the Đại Việt imperial courts of Lý, Trần and Lê had built up towards the people and lands in the mountainous areas around Thăng Long (Hanoi), further up to the Northeast and especially the Northwest regions? Although retaining the traditional view of looking north from the delta, this study attempts to challenge the theoretical concept of 'Zomia' about the disjunction between highland and lowland polities, as seen from the case of Lý - Trần - Lê Đại Việt and its surrounding powers.

Keywords: *Upland Vietnam; Premodern Vietnam; Early Modern Vietnam; Sino-Vietnamese borderlands; Westward expansion; Đại Việt; Zomia*

*University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.
Email: landttt@ussh.edu.vn

1. Introduction

The history of the uplands is a new direction in Vietnamese history. A view from the mountains, or a diverse and comprehensive Vietnamese history and culture, have only been taken up by anthropologists and historians over the last 10 years (typically Oscar Salemink 2011, Phan Huy Lê 2007, 2012) [45] (pp. 27-50), [41] (pp. 11-32).¹ Nevertheless, there have been many scholars, both inside and outside Vietnam, who have been eager to venture into the upstream regions to explore and fill in the gaps in conventional historiography. In that connection, the Zomia theory of the outstanding political scientist James C. Scott is an ambitious proposal [47]. Unexpectedly for a reader from Vietnam, I find that there are quite a few shortcomings in it, however.

In terms of space, the mountainous Northeastern region of Vietnam that is also the area of the Tay - Nung - Zhuang groups in the Vietnam - China borderlands are excluded (maps published by Jean Michaud have corrected this) [24] (pp. 188, 203, 205). And even though they are included in Zomia space, there is almost no data on the Northwest mountains and the entire Central Highlands of Vietnam. The notion of Zomia focuses on Burma, Southwest China, and North Mainland Southeast Asia (but leans more towards modern Thailand). That is, J. Scott favors the area east of Willem Van Schendel's (2002) concept of Zomia [46] (pp. 275-307), but lacks Vietnam.

Regarding the time, although he mentions the chronology of Zomia and wants to consider it with historical depth from the end of the first millennium to the end of the second millennium AD, but, as Scott has acknowledged, Zomia has an 'expiry date', covering the period from the first half of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. However, there are Zomia-type phenomena that take place outside that chronology, such as the Kinh migration to the hills after World War II, which is mentioned by

Scott himself at the end of his book and also studied by Hồ Thành Tâm [13].

In terms of geographical altitude, the higher the habitats of the smaller ethnic groups and the further away they live, the more they have the characteristics of Zomia. For Vietnam, the H'mong people, living on the mountain peaks in the North since the 17th century and being very active in the 19th century [30], are the best example that is compatible with James Scott's theory. But what about the other groups? Where did power lie at the lower elevations, on the slopes, in the mountain valleys? And where were the Thai, Tay - Nung - Zhuang, and Muong powers of Vietnam active?

In terms of method, as historians Victor Lieberman and Michael Aung-Thwin have pointed out, there are major problems in Scott's work, such as adequate use of primary sources and incomplete data [22], [6] (pp. 95-99). We also need to take into account the specificities of each discipline, and the similarities and differences between Political Science, Anthropology and History.

In this article, as a Vietnamese historian, I shall do something rather simple, which is to use primary historical documents to tell some stories that are not totally new in Vietnam but will diverge from the concept of Zomia.

2. The Central Plains and Upland-Lowland Interactions in the Pre-Thăng Long Period

The determination of a central polity in the Red River Delta has long depended greatly on the natural environment and even on climatic periods. In Prehistoric times, whenever the earth's temperature warmed and the sea receded, the Son Vi (Late Stone Age) or Phùng Nguyên (Early Bronze Age) peoples moved away from the highland caves in the West and North, following the river banks, and went down to the plain. In the Early Iron Age, the Đông Sơn tribal alliances mastered the delta region, building the necessary material premises so that the first

seeds of the centralized political system could be incubated in Ancient North Vietnam, most notably the Âu Lạc state with Cổ Loa [16], the capital located on the top of the Central Red River Delta [18], [54]. Until Đại Việt was born in the 10th century, power centers were located in the plains: Mê Linh in the Han Dynasty was located on ancient Pleistocene alluvium, Luy Lâu and Long Biên from the Han to the Six Dynasties were also in the area on the left and right banks of the Red River [38], and at the beginning of the 7th century the period of Tống Bình - Đại La - Thăng Long (Hanoi) officially began.

In the year 1010, Lý Công Uẩn, the Emperor who launched the first long-lasting dynasty in the history of the Đại Việt monarchy, moved the capital from the limestone Muong region in the south of the Red River Delta to Thăng Long. Since then, the Lý Dynasty (1009-1226), as well as the later Trần, Hồ, Lê, Mạc and Lê Trịnh dynasties (the 13th-18th centuries), did not only occupy a fertile, flat, and open delta region, but also had to face adjacent and remote hills and mountains northeast and northwest of the delta. When describing the topography of Vietnam in general and the north of the country in particular, scholars often emphasize the high proportion of hills and mountains, although most of this terrain is located at medium altitude. As one of the two mountainous regions of Vietnam (Northern and Central Regions), the North has the Hoàng Liên Sơn range in the west of the Red River, which is the southeast end of the Himalayas, running from the northwest to the southeast, parallel to the flow of the Red River, along with a few small mountain ranges located in the northeast, the arcs of Việt Bắc and Bắc Sơn [48] (pp. 3, 5). The legacy of the Lý imperial family, a clan of Min (Chinese Fujian) origin [29], which grew up in the delta, included great regional diversity [44], [37].

It would be a mistake to assume that the first interactions between the highlands and the central state stationed in ancient Hanoi only

began with the Lý Dynasty. A major early event with upstream - downstream connections is recorded in the annals in the middle of the 6th century CE during an uprising in Giao Châu against the Liang domination of Southern Dynasties (China) [7] (p. 73), [55] (pp. 251-252).² Those highlands were quite far to the southwest in the upstream area of Thanh Hóa (modern North Central Vietnam) [14]:³

“Nam Đế’s brother [Lý] Thiên Bảo (李天寶), stayed in the barbarian (Di Lão/夷獠) area, proclaimed himself as King Đào Lang (桃郎王), established the Dã Năng country (野能國). Previously, when Nam Đế had hidden at Khuất Lão (屈獠) Động, Thiên Bảo together with a general of Lý clan named Phật Tử had brought thirteen thousand soldiers coming to Cửu Chân (九真). Trần Bá Tiên had chased and fought, Thiên Bảo had been defeated, so he had collected the remaining troops, ten thousand of people, ran to the land of the Di Lão in Ai Lao (哀牢), then saw the Dã Năng Động (野能洞) at the upstreams of Đào Giang (桃江源), and thought the flat, fertile land there could be inhabited, built a new citadel to live in, therefore after the name of that land he set the country’s name. Up to this moment, the army and his men proposed him to be the Lord, calling King Đào Lang” (TT-550);

“King Đào Lang died in the country of Dã Năng, without an heir, people proposed Lý Phật Tử to succeed the throne and to lead the army” (TT-555).

“... Thiên Bảo went to Cửu Chân. [Trần] Bá Tiên brought the army to pacify successfully, changed Cửu Chân to Ái Châu (愛州)” (VSL: entry of Dương Phiêu).

The extracts show that the leaders, Lý Bí (Nam Đế) and the Lý family, originally from the North (i.e. China), lived in the Red River Delta, relied on the “Lão” 獠 and “Di Lão” 夷獠 forces in the western mountains to fight against the Chinese. Lý Bí’s brother also ran to “Ai Lao”, founded the

Dã Nặng kingdom, and was proclaimed King Đào Lang. This was the first time that a Vietnamese lowland leader became a king in the highlands.⁴ The place name “Ai Lao” 哀牢 in the conception of Later Lê historians refers to the polities of Tai-speaking peoples to the west of Giao Châu - Đại Việt, including the political entities of Lão Qua 老撾/ Mường Luông (*Luang Prabang*), Vạn Tượng 萬象 (*Vientiane*) and (Tồn) Bồn Man (存) 盆蠻 (*Muang Phuan, Xiangkhouang*); before the 14th century, most of them were small independent Thai groups [49] (pp. 191-192), [31] (p. 26).

Studying the administrative history of a mountainous locality west of the Red River Delta, I also found that, at the end of the 3rd century CE, the Jin Dynasty had established a district unit here, even though the name in Chinese script (“Xidao district”, 西道縣) still had heavy geographical and indigenous ethnic characteristics (the Tay - Thai name is “Nậm Tao”, today’s Thao River) [21] (pp. 357-358, 419), [15] (p. 140), [54] (pp. 29, 41, 50), [10] (pp. 255-256). By the Tang Dynasty, the area was located in a district (*huyện/縣*, sometimes *quận/郡*) named “Chenghua” 承化 [14],⁵ which seems to have been subject to the civilization of the colonial government in Đại La. Thus, even before the Tang Dynasty, the first Chinese dynasty to establish a system of ‘*jimi zhou*’ (羈縻州, loosely governed local unit) in the mountainous north of Vietnam [41] (p. 438), influences from lowland polities had existed in the uplands, even sometimes quite intimate and two-way interactions took place.

3. The Barbarians Nearby

The question is how the ‘barbarians’ “Lão” and “Di”, who had made their presence in the annals before the Lý Dynasty, were perceived by the monarchy in Thăng Long. The first date to record the move of the Lý court in its demarcation with the barbarian world around the Red River Delta was 1047, under the second king, Lý Thái Tông. He was building posts (碑堠) for barbarians to stay in when travelling to the

area [55] (p. 315), [7] (p. 126), [14].⁶

“Setting up the “Vọng Quốc trấn” (望國鎮) and seven stations (驛) Quy Đức (歸德), Bảo Khang 保康 [Bảo Ninh/保寧 - TT], Tuyên Hóa (宣化), Thanh Bình (清平), Vĩnh Thông (永通), Cảm Hóa (感化), An Dân (安民), each place had a title marker (碑候) to serve as a shelter for barbarians (蠻夷 [蠻夷 - TT])” (VSL-1047)

“At that time, countries from far away came to visit, so set up Hoài Viễn station (懷遠驛) to give them a place for resting. And established as well “Vọng Quốc trấn” and seven stations, namely Tuyên Hóa, Vĩnh Thông, Thanh Bình, Quy Đức, Bảo Ninh, Cảm Hóa and An Dân, each station set up landmarks to serve as places for passengers to rest” (CM-1047).

The annals of the Trần - Lê - Nguyễn dynasties do not provide the locations of these posts. Their names carry the meaning of “gathering to the court” (Vọng Quốc 望國) and express the ambition of achieving a two-way relationship of civilization-submission between the central state and the surrounding spaces. And in the Lý Dynasty, the units “Trấn” 鎮, “Trại” 寨, “Châu” 州, “Động” 洞, and smaller units “Sách” (柵 or 冊) were all recorded and they were mostly located in remote highland and border areas, in the hilly midlands; these names served to differentiate, geographically as well as ethnically, the areas of the court’s influence with the areas of “Lão” 獠, “Mountain Barbarian/ Montagnard” 山獠 or “Liao/Liêu Lão” 遼獠 [35] (p. 42).⁷

In the next century, the sixth king, Lý Anh Tông, in 1148 also continued to demarcate areas, and he forbade barbarian chieftains (蠻里山獠首領官郎) from Đại Thông and Quy Nhân (大通歸仁二鎮) to come into Thăng Long 京 without reason [7] (152).⁸ Accordingly, “Đại Thông” was to the east of present-day Hanoi; and “Quy Hóa” 歸化⁹ was further away. Therefore, a special feature of Đại Việt in the 11th-13th centuries was that the montagnards were not necessarily

living far from the capital Thăng Long, and were even in the heart of the Red River Delta, as long as there was mountainous terrain. Typically, Quốc Oai area (now the western suburbs of Hanoi) with units such as “Quốc Oai Châu” (國威州), “Đỗ Động” (杜洞, the Động of Đỗ family in the Đáy River basin) [36] (p. 41), “Khô Sách” (枯柵) [55] (428),¹⁰ where the mountain barbarians lived creeping on/in the last remaining hills of Hoàng Liên Sơn, after this majestic mountain range crossed the Đà River and stopped in the Northern Delta. The “Outer Trai” 外寨, “New Trai” 新寨, the Động of “Nghiễn” 覬洞, “Trư” 猪洞 and “An Đinh” 安丁洞 were also within the area of the Red River Delta [55] (pp. 410, 460, 417, 457), [19] (p. 801), [7] (p. 162).¹¹

Around the last decade of the Lý Dynasty and during the Lý - Trần transition, the annals also mention these “Man” 蠻 (barbarians) nearby: “Quảng Oai Man” 廣威蠻, the barbarians in Tản Viên and Quảng Oai mountain areas [7] (pp. 164, 168).¹² The book *Lĩnh Nam chích quái* (Selection of Strange Tales in Lĩnh Nam) written by Trần Thế Pháp in the end of the 14th century still mentioned the “White Shirt Barbarians” 白衣蠻 distributed in the Tản Viên Mountain area [52] (p. 191).¹³ This was the White Thai ethnic group (*Tay Khao*), after whom “Nậm Tao” River was named, which in turn, was sinicized into “Thao Giang” 洮江 [14]¹⁴ neighboring the Tản Viên - Ba Vì mountain areas to the north-west.

At the same time, the area at the foot of Ba Vì Mountain (*Bua Pa Vi*) has also been considered the homeland, the “core space”, of the Muong ethnic group, the place for worshipping Tản Viên Sơn Thánh (the *Đản/Tản* saint of the Muong people), where the “King Pond” is located (not Hùng King, but King of Ba Vì/Saint Tản of the Muong people). Also, in the Trần Dynasty, at this Oai Lộ (Lộ unit/路/Circuit) [26], “Quảng Oai Man” (Muong Quảng Oai) had conflicts in the early years of the reign, and ever since, it has remained and has always been the “socio-cultural space of the Muong” [54] (pp. 57-71-74).

Not only being the original space of the Muong ethnic group, the western area adjacent to Thăng Long, under the Lý and early Trần dynasties, also presented a descendant group of the Đinh family (who founded the dynasty in 968-980). Đinh Bộ Lĩnh was born and founded in Hoa Lư, but this lineage originated in an important and powerful Muong area, located in the northwest uplands of Ninh Bình and southwest of Hòa Bình provinces today, with the unit “Khôi Sách” (瑰冊, or Khôi district) in the past [7] (p. 293), [31] (p. 76).¹⁵ After the Đinh Dynasty lost their position, descendants from Hoa Lư in the south moved northwest, to the west of Thăng Long, where they had close bloodlines; most of them carried the Đinh family name, and always had conflicts with the Lý central court [55] (p. 147), [8] (p. 320) in which, the group called “Mountain Barbarians” was the strongest protest group [55] (pp. pp. 158-159, 169, 180-181), [8] (pp. 301, 331, 340), [47] (pp. 180-181), [44] (pp. 125-130, 158, 165, 202).

Thus, it can be seen that the highlands, the barbarians and even montagnard tribes were not too far from the Thăng Long capital of the Đại Việt delta courts. Those lands and people were not only diverse in location, but also diverse in ethnicity, as well as political attitudes towards the central state or even among the barbarian Động - Sách - Trai with each other. The highlands and the plains should not be seen as two opposing, separate poles. As we will see later, basins and valleys with delta features are interwoven amongst the hills, while in the downstream areas, the intervening elements of the upstream region were not restricted merely to the hills and mountains of left by natural geological tectonics. Man (蠻/蛮) - Lí (俚) - Lão (獠) had usually been associated with upland areas, but they were recently redefined by Catherine Churchman based on the relationship to Han colonial governments (delta state) [3], then by Phạm Lê Huy’s research on Giao Châu - Annam of the Sui - Tang dynasties (the 7th-10th centuries)

[31].¹⁶ Judging also from the perspective of the Lý - Trần court chronicles presented above, we see that these entities were also interwoven in the landscape of the lowlands.

4. The Barbarians in the Distance

Man, Lí and Lão were sometimes close to or in the plains, while the barbarians far away were also notable in being associated with the “Trại” unit (as “Thanh Hóa Trại” 清化寨 in 1090 and 1100), which was established during the Lý Dynasty, especially in the border areas, typically “phiên trại” (番寨) in the South of Hoan Châu (於/于驩州南界) [35] (pp. 41, 68), [55] (p. 131), [7] (p. 113).¹⁷ The *Trại* were located far from the Capital, belonged to Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An areas (Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh today, hereafter Thanh - Nghệ), coastal or upland, and the common characteristic was that they were located in mountainous areas. With the strength of the monarchic state, by military measures (the *Trấn* was also a unit of military nature), pacification, civilization, and comfort, places of *Trấn* and *Trại* could be promoted to *Châu* or *Phủ* (府), as shown in the case of Thanh Hóa promoted from *Trại*, *Trấn* to *Phủ* (with a force of soldiers already known as “Phủ binh”/府兵 in the decades of 1190s and 1200s) [35] (pp. 39-58, 64-78, 113-140, 208-271), [55] (pp. 353, 397, 401, 407, 421).¹⁸

In 1157, an inscription states that *Việt Quốc công* Đỗ Anh Vũ had been entrusted by the Lý Court with the rule of Thanh Hóa, and also that the title of inspector of the *Trấn* and *Trại* from afar (委任清化府, 遙授諸鎮寨) had been conferred on him [35] (p. 234).¹⁹ The promotion from *Trại*, *Trấn* to *Phủ* shew the spread of Lý state power to the remote and barbarian regions; and once *Phủ* was positioned at the center of the region, *Trấn* and *Trại* were pushed further away and became smaller, while *Phủ* continued the process of spreading the power of government, of civilization, to continue the acquisition and promoting to the far-flung areas it reached and

governed.

Thanh Hóa as well as Nghệ An (Hoan Châu) until the beginning of the 12th century were still considered by the Thăng Long court as *Trại* lands, even “Phiên trại”. The word “Phiên” (藩) was present in the title “Định Phiên Vương” (定藩王) of Lê Tung, the 7th prince of King Lê Hoàn of the previous dynasty (the Former Lê, 980-1009) [51] (p. 207), ruling the region of “Ngũ Huyện Giang” (五縣江) in Thanh Hóa [55] (pp. 317, 326).²⁰ On the event in 1025, the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, again, recorded the place as “Định Phiên trại” (定藩寨), making people think of a settlement camp of the Phiên people, that were Champa prisoners [7] (p. 113).²¹ Ultimately, they were all from the South! Tạ Chí Đại Trường commented: “In the old Giao Châu area, Lê Hoàn’s children just hang around in the narrow central part of the delta” [49] (p. 176). It was true that from the central view of the Red River Delta and the capital Hoa Lư, as “Ngự Bắc Vương” (禦北王) was based in Phù Lan in Hải Dương, “Trung Quốc Vương” (中國王) in Mạt Liên in Khoái Châu (Hưng Yên nowadays), both being located in the East of the present Hanoi. Then, however, “Ngự Man Vương” (禦蠻王, Barbarian-conquering King) in the western mountainous region and “Định Phiên Vương” (定藩王, The King who pacifies the Borderlands) and “Nam Quốc Vương” (南國王, at Vũ Lũng, in Thanh Hóa) were located in the South and considered as “Phiên”; all these are understandable.

In addition to *Trại* and *Trấn*, the names and regions of Man/Barbarian were often demarcated under the name of *Châu* units, which appear quite early and are common in the annals of the Lý Dynasty. Excluding the *Châu* which had at some time been promoted to *Phủ*, the number of remaining *Châu* must also have been over 40 during the Lý Dynasty. The *Châu* were densely concentrated in the midland and mountainous regions, far from Thăng Long. The scale of the *Châu* in the uplands was not as large as the old *Châu* under the direct control of the Tang

Dynasty, so these can be regarded as the *jimi zhou* of the Lý Dynasty (ruling from Thăng Long), similar to the *jimi* units in Giao Châu - Annam of the Tang Dynasty in the 7th-10th centuries.²² The loose binding could exist right in the delta, when some places in the Red River Delta, quite close to Thăng Long, were still called Châu such as *Cổ Châu* 古州 (*Cổ Pháp* 古法), *Quốc Oai*, *Đằng Châu* (藤州) [55] (p. 416),²³ *Tĩnh Châu* (井州),²⁴ *Đại Thông*, *Cứu Liên* (究連) [55] (p. 454).²⁵ This can be explained by customary use of old names (for instance, *Cổ Pháp*, which had already been

promoted to Phủ, was still called Châu), or it was because of the diversity of terrain, culture and ethnic groups in the delta region. Moreover, the fact that Châu was still located in the lowlands showed the different levels of control and administration in the localities of the Lý Dynasty, whereby Phủ connoted stronger control by the state than Châu.²⁶ Châu were also found in the delta, and Phủ and Lộ were also located in the upstream region, so it is incorrect to suggest that Châu were located only in the uplands, and Phủ and Lộ only in the midlands and lower deltas.

Table 1. List of Châu under the Lý²⁷

No.	Large, Old Châu	Châu promoted to Phủ, Lộ	Smaller Châu
1.	Ái Châu 愛州		
2.	Diễn Châu 濱州		
3.			Vị Long 渭龍
4.	Ly Châu 籬州		
5.			Vĩnh An 永安
6.			Phong Luân 峯輪
7.			Đô Kim 都金
8.	Hoan Châu 驩州		
9.			Thất Nguyên 七源
10.			Văn Châu 文州
11.	Lạng Châu 諒州		
12.			Định Nguyên 定源
13.			Trệ Nguyên 穢源
14.		Cổ Châu 古州	
15.	Phong Châu 峯州		
16.			Thường Tân 常新
17.			Bình Nguyên 平原
18.			Quảng Nguyên 廣源
19.	Nghệ An 乂安		

No.	Large, Old Châu	Châu promoted to Phủ, Lộ	Smaller Châu
20.			Thảng Do 儻猶
21.			Lôi Hỏa 雷火
22.			Bình 平
23.			Bà 婆
24.			Tư Lãng 思浪/Tư Lang 思琅
25.			Vũ Ninh 武寧
26.	Chân Đăng 真登		
27.			Tây Nguyên 西源
28.			La Thuận 羅順
29.			Mang Quán 忙貫
30.			Kỷ Lang 几郎
31.			Tô Châu 蘇州
32.			Mậu Châu 茂州
33.			Thạch Tê 石犀
34.			Đông Lương 東梁
35.			Phú Nghĩa 富義
36.			Tư Nông 司農
37.		Thượng Nguyên 上源	
38.			Tây Nùng 西儂
39.			Long Lệnh 龍令
40.		Phú Lương 富良	
41.			Hạ Lang 下琅
42.			Trung Giang 中江
43.	Quốc Oai 國威		
44.			Đằng Châu 藤州
45.			Tĩnh Châu 井州
46.			Đại Thông 大通
47.			Cứu Liên 究連

(Source: *Việt sử lược, Lý Inscriptions, Thiên uyển tập anh, Annan zhilue, Toàn thư*)

The small Châu (unlike the old Châu in the Chinese Domination period) were mostly found in the area of the hill tribes in remote regions. Specifically, the Châu of the Man/Barbarians were sometimes labelled “Rebel” by court historians like the Cử Long invaders in 1011 (Muong Cẩm Thủy, Thanh Hóa; or “Babarian” in “Vị Long châu” (渭龍州) in 1013 [55] (p. 299)²⁸ (the Tay ethnic, Chiêm Hóa, Tuyên Quang). However, large powerful Châu were also recorded amongst the Barbarians. There were two Barbarian Generals” (蠻將) of “Hạc Thác Man” (鶴拓蠻) [55] (p. 299), [7] (pp. 111-112), [4] (pp. 306, 539)²⁹ (the Tai Dali, Yunnan) in 1014, who entered and were stationed at the Kim Hoa wharf in 1014 (now in Kim Anh district, Vĩnh Phúc province). Prince Phật Mã before ascending to the throne as Lý Thái Tông was recorded as “following the king’s orders to fight the Man invaders, having merit”, including suppressing such places as Champa (in 1020), “Phong Luân châu/峯輪州” (i.e. Phong Châu, the Thai - Muong area of Phú Thọ, Vĩnh Phúc provinces) in 1024, Diễn Châu/演州 (in Nghệ An) in 1026, and “Thất Nguyên châu/七源州” (in Thất Khê, Lạng Sơn) in 1027 [55] (pp. 300, 301, 302).³⁰

In addition to the Châu units, rebellions against the Lý kingship were also recorded in other units such as: *Giáp* (“Đã Nãi giáp/但乃甲” in 1029, “Long Trì giáp/龍池甲” in Ngũ Huyện Giang in 1050, “Cổ Hoàn/ Cổ Hoàng giáp 古宏/ 弘甲” in 1188 and 1192, which all belonging to Ái Châu, Thanh Hóa); *Động* (“Lôi Hỏa động/雷火洞” (Hỏa Động/火洞) and “Vật Ác/勿惡” (both northwest of Cao Bằng) of Nùng Trí Cao in the 1040s, “Sa Đãng động/沙蕩洞” in the upper Thanh Hóa in 1061, “Ma Sa động/麻沙洞” (Đà Bắc, Hòa Bình now, in the years of 1064, 1083 and 1119); *Trường* 場 (like “Bình Long trường” (平隆場) somewhere in Thanh - Nghệ - Tĩnh in 1161) [55] (pp. 305, 317, 315, 325, 327, 343, 358, 395, 397, 379), [7] (p. 160).³¹ A special case of “Lộng Lạc Barbarian” (弄洛蠻) in “Mang Quán/芒貫” (ie Muong Quán, Sơn La)

was recorded with both units of Châu (1065) and *Giang* 江 (1164) [53] (pp. 327-328, 380).³² A similar designation of rebellious nature was also clear, accompanying the concept of “Di” (夷, in the historiography of the Lê Dynasty) as “Đại Quang Lịch” (大光歷) or “Đại Nguyên Lịch” (大元歷) in 1022, which could be the Nung/Zhuang people of Qinzhou (China) [55] (p. 301), [7] (p. 113).³³

It can be said that the overall picture of the local units during the Lý Dynasty (including the Man, Di, Lí and Lão lurking in the mountains and forests) is one of much diversity following time layers (the old - new units, including the miniaturization and preservation of the Tang-Song model, as well as the continuation of the spread and miniaturization), spatial areas (rural or urban, mountainous or delta), functions (economic, security), and characteristics (territorial or administrative units, or heavily topographically based). In particular, similar to the units of Châu and Trại, which were not only to be found in highland and remote areas, Sách³⁴ and Động also appeared in the lowlands or in the areas not too far from the capital Thăng Long. In the opposite direction, with units of the plain such as *Hương*, *Huyện* 縣 and, to a lesser extent, *Thôn* 村 (equivalent to the Sách of the mountains) there is no complete distinction between the lowland and upland regions.³⁵ Moreover, as late as the year 1220, the Lý court was able to put a *Lộ* unit in “Thượng Nguyên Động/上源洞” (about Thái Nguyên, Bắc Kạn today); By 1224, the water flow from the upstream “Thượng Nguyên Đầu” (上源頭) to Thăng Long was clearly observed by the contemporaries [35] (p. 272), [55] (p. 406).³⁶

In the case of Thượng Nguyên, the Động unit recorded in the epitaph *Hoàng Việt Thái phó Lưu quân mộ chí* 皇越太傅劉君墓志 (1161) seems to be quite large, equivalent to a large Châu, while in general the Động in the highlands were equivalent to small *Trấn* and small *Châu*, or to *Huyện* in the delta or *Nguồn*³⁷ (associated with rivers) in the upstream areas as well, and could

also be equivalent to *Giáp* and *Trường* in distant areas (Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An). The origin of the concept of “Động” has recently been discussed in greater depth by researchers such as Kathlene Baldanza (2015), Catherine Churchman (2016), James Anderson and John Whitmore. It is a word from ancient Tai, Sinicized into “洞”, to refer to valleys in the highlands, even though the area of valleys (basins of small rivers and streams) accounts for only one-tenth of the terrain compared with forest-covered slopes. Động

were valleys which were the point of interaction between people in the valleys and people on the mountains - such a dynamic area that it was chosen as a concept to refer to the whole world consisting of these two types of terrain [2].

In short, the common denominators for all Châu, Trại, Động and Sách was mountainous areas and the “Man” and “Lão” tribes, regardless of whether they were actually situated in the Red River Delta, the Mã River, the Northeast highlands or partly Northwest region.

Table 2. List of Lý’s Local Units distributed in Red River Delta, Thanh - Nghệ and Uplands, Borderlands

Local Units	Red River Delta	Thanh - Nghệ - Tĩnh	Hills, Mountains (including those in the Lowlands), and Borderlands
Lộ 路	Ô, Hồng, Khoái		Thượng Nguyên
Phủ 府	Trường An, Thiên Đức, Ứng Thiên, Đô hộ, Tinh Cương (?), An Hoa	Nghệ An, Thanh Hóa	Phú Lương
Đạo 道	Đại Thông, Nam Sách, Phù Đái, Phù Lạc, Bình Lạc, Bắc Giang		An Châu
Châu 州	Cổ Châu, Vũ Ninh, Quốc Oai, Đằng Châu, Tĩnh Châu, Đại Thông, Cứu Liên	Ái Châu, Diễn Châu, Ly Châu, Hoan Châu, Nghệ An	Vị Long, Vĩnh An, Phong Luân, Đô Kim, Thất Nguyên, Văn Châu, Lạng Châu, Định Nguyên, Trệ Nguyên, Phong Châu, Thường Tân, Bình Nguyên, Quảng Nguyên, Thảng Do, Lôi Hỏa, Bình, Bà, Tư Lãng, Tư Lang, Chân Đẳng, Tây Nguyên, La Thuận, Mang Quán, Kỷ Lang, Tô Châu, Mậu Châu, Thạch Tê, Đông Lương, Tư Nông, Thượng Nguyên, Tây Nùng, Long Lệnh, Phú Lương, Hạ Lang, Phú Nghĩa*, Trung Giang*
Trấn 鎮	Đại Thông♣	Thanh Hóa*, Sa Đẳng+	Triều Dương, Vọng Quốc, Trung Giang*
Trại 寨	Ngoại, Văn Lôi	Thanh Hóa* [Phiên trại nam Hoan Châu]	Vĩnh Bình, Quy Hóa, La Biều, Ngọc Sơn
Giang 江	Thiên Đức, Đỗ Động, Đà Mạc	Ngũ Huyện, Lương, Quy Hóa#	Mang Quán, Tam Đái, Tuyên Quang
Trường 場	Đại Thông+	Bình Long	

Local Units	Red River Delta	Thanh - Nghệ - Tĩnh	Hills, Mountains (including those in the Lowlands), and Borderlands
Quận 郡	Gia Lâm, Vĩnh Khương+, Thường Lạc+, Bình Lỗ+, Như Nguyệt+, Ái (?)+,	Thanh Hóa*, Cửu Chân*, Ái (?)+,	
Hương 鄉	Cổ Pháp, Siêu Loại, Cổ Miệt, An Lãng, Tứ Mặc, Hoạch, Nhuế Duệ, Đa Cảm, Khoái, An Lạc*, Tây Dục*, Điện Lệnh*, Cổ Liêu*, Ốc+	Cửu Chân*, Lục Hương*	Tuế Phong*
Huyện 縣		Cửu Chân*, Cổ Chiến*	Hạ Liên, Đô Lạp
Giáp 甲		Đản Nãi, Long Trì, Cổ Hoàn	
Động 洞	Nghiễn, Trư, An Đình		Lôi Hỏa, Vật Ác, Sa Đãng, Vũ Kiện, Ma Sa, Chu Ma, Thượng Nguyên*, [49 động in Vị Long châu]*
Ấp 邑	Đà Mỗ, Tạt Tụ, Hải, Than, Nhuế, Trì, Thần Khê, Cá Lũ, Hợp	Đại Lý*	[Ấp in Phong Châu]
Xã 社	A Cáo, Lợi Hi*		
Nguồn* 源 (Nguyên)		[3 nguồn in Thanh Hóa]*	
Thôn 村	Lưu Gia, Cổ Việt*	An Lãng*	Đỗ Gia (?), Tượng Nô
Sách 柵/冊	Khô, An Lạc		Tượng, Tư Mông, Trịnh, Ô Mễ, Đãng Bái, Vạn Mễ, Linh, Ma Luận (?), Mông (?)
Lý 里	Sùng Nhân*		

Source: *Việt sử lược*; *Văn bia thời Lý* (*); *Thiên uyển tập anh* (+); *Annan zhilue* (#); and *Toàn thư* (♣)

5. Barbarians Moved Far away, Engaging with the Court, and the Kinh - Trai Separation

At the end of his article on *Land, Water, Rice and Men in Early Vietnam*, the late famous scholar Sakurai Yumio argued that a Đại Việt unified in both title and practice was only formed from the Trần Dynasty onwards, when the dynasty gained unified control over agricultural heartlands in the delta regions [44] (p. 203). Indeed, the annals of the Trần Dynasty do not record imperial conquests over barbarian forces within the Red

River Delta, and absolutely no political marriages with the chieftains of the mountain tribes are recorded. We do not know if it was due to the historians of the Trần - Lê dynasties, intellectuals who had gradually absorbed Confucianism and who may perhaps have avoided referring to such matters. But one thing was for sure, the Man and Lão that appear in political history from the Trần period onwards were often associated with specific places quite far from the Capital, even outside the Đại Việt border or deep in the South

(eg. Man Lão at Năm Bà La/稔婆羅) [14]³⁸) [50] (p. 324), [7] (pp. 173, 185, 188):³⁹

The Northern Barbarians (北) came to plunder the border. [The emperor] sent General Phạm Kính Ân to fight them. [Then he] captured the barbarians' settlements (蛮洞) and returned (TT-1241);

Emperor [Trần Thánh Tông] personally fought the Man (蠻) and Lão (獠) people in Năm Bà La (稔婆羅洞), capturing more than 1,000 party members alive and bringing them back (TT-1277);

Trần Khánh Dư... “suppressing the Barbarian in the mountains (山蛮) [at Chí Linh châu], won a great victory, was awarded the title of General (驃騎大將軍)...” (TT-1282).

In the second half of the 14th century, the word “山獠” (Mountain Barbarians/Montagnard) reappeared in the annals of the Trần Dynasty, but unlike under the the previous Lý Dynasty, they resided quite far from Thăng Long and became an army to support the imperial dynasty, guarding the northeastern gateway of Đại Việt [7] (pp. 237-238):⁴⁰

“Ordered the Sơn Lão [army of mountainous ethnic groups] in Lạng Giang (諒江山獠軍) to guard the border, because the North (北地) was in turmoil, Minh (明) and Han (漢) competed against each other, stationing in Nanning and Longzhou” (TT-1365).

It can be said that, under the Trần Dynasty, the Northeast upland area was stable and cooperated closely with the Red River delta court. During the three resistance wars against the Mongol - Yuan, the barbarian Tay - Nung leaders, who had guarded the waterway and land routes from China, enthusiastically joined the Trần Dynasty to fight the invaders, especially the “Leaders of Trại” (寨主), “Phụ đạo” (父道) of the Hà clans living upstream of the Lô and Thao rivers played significant roles [7] (pp. 178, 178-179, 192).⁴¹ Furthermore, at the end of the 13th century, the Trần Dynasty could not only recognize the local authority of the leaders but was also able to “mobilize” them to other areas

[7] (pp. 190, 196):⁴²

If in 1285, “The Lạng Giang chieftains (諒江土豪)” “ambushed the [Yuan enemy] at Ma Lục (麻六寨)” (TT-1285); then in 1289, after the final victory at the Bạch Đằng River, the Trần Dynasty “let Lạng Giang Chief of Barbarians Lương Uất (諒江蛮長梁尉) become the chief of Quy Hóa (歸化寨主), and conferred on Hà Tất Năng the title of marquis (冠服侯) because he had commanded the barbarian people to fight the enemy” (TT-1289).

In the end of the 14th century, the case of Lương Nguyên Bru of Tuyên Quang, who joined the group of Trần Khát Chân to overthrow Hồ Quý Ly unsuccessfully, shows that the indigenous forces of the Northeast highlands had enjoyed many generations of close alliance with the Lý - Trần courts [7] (p. 264):⁴³

“Nguyên Bru from Tuyên Quang: his ancestor Thế Sung was granted the title of Toát Thông Vương and also sanctioned the position of “Phụ đạo” (父道) in the Lý Dynasty. His children Văn Hiến and Quế were all granted the title of Marquis (侯). Quế's son, Hiếu Bảo, because of his merit in fighting Sugetu (a Yuan General), was given the title of marquis (冠服侯); Hiếu Bảo gave birth to Thế Tắc who was given the title of Marquis Lạc Thuận (勒順侯); Thế Tắc gave birth to Cúc Tôn who was granted the title of Commissioner (觀察使); Cúc Tôn gave birth to Nguyên Bru” (TT-1399).

The 13th-14th century inscriptions in Hà Giang (the northernmost province of Vietnam) also record a similar situation [50] (pp. 203-204, 314-315).

Also, from the Trần period onwards, besides the traditional concept of Man, Lão that now appeared in the dynastic chronicle less often and only indicated people far away from Thăng Long, a new identifier that showed the distinction of lowlands from highland came to the fore. This was the “Kinh” (京) accompanied by a derivative the “Kinh Lộ” (京路). The first date of

the appearance of “Kinh” was in 1256, which is associated with the degree “Kinh Trạng Nguyên/京狀元” (the First Successful Candidate from the Kinh region), a creation in the Trần Dynasty’s Confucian examination [7] (p. 178):⁴⁴

“Held an exam to choose scholars. Granted Trần Quốc Lặc to be the “Kinh Trạng Nguyên”; Trương Cần to be the “First Successful Candidate from the Trại region” (“Trại Trạng Nguyên”/寨狀元); Chu Hi to be the “Bảng nhãn/榜眼” (Second Successful Candidate); Trần Uyên to be “Thám Hoa Lang/探花郎” (Third Successful Candidate); another 43 successful candidates 太學生 (Kinh 42 people, Trại 1 person) were given different degrees. In the beginning of the dynasty, successful candidates were not yet divided (by their home places) into Kinh and Trại categories, so the first successful one (among the entire candidates) was simply given the [title] “Trạng Nguyên”. This time, Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An have just been divided into Trại lands, so there was a distinction between Kinh and Trại” (TT-1256).

While historians of the Later Lê Dynasty had argued that the establishment of Kinh and Kinh Trạng Nguyên was to distinguish it from the remote and southern border areas of Đại Việt, the evidential study of the Nguyễn Dynasty Historiography Office (*Quốc sử quán*) also confirmed that Trần Quốc Lặc and Trần Uyên were from two districts of Thanh Lâm and Đường Hào, belonging to Hồng Châu (Hải Dương province now); and the Trạng Nguyên who was from Trại land, also the only Trại person of this exam in 1256, came from Hoàn Sơn belonging Bồ Chính (lộ) [14].⁴⁵ Under the Trần Dynasty, although the number of Lộ and the local administrative system were more clearly defined than those under the Lý, we still see that there were Trại and Trấn, both far (mainly) as well as nearby the Red River Delta, the former cases including such areas as Yên Hưng Trại, Thái Nguyên Trấn, Quảng Oai Trấn, a certain “Trại Đầu”, Vạn Ninh Trại,

and Tuyên Quang Trấn [9] (pp. 33, 61, 159, 175, 182, 193). Thanh Hóa itself had been promoted to Phủ for a long time, by the Lý Dynasty, but in the event of 1263 still remained title “Leader of Trại” [7] (p. 181).⁴⁶ The border region of Thanh - Nghệ until the 14th century was still a key point of the Trần Dynasty, from which it was possible to secure the western uplands bordering Ai Lao (like the event in 1334), as well as to strengthen the border of the Trần’s southern territory (the patrols calmed the border in 1356, 1371 or strengthened Phủ, Lộ in 1375) [9] (pp. 122, 136, 155, 158). Trại land was not only restricted in Thanh - Nghệ, but could also include the remote lands to the North, which were already belonging to the Hải Đông Lộ. In the next exam 10 years later, also “Trại Trạng Nguyên” was from Nghệ An, but the education level there had been highly appreciated;⁴⁷ and then about a decade later, the Trần Dynasty abolished the distinction between “Kinh Trạng Nguyên” and “Trại Trạng Nguyên” [7] (pp. 182-183, 184).⁴⁸

“Held the exam to select scholars. Granted Trần Cố as Kinh Trạng Nguyên, Bạch Liêu as Trại Trạng Nguyên; Bảng nhãn (missing name); Hạ Nghi as Thám Hoa Lang; another successful 47 candidates were given different degrees. Liêu of Nghệ An, smart, long-term memory, read books with thousands of lines at once. At that time, Senior Minister Quang Khải governed Nghệ An and Liêu was his hanger-on but did not serve as an official” (TT-1266);

“Held the exam to select scholars. Granted Đào Tiêu as Trạng Nguyên; Bảng nhãn (missing name); Quách Nhẫn as Thám Hoa Lang; another successful 27 candidates were given different degrees. In the two previous exams in the years of 1256 and 1266, Kinh Trạng Nguyên and Trại Trạng Nguyên were distinguished from each other, now they merged into a single degree” (TT-1275).

Within 20 years, the rituals and culture of the Trại lands seemed to have “caught up” with those of the Kinh land. It is true that the

chronicles of the Trần Dynasty that survive today were all compiled during the Lê - Nguyễn Dynasties. However, *Đại Việt sử lược* (Brief Historical Annals of Đại Việt) of the 14th century (or possibly earlier) [43] (pp. 12-13) records the history before the Trần period, in which we only see, in the Lý period, the words “Kinh” associated with “Kinh thành” (京城), namely Thăng Long citadel (which at that time retained the denomination “Đô Hộ Phủ 都護府”/Protectorate General). From the Trần - Hồ dynasties onwards, Kinh became a civilized space beyond Đại La citadel. A particularly valuable piece of evidence is found in the epitaph *Ngô gia thị bi* (吳家氏碑), dated about 1366-1395 (now preserved at Dầu Pagoda, Đình Xá Commune, Bình Lục District, Hà Nam Province), which records the fields in Đình Xá, Chân Ninh and Ngô Xá communes (all belonging to the Lý Nhân Lộ) with the phrase “near (the land of) Kinh people” (近京人) [50] (120). Lý Nhân Lộ (present-day Hà Nam province) was located just south of Thăng Long (Hanoi). Was this the “Kinh people” or people living in the Capital? It is known that the annals of the early 15th century clearly stated the Kinh people, the “Kinh Lộ” (*Kinh Circuit*) in the distinction from Barbarians in the “Phiên Trấn” (藩鎮) or Chieftains in the Border (邊填酋長) (which can be understood as distinguishing Kinh/lowlanders - Thượng/Highlanders) [7] (p. 267), [14].⁴⁹

“Hồ Hán Thương ordered household registers to be made throughout the country, allowing the Hồ clan members to be registered in Diễn Châu and Thanh Hóa... The roaming people who had already been registered in their residing places (in the area of Phiên Trấn) should be noticed with a placard. Any Kinh people (京人) who roamed to live there must be sent back to their original homeland...” (TT-1401)

The “Kinh Lộ” covered the delta area around the Capital as well as the lower coastal area, which were distinguished from the Trấn areas in upstream regions and southern regions such

as Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An (Diễn Châu) or further South as Hóa Châu (Thừa Thiên - Huế province at present) [7] (pp. 271, 275, 284, 287):⁵⁰

“[Hồ] Quý Ly and Hán Thương patrolled the mountains, rivers, and estuaries, in the Kinh Lộ (京路山川乃諸海口), because they wanted to know the dangers or the safety of places. (They) came back (to the court) in August” (TT-1405);

“Quý Ly and Hán Thương both returned to Thanh Hóa. Most of the Kinh Lộ followed the enemy and betrayed (our country) ...; People in Kinh Lộ (京路人) were forced into working by the Ming army...” (TT-1407);

“At that time, the Kinh Lộ was all dependent on the Ming Dynasty... From Diễn Châu back to the South (farmers) could not cultivate...” (TT-1412);

“Among the mandarins in Kinh Lộ (京路仕宦), there had been some people who escaped the enemy and followed the emperor Trùng Quang to go to Hóa Châu. Now (because Trùng Quang was captured by the Ming) some people brought their families to (take refuge to) Lão Qua (老撾) country, some people ran to Champa (占城), and from then on all the people in the country became subjects and concubines of the Ming people” (TT-1414).

At this point, along with the only appearance in the high and remote areas of the Man and Lão, we can conceive of the formation of Kinh space (*Kinh Lộ*), despite its diversity of terrain and thus the inhabitants and culture.⁵¹ Discussing the nature of the Lý - Trần regime, it would be too naive and obstinate to maintain the view of a centralized monarchy state that had already unified the entire territory, but it is also not correct to simply consider it was a pure Southeast Asian entity (of *Mandala* type) [56] which only controlled the Red River Delta. It is necessary to see things and events in a dynamic, historical depth and change in space and time. Starting from a nuclear fragment of the China’s colonial regime (which lasted for more than 1000 years),

it was led by a group of Min descendants who settled in the South for many generations (like the Trần clan) or a few generations (like the Lý family). The model (or paradigm) of centralized monarchy leaning heavily towards the East Asian world continued to be incubated, nurtured and developed there. At first, the Lý Dynasty could not even dominate the Red River Delta perfectly, when right next to the Thăng Long capital still existed the fierce Man and Lão; but over time, the central polity gradually prevailed (thanks to its nature, the soil, and the organization of the government), spreading power throughout the plains, subjugating the uplands (Vị Long, Phú Lương, Thượng Nguyên were typical) and expanding to the far south (Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An). The successive appointments of princes and high-rank officials to the ruling positions of Thanh - Nghệ region (such as Lý Nhật Quang, Lý Thường Kiệt, Lý Đạo Thành of the Lý Dynasty; Phùng Tá Chu, Trần Thủ Độ, Trần Quốc Khang, Trần Nhật Duật [9] (120-121) under the Trần Dynasty [23] (pp. 52. 53), [55] (p. 83), [35] (215), [8] (277), [40] (pp. 30-31) made the Trai lands gradually come closer to the Kinh space. Yet, the patchwork was still irregular and loose; in the late Lý (and even late Trần) period, when the central power became weak, the local clans and regional forces (with the “Hương Ấp” (鄉邑) and “Hương Ấp mandarins”) [53] (pp. 180, 194, 214), [7] (p. 164), [49] (p. 175-177)⁵² and the neighboring Man Lão, who had been inactive, rose again (such as Quốc Oai, Đại Hoàng). The Trần Dynasty which dominated the central core region strongly, mobilized the members of the royal family to rule the outer regions, then the nearby Barbarians seems to have been absent (Quốc Oai barbarians were pushed to the Quốc Oai Thượng (國威上). They and Quảng Oai at the foot of Ba Vì Mountain did not oppose), while Lão was far away, became loyal and cohesive. The monarchic state space was consolidated (with more than 12 Lộ) [20] (pp. 55-60, 372-375 卷第一, 郡邑), [25] to form the concepts of Kinh, with the circuits Kinh Lộ in demarcation with

Trai, Man and Phiên (trấn).

Therefore, when we approach the Đại Việt - Vietnamese monarchy in the Pre-Colonial Times, the perspective from the upper social stratum tends to make us see that a ‘Great Tradition’ somewhat overwhelms the ‘Little Tradition’. However, because the latter was of the masses of the lower-class people (as Alexander Woodside claimed in 1971) [57], it is necessary to consider the time process with *Pre-Paradigm* period (the 10th-14th centuries) - *Standard Paradigm* (the 15th-16th centuries) - *Post-Paradigm* (the 16th-19th centuries) as contemplated by Nguyễn Thừa Hỷ (2006, 2018) [33], [34] (pp. 3-11); and when considering the complex of Man - Kinh - Trai conceptions of Đại Việt in the 11th-14th centuries, it is also possible to suggest spatial and even high-low terrain perspectives. Only by approaching space - time and paying attention to the altitude and differences of geographical - ethnic regions, can we understand why during the period 1314-20, when Đại Việt’s territory had descended to Hải Vân pass, but the senior emperor Trần Anh Tông still warned “the country is as small as a palm of the hand” (國如手掌大); and the senior emperor Trần Nhân Tông declared in 1299 that “our family was from the lowlands (the ancestors were the Hiễn Khánh people) 我家本下流人 (始祖顯慶人)” [7] (pp. 203, 217).⁵³ Therefore, contemporary *amateur* historian Tạ Chí Đại Trường commented very rightly: “Rapids discouraged rowers in the plains, deep forests and poisonous water hindered the footsteps of soldiers from the Capital citadel and farms” [49] (p. 186). From the end of Trần to Hồ and especially from the Early Lê Dynasty (1428-1527) onwards, the space and people of that “poisonous deep forest” appeared more clearly in the perception of the Thăng Long monarchy court.

6. Barbarians Being Zoomed Closer and Clearer

From the last half of the 13th century onwards to the end of the Trần - Hồ dynasties, history readers no longer see a peaceful

highland. However, unlike the Lý Dynasty, the upheavals of the mountains and forests at this time were focused on the Northwest, with the Đà Giang Prefecture (沱江道/鎮) (for many years of 1280, 1301, 1329 and 1370) and Thai tribes there such as Trịnh Giác Mật (鄭角密), Nguu Hống Barbarian (牛吼蠻/蠻), Trịnh Kỳ Trại/鄭旗寨 (with the chief of the Xa (車) family) [7] (pp. 187, 207, 223, 229, 240).⁵⁴ Nguu Hống (Black Thai in Sơn La region) had paid tribute to the Lý Dynasty since 1067 [9] (p. 274); and groups of “Trịnh” (鄭, possibly a transliteration of “Chiềng” [49] (p. 182),⁵⁵ a word for the central *Bản* of a Thai *Mường/Muang*) [55], [5], [12] had appeared since the Former Lê Dynasty, both in conflict and in association with the Hoa Lu government [55] (p. 286), [7] (p. 98), [49] (p. 181).⁵⁶ However, it was only in the Trần Period that the Đại Việt central royal family had a understanding and closeness to the Man tribes, crystallizing most clearly in the episodes of Trần Nhật Duật [9] (p. 46).

It was based on this understanding and closeness with Man Di (蠻夷) that half a century later, in 1329, Senior Emperor Trần Minh Tông went to patrol Đà Giang, personally defeated Nguu Hống Barbarian, and ordered Nguyễn Trung Ngạn to compile the veritable record (*thực lục* 實錄), and made the declarations as a parent to all his subjects, probably including the local Thai (and possibly Muong) people.

It can be seen that, in addition to the political attitude of treating the Barbarians as children, which had brought the highland tribes of the

Đà River basin under state rule, the upstream regions at this time, however, were still a sacred forest with toxic water for the Thăng Long court. During the late 14th century - early 15th century, forces of Champa and the Hồ Dynasty both chose mountain routes to attack their enemies in the North and in the South respectively, as in 1383 when “Lord Champa” “led his army move by road following the foothills of the mountain via Quảng Oai Trấn/廣威鎮 (districts of Lương Sơn of Hòa Bình and Ba Vì of Hanoi now) to find the way to the Khổng Mục Sách/孔目冊 (to sack the Thang long Capital)...” [7] (p. 250),⁵⁷ while Đại Ngu (Hồ Dynasty’s) army in 1401 met the flood, the generals and their troops ran out of foods in the mid-way because they took an unfamiliar uphill route (in order to attack Champa) [9] (p. 202). Similarly, when mandarins from the capital went to border towns, such as Thủy Vỹ district (Lào Cai now), it was recorded in the annals that “many dispatched officials were infected with blue obstacles and died” [9] (p. 170).⁵⁸

Moreover, starting from the Trần Dynasty, the native places and the cultural - ethnic residential spaces of the highlands appeared in the annals. That was “Mường Mai”/ 芒枚 (i.e., Mai Châu, Hòa Bình) in 1301; or “Mường Việt”/ 忙越 (present-day Yên Châu, Sơn La) in 1329 [7] (pp. 207, 224).⁵⁹ Especially, under the Early Lê Dynasty in the 15th century (until Lê Thánh Tông’s conquest of Bồn Man and Lão Qua/Ai Lao in 1479),⁶⁰ a series of Muong, Chieng entered the history of Đại Việt.⁶¹

Table 3. List of Muong, Chieng, Dong in the 15th century

No.	Time	Names of Mường, Chiềng, Động	Remarks
1.	1418	Mường Yên	Yên Nhân commune, west of Pù Rinh mountain (Chí Linh mountain (Linh Sơn), Giao An commune, Lang Chánh district, Thanh Hóa). This Mường is Mường Din of the Thai
2.		Mường Mọt	Or Mường Mọt, later called Bất Mọt/Bát Mọt commune, Thường Xuân district (Thanh Hóa)

No.	Time	Names of Mường, Chiềng, Động	Remarks
3.	1419	Mường Chánh	Lang Chánh district (Thanh Hóa) latter. Also being called Mường Chính, Mường Tầm, a big muang of Muong people
4.		Mường Thôi	Maybe Mường Xôi/Man Xôi, in the northwest of Thanh Hóa, bordering Laos. This is a muang of Thai people, now belongs to Laos
5.	1420	Mường Nanh	It is also Mường Nang, presently Giao An commune, Lang Chánh. This is a muang of Mường people
6.		Mường Thôi	
7.	1424	Trịnh Sơn trang	It is “Kẻ Trịnh”, Thạch Ngàn commune, Con Cuông district (Nghệ An)
8.	1427	Mường Mộc	Presently Mộc Châu (Sơn La). Thai people call Mường Sang/Xang or Mường Mố. This was the Thai group who rose against the Lê
9.	1428	Mường Thôi	
10.	1432	Mường Lễ	Lai Châu nowadays. The Thai people call Mường Lay.
11.	1434	Mường Việt	It is also Việt Châu, presently Yên Châu district, Sơn La. The Thai people call Mường Vạt, or Mường Phật (because there was Buddhist pagoda). This muang had obeyed the Trần Dynasty for a long time (the event in 1329)
12.		Mường Ba Long	Belonging to “Thanh Hóa phủ”
13.		Mường Bồn	It was also (Tồn) Bồn Man, belonging to Xieng Khouang province, parts of Houaphan, Khammouan provinces (Laos) at present. It was also called Mường Phuôn/Puôn/Phăng (<i>Muang Phuan/Puan</i>). In 1448, Lê Nhân Tông changed to “Quỳ Hợp châu”; In Hồng Đức reign (chronicle 1471) it was “Trấn Ninh phủ”
14.		Mường Mộc	
15.		Mường Phù	Also being written as ‘Động’, belonging to Lai Châu. Maybe the Thái area close to Mường Tè (Lai Châu now)
16.	1435	Phộc La, Trịnh Song, Mường Dương	All situated at the upstream of Mã river, now belonging to Laos and the Vietnamese districts of Quan Hóa, Quan Sơn, Mường Lát (Thanh Hóa), it was the 15th century “Nam Mã châu”; The Quan Hóa Thai people, the local chieftains with the family names of Phạm Bá/Lò Khăm
17.		Mường Qua	Lão Qua (Laos nowadays)

No.	Time	Names of Mường, Chiềng, Động	Remarks
18.		Mường Tầm	It was also Tầm Châu, the upstreams of Mã river, belonging to the 15th century Ai Lao
19.		Mường Viễn	Maybe “Ninh Viễn châu”, it is also Mường Lễ/Mường Lay, having been changed into “Phục Lễ châu”
20.			Mường Bồn
21.			Mường Mộc
22.		Mỗi Châu/ Mường Muối/ Muối	Belonging to “Gia Hưng trấn” at that time. The Lê changed into “Thuận Châu”, including the districts of Thuận Châu, Mường La, Mai Sơn of Sơn La and the district of Tuần Giáo, Điện Biên province presently
23.		Mã Giang châu and Mộc châu/ Mường Mộc	Mã Giang is area of Sông Mã district, Sơn La province now
24.	1440		It was “Thuận Mỗi châu” (i.e. Mường Muối/Muối)
25.	1441		
26.		Động La	It is also Mường La, now belonging to Sơn La city and Mường La district, it is the centre of the Black Thai
27.	1448	Sách Thám Già, Mường An Phú	?
28.	1456		Mường Bồn
29.			Mường Mộc
30.	1467	Cư Lộng động/ Câu Lộng sách?	Belonging to Ai Lao

Source: Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến (2021)

The Muong place names appearing in 15th century Early Lê chronicle do not fully reflect the interactions with the mountain ethnic forces of the ruling political group that later established the ruling dynasties of Đại Việt/Việt Nam. This is because the record heavily concentrates on the Thai tribes (except for the Mường Chanh, and the Mường Nanh which belonged to the Muong people) in the western and northwestern

highlands of Đại Việt (now in the provinces of Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Lai Châu and Sơn La). Meanwhile, from the reign of Lê Thánh Tông (1460-1497) onward, in addition to the Western Thai group, the Tay - Nung forces in the Northeast rejoined the Lê Dynasty. It is possible to mention other upland elements appearing in the “military experiences” of the Lê family.⁶²

Table 4. List of Place names, People names Relating to Muong, Thai and Tay - Nung Groups in the 15th century

Ethnicity	Ancient place and people names	Modern place names and ethnicities
Muong	Lam Sơn	Xuân Lam commune, Thọ Xuân district (Thanh Hóa)
	Đà Sơn sách	Near Lam Sơn
	Ba Lãm sách	Chiềng Lãm, Điền Lư commune, Bá Thước district (Thanh Hóa), lands of Mường Khô
	Đèo Ống	Thiết Ống commune, Bá Thước district, area of Mường Ống, an ancient large muang
	Khôi sách	Or Khôi district, about northwest of Ninh Bình, Tây Nam Hòa Bình
	Thiên Quan	Lands of Nho Quan, Lạc Thổ (now northwest of Ninh Bình and southernmost of Hòa Bình)
Tay - Nung	Bế Khắc Thiệu, Nông Khắc Thái in Thạch Lâm châu, Thái Nguyên trấn	Chiefs of the districts of Hòa An, Thạch An, Thông Nông, Nguyên Bình, Hà Quảng, and part of Trà Lĩnh, Phục Hòa districts and Cao Bằng city (Cao Bằng province)
	Hoàng Nguyên Ý, Hoàng Văn Ngạc, Nguyễn Thế Ninh, Nguyễn Công Đình, “Phụ đạo” of Lạng Sơn trấn	Tày Nùng Chieftains/ 土司
	Nguyễn Khải, châu Mông, trấn Tuyên Quang	Tày Nùng Chieftains/ 土司
	Nông Văn Thông, “Phụ đạo 父道”/ Chieftain of Thái Nguyên trấn	Tày Nùng Chieftains/ 土司
	Hà Tông Lai, Hà Tông Mậu	Tày Chieftains (?), Thu Vật district, Tuyên Quang (now Yên Bình district, Yên Bái province)
	Nông Thế Ôn in Bảo Lạc châu, Dương Thắng Kim in Thám Già sách, Nguyễn Châu Quốc in Mường An Phú, all belonging to Tuyên Quang trấn	Chieftains of Nông clan, Tày ethnic, Bảo Lạc, now the area of Bảo Lạc district (Cao Bằng); Chieftains of Dương, Nguyễn clan, Tày ethnic (?)
	Bắc Bình phủ	Later became “Cao Bình phủ”, lands of Cao Bằng now. Area of Tay people
	Tỏa Thoát	Quả Khoát gate, Quảng Uyên district (now being town of Cao Bằng)
	An Bang trấn	Lands of Quảng Ninh province, under the influence of Tay, Nung ethnicities
	Ôn châu	Thuộc đất Lạng Sơn
	Lộc Bình châu	

Ethnicity	Ancient place and people names	Modern place names and ethnicities
Thai	Lạc Thủy	Upstreams of Chu River (Cầm Thủy district, Thanh Hóa), area of Thái Dọ people, or Chu River Thai
	Chí Linh (Linh Sơn/Pù Rinh)	Giao An commune, Lang Chánh district (Thanh Hóa) belonging to Mường Giao Lão, a large mountainous area belonging to Thường Xuân commune, Lang Chánh district
	Lư Sơn	Quan Sơn district (Thanh Hóa), equivalent to Mường Xia of 'Phủ Tày' Thai people
	Cầm Lạn, "Đồng Tri châu 同知州"/ Governor of Quỳnh Châu	A chief of Tày Dọ Thai, Quỳnh Châu (Nghệ An)
	Kinh Lộng ải	Cổ Lũng gate, lands of Bá Thước district, area of Mường Khoòng, a large muang of 'Phủ Tày' Thai people
	Thủy sách	Quan Sơn district, lands of 'Phủ Tày' Thai people
	Quan Da	Or Quan Du, Ca Da Muang, a large muang of 'Phủ Tày' Thai people
	Bồ Lạp Mountain	Also called Bồ Cừ, Bồ Đẳng, the local name is "Bù Đờn"; Châu Nga commune, Quỳnh Châu district
	Trà Lân châu	Or Trà Long, lands of Con Công, Tương Dương districts of Nghệ An
	Cầm Bàn	A chieftain of Dọ Thai, Trà Lân châu, now belonging to Nghệ An
	Cầm Quý, "Tri châu"/ Governor of Ngọc Ma châu	A Thai chieftain of Kỳ Sơn area (Nghệ An), the mountainous region of Hà Tĩnh and neighbouring districts of Laos; "Ngọc Ma châu" latter became "Ngọc Ma phủ" (as the chronicle 1470)
	Cầm Lạn	A chief of Thai, Quỳnh Châu
	Đèo Cát Hãn, Đèo Mạnh Vượng, at Phục Lễ châu	Chiefs of Lai Châu, the Thai people call Mường Lay
	Đào Lộc, Đào Quý Dung, Phụ đạo/ "Đồng Tri phủ 同知府"/ Governor of Quy Hóa trấn	Areas of Phú Thọ, Yên Bái, Lào Cai now. Đào (Đèo?) clan, Thai people? ⁶³
	Cầm Công, Phụ đạo of Lệnh Châu/ Quy Hợp châu	A chief belonging to Bồn Man; Lư/Lò Cầm clan
An Tây phủ	Lai Châu and some areas of China	
2 châu of Sa Bôi, Thuận Bình belonging to Cam Lộ nguyên	Quảng Trị province	

Source: Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến (2021), *Toàn thư*

The concepts of Di, Lão, and Man continued to appear in the history of the Lê court, and were also increasingly clear, specific, and distant, such as the “Lão” people in Bình Nguyên, Tuyên Quang Trấn (宣光鎮平原獠人, the Tay ethnic, now in Hà Giang), the “Barbarian in Nam Mã Châu” (南馬各蠻, 南馬州), the “Barbarian with the Nữ family” (柎蠻) or “Man Nữ”, the “Barbarian of the Cầm clan” (琴蠻), “Barbarian of Xa clan” (車蠻), even “Xa people”... [7] (pp. 417, 418), [14]⁶⁴ Among them, the furthest was Man with Nữ clan who belonged to Ai Lao, and a generic “Sơn Man/山蠻” (Mountain Barbarian) that was in the territory of the Ming (China) according to the re-research of later historians.⁶⁵ Man, Di of the Lê Dynasty were really in the “distant frontier” (邊遠夷) as said by the chroniclers of the Thánh Tông reign [7] (p. 396).⁶⁶

Quantitative research by Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến (2021) shows that in the “collective imagination of Đại Việt in the 15th century” through the *Toàn thư*, besides Champa in the South, the biggest rival of the Lê family was the “Western Thai block”. According to the “images” reproduced by the history of the Lê Dynasty, the Muong as well as the Tay - Nung people were obedient, so the Lê had little to worry about these groups. Meanwhile, for nearly a whole century, facing the western mountainous ethnic forces, they had to deal with Thai polities. In the 15th century, “Westward progress almost coincided with Thai advance”, like “Southward advance almost coincided with Champa progress” [31] (104-105). From a cramped Đại Việt just as small as a “hand”, which had not yet covered all the Red River Delta, to a mighty Lê Dynasty moving far to the West, stepping high into the mountains, it was a long process of actions by the courts Lý - Trần - Lê from the capital Thăng Long.

7. Discussion

A long and broad view of the history of the northern highlands of Vietnam from the 11th to

the 16th centuries reveals a number of features that differ from the theoretical concept of Zomia asserted by Professor James C. Scott. With this first article, I argue the following two points:

Firstly, the highlands and lowlands were not (and should not be) considered as completely opposite poles. Of course, J. Scott’s book presents the formation of mountainous institutions in interaction with the central state in the plains. However, it seems to us that, mountains and plains were two separate worlds. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, early in pre-modern history, at the time of the formation of a ‘Charter polity’,⁶⁷ we find that the mountains, the montagnards, and the barbarian tribes were not far away, sometimes right next to the Capital. Even the Đinh tribe that founded Đại Cồ Việt with all the criteria of an independent state in the South (kingdom name, reign title, and title of Emperor) were highlanders, and most clearly, we have seen Thanh Hóa forest groups have mastered Vietnamese history from the 15th century until the Colonial period. In terms of nature as well as people, there were highland elements in the lowlands, and on the contrary, as shown in the cases of the wet rice valleys of the Tai-speaking groups in the North, or of the Hre in the upper Quang Ngai region in the South (as Andrew Hardy 2019 pointed out), there were also elements of powerful, prosperous lowlands in the highlands which had been there already. The so-called lowlands, lowlanders or central people (as the Kinh/Việt) with all its institutions, were themselves in the process of shaping, changing and not being homogenized.

Secondly, there are many gaps in the larger picture of Zomia, in terms of space and time, among which the most important piece is the Thai block in the west of North Vietnam, as well as the Muong people of Vietnam. The story of the “Westward advance” of the Lê family in the 15th century Đại Việt has shown that Thai polities (and not the modern Thai in

Thailand as Scott has concerned) have been too unfortunately overlooked in Zomia. Thai people are highlanders (we should not exclude them from the upper world as Scott argued), they have been there, with the political order and social organization already quite sophisticated, and the large population community and the powerful economic bases as well. In the North of Vietnam, the Thai factor in language, customs, agricultural cultivation, etc. has had an even deeper influence on the Red River Delta than ever thought. Only a multi-ethnic Đại Việt kingdom in the 15th century could accept the indigenous and mountainous folk legends to incorporate them into the construction of the national tradition in the official history. The story of Hồng Bàng clan was the creation of the Late Trần and Early Lê historians, but the influence of China was sometimes just a cover, while the content was very similar to the indigenous Muong - Thai minds. And in the end, the historical reality of the Muong - Thai highlanders mastering the Đại Việt dynasties for several centuries has shown a completely opposite direction compared to what happened in Zomia. Plain, center has been always the destination, not the object to “respect but with distance”.

It can be said that ‘Zomia’ and ‘Southeast Asian Massif’ are respectable theoretical concepts in terms of generalization, influence, scholarly implications, and in general have been accepted as correct over time (from 2009 and 2010 and thus now for more than a decade). The Vietnamese have a saying about a dangerous way of thinking: “*Seeing trees but not seeing forests*”, which is very serious; in the opposite direction, although not as serious as that, seeing the forest but missing the trees is also worth paying attention to. Hopefully, the “trees” growing on the hills and mountains of the Northeast, Northwest and Central Highlands of Vietnam will contribute to the forest, so that it can become more colorful and can be seen close-up.

Notes

- ¹ Among studies in French, the edited volume by Pierre-Bernard Lafont (1989), with the contributions of ten other scholars [17], is worthy of consideration. Although the main aim of the book is to describe the frontiers of Vietnam through history, the depictions of boundaries in the north (the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, 6 chapters) and to the west (with Laos generally, 3 chapters) are indeed about the upland regions. Moreover, while the Vietnamese southern expansion has been studied profoundly (see for example Momoki Shiro 2015 [27]), scholarship on the ‘western advance’ as found in Lafont’s volume is rather rare. Since Lafont’s book is more relevant to my next projected article I shall defer further discussion to a future occasion.
- ² *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư (Complete Book of the Historical Records of Đại Việt, hereafter Toàn thư and or TT)*, “Ngoại kỷ (Outer Annals)”, Book IV, pp. 19a-b; *Việt sử lược (Brief Historical Annals of Đại Việt, hereafter VSL)*, Book I, p. 9a.
- ³ *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục (Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Việt, hereafter Cương mục and or CM)*, “Tiền biên (Prefatory Compilation)”, Book IV, p. 10, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/252/page/74>.
- ⁴ But then, the next leader Lý Phật Tử quickly moved down to the eastern plain, with the sites of Bãi Quần Thần, Ô Diên citadel on the periphery of Hanoi today. *Toàn thư*, “Ngoại kỷ”, Book IV, pp. 19b-20a, [7] (p. 73).
- ⁵ *Cương mục*, “Tiền biên”, Book IV, p. 19, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/252/page/84>.
- ⁶ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 8b (Trần Quốc Vượng’s translation of VSL had corrected the character 候 into 堠); *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ (Main Annals)”, Book II, p. 36b; *Cương mục*, “Chính biên (Main Compilation)”, Book III, p. 11, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/254/page/11>.
- ⁷ 明淨寺碑文, at Hoàng Hóa District (Thanh Hóa).
- ⁸ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book IV, p. 6b.
- ⁹ “Quy Hóa đầu”, “Quy Hóa giang”, in Phú Thọ, Yên Bái Provinces or upstream Thanh Hóa; Even if it was still “Quy Nhân”, the event in 1053 [55] (p. 88)

- shew that this place had been in the Lý - Dali (Yunnan) border area.
- ¹⁰ *Việt sử lược*, Book III, p. 22a.
- ¹¹ *Việt sử lược*, Book III, pp. 16b, 32b, 18b, 31b; *Thiền uyển tập anh* 禪苑集英 (*Collection of Outstanding Figures of the Zen Garden*), 卷下, 56b1頁; *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book IV, p. 26a.
- ¹² *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book IV, p. 30a; Book V, pp. 1b-2a.
- ¹³ 武瓊 (校訂), 嶺南摭怪列傳, 卷一, “狐精傳”, 八頁.
- ¹⁴ *Cương mục*, “Tiền biên”, Book V, p. 26, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/252/page/131>.
- ¹⁵ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book X, p. 9b
- ¹⁶ Phạm Lê Huy also said that the Red River Delta during the period of Sui - Tang domination (7th - 10th centuries) was quite diverse and multi-ethnic in terms of population characteristics (indigenous, Han, Man - Lão - Di 夷/ non-Huaxia/non-Han, and Chenla people), having both multi-terrain (delta, ravine, cave and hill valley (溪/谿洞), coastal), especially the process of “multi-layer mixed blood” and “diverse localization” of the classes of inhabitants, in which the immigrants from the North were involved.
- ¹⁷ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 4a; *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book II, p. 9b. See also *Vĩnh Bình* (year 1084), *Quy Hóa* (1158, 1190, 1220), *La Biều* (1184), *Ngọc Sơn* (1200), *Văn Lô* (1204, 1208) [55] (pp. 105, 149, 159, 161, 165, 169, 173, 197, 199).
- ¹⁸ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 21a; Book III, p. 12b, 13b, 15b, 20a. The reason for promotion (or demotion) often depended upon the merit of the local unit’s chief and his ties with the central court.
- ¹⁹ 古越村延福寺碑明 (1157), at Khoái Châu (Hưng Yên). Large Trấn and Small Trấn [55] (p. 93), [19] (p. 287). Nevertheless, the titles of Đỗ Anh Vũ, as well as Lý Thường Kiệt’s, appear to have been honorary titles without real authority. Therefore, those Trấn and Trại were not truly restricted to a certain region [28] (pp. 92-94). However, these could still be considered to reveal the attitude of the Lý Dynasty towards Thanh Hóa.
- ²⁰ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, pp. 9a, 12a.
- ²¹ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book II, p. 9b.
- ²² Đào Duy Anh in 1964 also said that it was necessary to distinguish two types of Châu, large and small, in Đại Việt under the Lý Dynasty, at least in the 11th century [11] (p. 176).
- ²³ *Việt sử lược*, Book III, p. 18b.
- ²⁴ *Tĩnh Châu*, in the course of 1213, probably near Tam Đái (Phú Thọ, Vĩnh Phúc), was also the border between the midland plain and the central region. [55] (p. 438).
- ²⁵ *Việt sử lược*, Book III, p. 30b.
- ²⁶ Tạ Chí Đại Trường [49] (p. 178) argued that Châu was more central close to Thăng Long authority, however, Phủ (and higher Lộ) actually was much more administrative.
- ²⁷ This is not the first table made for the local units of the Lý Dynasty. In 2013, Momoki Shiro (2013) [26] has made overall tables including 20 kinds of local unit, based on *Việt sử lược*, *Toàn thư*, *Thiền uyển tập anh*, and Chinese sources such as *Song huiyao jigao* 宋会要輯稿 and *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答 to supplement and correct the list of Sakurai Yumio [44]. I have added several more materials to my tables, especially data from inscriptions. In *An Nam chí lược* (*Annan zhilue* 安南志略 (A Brief History of Annan) [20] (pp. 57-58, 372-374), Lê Trắc (黎崱) categorized the normal Châu in the Trần period and the old Châu from the era of Chinese Domination, such as Phong Châu, Tô Mậu châu, Tô Vật châu, Trường Châu, Nga Châu, Đường Châu. Therefore, in my list for the Lý, the categorization of Large Old Châu and Smaller ones carries the same meaning. Among the Smaller Châu, Quảng Nguyên in the uplands and Đẳng in the delta were powerful, as James A. Anderson and Sakurai Yumio have pointed out [1] (pp. 75-76, 90-91), [44] (pp. 121-123, 165-170).
- ²⁸ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 3a.
- ²⁹ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 3b; *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book II, pp. 6b-7a; Cao Hùng Trưng (高熊徵), *Annan zhiyuan* (安南志原), Book III, p. 17b.
- ³⁰ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, pp. 3b, 4a.
- ³¹ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, pp. 5b, 9a, 7a, 8b, 12a, 17b, 22b; Book III, p. 12a, 12b, 6b; *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book IV, pp. 20b (古弘甲).
- ³² *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 12b; Book III, p. 7a. *Giang* may be equivalent to (or slightly smaller) in size with *Đạo* 道, *Phủ*, *Châu*, *Trại*, *Trấn*, *Quân* 軍 and possibly *Trường*; Below *Giang* were the *Hương*

- 鄉, *Huyện, Quận* 郡, *Giáp*, and possibly *Ấp* 邑.
- ³³ *Việt sử lược*, Book II, p. 4a; *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book II, p. 9a.
- ³⁴ *Sách* (柵 or 冊) was definitely the division of the hill tribes (such as the mountain barbarian people in the *Sách* of Khô, Ma Luận, Mông/蒙...), but the Khô Sách (枯柵) was somewhere in Quốc Oai, An Lạc was about Vĩnh Yên, and Ma Luận 麻論 (unknown) but the chief Bạch Lãng of this *Sách* was granted a title of Marquis (以麻論柵山獠明字白浪爲列侯)? *Việt sử lược*, Book III, pp. 30b, 22b, 32a [55] (pp. 454, 428, 459).
- ³⁵ According to statistics from *Đại Việt sử lược* and to contemporary inscriptions, it can be seen that the *Hương* which have survived to nowadays were more distributed in the delta, only Tuế Phong Hương (歲豐鄉) belonged to Chân Đăng Châu in the midlands; The *Huyện* was not just in the delta, the *Huyện* names Hạ Liên (下連) and Đô Lạp (都臘) belonged to the northeastern silver mines, or where certain mountain forests had white elephants; The *Thôn* cannot separate the uplands from the lowlands. *Tượng Nô Thôn* (象奴村) was somewhere on the border between the plains and the northeastern mountains (Thương River basin, Lạng Châu area during the Lý Dynasty) [55] (pp. 287, 288); *Việt sử lược*, Book II, pp. 12a, 13a; Book III, p. 27a [55] (pp. 326, 330, 444).
- ³⁶ *Việt sử lược*, Book III, p. 32b.
- ³⁷ *Nguồn* (Nguyên 源): as described in the inscriptions, it seemed to be in the mountains far from the center.
- ³⁸ *Cương mục*, “Chính biên”, Book VII, pp. 17-18, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/256/page/17> & <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/256/page/18>: a barbarian *Động* in *Bố Chính Phủ Lộ*, i.e., Quảng Bình area nowadays.
- ³⁹ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, pp. 12b, 35a, 42a.
- ⁴⁰ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VII, p.p 26b-27a.
- ⁴¹ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, pp. 22a, 22b-23a, 49a.
- ⁴² *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, pp. 46b, 57a. Both Lạng Giang, Ma Lục belonged to Lạng Sơn nowadays; while Quy Hóa covered present-day Yên Bái and Phú Thọ, areas far west from Lạng Giang.
- ⁴³ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VIII, pp. 34b.
- ⁴⁴ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, pp. 21a-21b.
- ⁴⁵ *Cương mục*, “Chính biên”, Book VI, pp. 38-39, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/255/page/82>; <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/255/page/83>.
- ⁴⁶ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, p. 28a.
- ⁴⁷ Similarly, in the 14th century, we encounter characters from Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An who were considered as academics (such as Trương Phóng, examination in 1304), and Confucian intellectuals (Lê Quát, chronicle 1366), or Hồ Tông Thốc, an Academy Scholar, “a young man with a high pass, very talented” (chronic 1386) [9] (pp. 88, 153, 172).
- ⁴⁸ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, pp. 29b-30a, 34a-34b.
- ⁴⁹ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VIII, p. 39a; *Cương mục*, “Chính biên”, Book XIII, p. 29, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/259/page/29>; 國朝佐命功臣之碑 (1450) wrote “Emperor went out to Đông Đô and stayed” (帝出東都留) [35] (p. 76).
- ⁵⁰ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VIII, p. 48b; Book IX, pp. 1a, 2a, 19b, 25a.
- ⁵¹ The first attempt at unifying culture and language, which seems to have been rather xenophobic, appeared at the end of the Trần Dynasty, in 1374, when the Dynasty stipulated that “the army and the people were not allowed to wear clothes or combs following the Northern people and to imitate the voices of Champa and Laos countries” [9] (p. 158). This event leads us to two feelings: *First*, the population under the Trần Dynasty still tended to be pluralistic and had not yet shaped its identity; *Second*, we can not even imagine what a set inside was.
- ⁵² *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book IV, p. 29a (兵合縣).
- ⁵³ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VI, pp. 7a-7b, 36a-36b.
- ⁵⁴ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book V, p. 40a; Book VI, pp. 16b, 48b-49a; Book VII, pp. 9a-9b, 32a.
- ⁵⁵ This hypothesis is also interesting, because to this day, in Trịnh Xá village, the vernacular (Nôm) name of which is Chiềng village, Yên Ninh commune, Yên Định district, Thanh Hóa province, the folk festival Trò Chiềng is still preserved.
- ⁵⁶ *Việt sử lược*, Book I, p. 20b (鄭航); *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book I, p. 15b ((鄭國皇后) of King Lê Hoàn).
- ⁵⁷ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VIII, p. 6a-6b.
- ⁵⁸ In the opposite direction, also in the first half of

this 15th century, during the Lam Sơn uprising, the soldiers of Thiên Quan (Nho Quan, Lạc Thổ in Ninh Binh, Thanh Hóa today) were Muong people, who lived in the mountains, so they could not swim, did not cross the river, stayed and died to defeat the Ming invaders [9] (p. 265), [31] (p. 78).

⁵⁹ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book VI, pp. 16b, 49a.

⁶⁰ From this event onwards, the Early Lê chronicle of the 15th century depicts the internal activities, rituals, examinations, taxes, etc. of the Dynasty and unlike the previous periods, the appearance of the Man and Muong cannot be seen. According to Early Lê epitaph, there were only minor events, in 1482 and in the reign of Lê Hiến Tông [39] (pp. 326-327, 504-505).

⁶¹ Epitaph documents, such as 皇越開國功臣之碑 (1462), praising Lê Sao, also mentions the lands of Mường/Mang Chính 忙正 and Man Bổng 蠻俸 [39] (p. 103).

⁶² These lands and locations are not mentioned with the names of Muong, Chieng, and Dong in the history of the Lê Dynasty, but thanks to the research of [31] (pp. 71-103), we know they were Thai, Muong areas.

⁶³ This is the hypothesis of Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến, but with another chronicle (1467), there was Governor (Tri châu/ 知州) Đào Phục Lễ in Bắc Bình phủ (Cao Bằng at present) which was the lands of Tay people. This issue needs further research.

⁶⁴ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book XI, pp. 2a-2b, 16b, 20b, 27b, 44a, 51b; Book XII, pp. 31b, 35a, *ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 329, 336, 338, 342, 350, 354, 394, 396

⁶⁵ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book XIII, pp. 3b, 5b; *Cương mục*, “Chính biên”, Book XXII, p. 35, <https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/263/page/76>.

⁶⁶ *Toàn thư*, “Bản kỷ”, Book XII, pp. 35b.

⁶⁷ The concept in Victor Lieberman (2003) [22] (pp. 31-44, 352-365), Momoki Shiro (2012, 2013), [25], [26] (pp. 45-48). Particularly, for the shaping process of the Lý polity, see Momoki Shiro, “Gia đình của các vua nhà Lý và sự xuất hiện của vương triều phụ hệ ở Việt Nam” (The family of the Lý kings and the emergence of the patriarchal dynasty in Vietnam) & “Những

người đàn ông ngoài hoàng gia ở triều đình nhà Lý” (Non-royal men in the Lý court), in [32] (pp. 799-841).

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