

Đại Nam Thực Lục Tiên Biên: Chapter 1 (1525-1613)

The Great Ancestor Auspicious Circumstance Thùy thống Khâm Minh Cung Ý Cẩn Nghĩa Đạt Lý Hiến Ung Chiêu Hựu Diệu Linh Gia Emperor,¹ of the surname Nguyễn, of the tabooed name Hoàng, was a person from Gia-miêu in the outside area of the district of Tống-sơn, the prefecture of Hà-trung, the region (xứ) of Thanh-hoa.

He was born on the day *bính dần*, in the eighth month, in the fall, in the year *ất dậu* (1525) (The fourth year of Lê Thống Nguyên, and the fourth year of Minh Gia Tĩnh²), the second son of the Triệu tổ Tĩnh Emperor; his mother was the Tĩnh Empress Nguyễn thị (the daughter of Nguyễn Minh Biện, the Special Advance Assistant Country Commanding Troop General and Acting Guard in the Lê court).

His distant ancestors were from a renowned family in Thanh-hoa.

His paternal grandfather had been the Trùng Grand Duke³, of the tabooed name [Du]⁴, (who) when he was 8 years old he already knew how to write literature, (and who) at the age of 15 was acquainted with the military arts. Triều Hiến Tông of the Lê house, served as a viceroy envoy⁵ until the time that Uy mục Emperor acted immorally, and then he returned to the western capitol (Tây-kinh) to assist Lô Oanh with an uprising in Thanh-hoa, and he planned the task of defending the peace of the country. When Oanh ascended [the throne] to serve as the Tương-dực Emperor, he was promoted to serve as the Great Assistant Grand Duke Trùng.⁶

¹ Great Ancestor Auspicious Circumstance Modest Commanding Respectful Intelligent Palace Purpose Cautiously Righteousness Attaining Comprehending Glorious Peaceful (Calming) and Welcoming Forgiving Marvelous and Miraculous Expanding Good Fortune Emperor. This translation gives at least the flavor of the typical honorific posthumous titles. I have left many of the rest in this chapter untranslated, but the sense is not that different from ruler to ruler.

² The dating given to introduce each new lunar year gives first the reign year of the Lê Emperor, following by the reign year of his Chinese (Ming Dynasty, in this case) counterpart. With the exception of dates, all words in parentheses () are commentary or clarification found in the original text itself. Words in brackets [] are my own insertions.

³ *quốc công* - 國公

⁴ There was a story that said that An-hòa had sown (bá) Nguyễn Hoàng Dụ to bear Nguyễn Kim (according to the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*)

⁵ *kinh lược sứ*

⁶ *thái phó* Trùng quốc công.

His father was the Triệu tổ Tĩnh Emperor, of the tabooed name [Kim], the first son of the Grand Duke Trưng.⁷ At first he had served as an official in the Lê court, with the position of Lefthand Palace Guard Advance Troop General⁸ and [with the noble title of] An-thanh marquis.⁹ In the year *bính tuất* (1527), Mạc Đăng Dung seized the throne from the Lê family. In the year *đinh hợi* (1527) the Lê family was lost. Triệu tổ hated the Mạc family for being usurpers, and his spirit wanted to restore the Lê house. Therefore, he led his son and younger brother to evade (the Mạc) and make their way to Laos. The king of that country was Sạ Đẩu and he allowed them to remain at Sầm-châu. At that time he gathered together heroes, and his ranks of loyal soldiers numbered many thousands of people; he had 30 elephants as well, and he discussed plans to look for a nephew of the Lê house in order to set him up as king. In the year *canh dần* (1530), he [Nguyễn Kim] brought the troops out to Thanh-hoa. Mạc Đăng Doanh (the first son of Mạc Đăng Dung) ordered the general Ngọc Trục (last name unclear) to resist them. They fought one another in the district of Lôi-dương, (and) Ngọc Trục was defeated and fled. In the year *tân mão* (1531), [Nguyễn Kim] attacked and was able to destroy the Mạc general Nguyễn Kinh in the district of Đông-sơn, and he cut off more than 1,000 heads. When they advanced to the ferryboat of Diêm-thủy in the district of Gia-viện, he again fought a series of battles with the Mạc general, Lê Bá Ly, and achieved great victories. He encountered a rainstorm, (and) the water flooded to overflowing, (so) the Mạc troops took many warships to follow each other to advance, (and) he immediately turned his troops back to the [riverine] area¹⁰ of Sầm-hạ in Laos. In the year *quí tý* (1533) he went to meet the young son of Lê Chiêu Tông whom Ninh had established to act as king, [and] he took the regnal name of Nguyễn Hòa, formerly known as Trang tông (When the Lê house had recently fallen, Trang tông was still young,¹¹ and his subjects, the group of Trịnh Duy Tuấn and Lê Lan, met him and made their way

⁷ His father was Nguyễn Kim, the progenitor of the Nguyễn family.

⁸ Hữu vệ điện tiền quân tướng

⁹ hầu

¹⁰ sách

¹¹ thơ ấu

back to go over to Laos, where he mingled with the people, and no one recognized him. Until this time, Triệu tổ searched everywhere until he found him, and then he immediately set him up serve as king). For this meritorious service, he was promoted as the Superior Assistant Great Tutor Hưng Grand Duke in charge of internal and external matters.¹² At that time there was a person in the village of Sóc-sơn, the district of Vĩnh-phúc (the modern district of Vĩnh-lộc) by the name of Trịnh Kiểm who came to pay his respects (Kiểm was to be the ancestor of the Trịnh family). Triệu tổ saw that Kiểm had an unusual appearance,¹³ and he granted him his eldest daughter Ngọc-bảo in marriage, and ordered him to oversee the cavalry troops and also asked him to take the position of troop general. In the year *canh tý* (1540), he brought the troops to station them to defend Nghệ-an, [and] among his followers were many heroes. In the year *nhâm dần* (1542) he went on a patrol of the ranks in the area of Thanh-hoa, where the reputation of the troops was very celebrated – both near and far they were equally praised. In the year *quý mão* (1543) they met the Lê king and advanced their troops out of Tây-dô [that is, Thanh-hoa] in order to attack Mạc Chính Trung (the second son of Mạc Đăng Dung, who was also called Đăng Xương), and they were able to appoint Thái tổ to serve as the temperate general of all the military camps both naval and infantry, (and) they divided their paths and all advanced, [and] they fought everywhere and were successful there.

On the day tân ty, in the fifth month, in the summer, in the year *ất ty* (1545) he (Triệu tổ) was poisoned by the Mạc general [named Trung]. Triệu tổ died at the age of 78. (Earlier the Mạc house had seen that the troops of the king's house were very active and strong, and they had been very worried, so they had secretly ordered a eunuch by the name of Trung (last name unclear) to pretend to surrender, in order to poison the Lê king; this effort did not succeed, and so he immediately and secretly put the poison into a watermelon, which he then presented to Triệu tổ). The Lê king mourned his death

¹² Thượng phụ thái sư Hưng quốc công chương nội ngoại sự

¹³ unusual in a positive way.

ceaselessly, (and) posthumously granted him the title of Peaceful Merit Duke Chiêu,¹⁴ and by means of a profound ceremony brought him for interment at the Thiên-tôn mountain (in the district of Tống-sơn. According to the [oral] tradition the grave was dug in the shape of a dragon's mouth, (and) when the coffin was lowered into the grave the entrance of the grave closed up again. Suddenly the heavens opened up with rain and there was wind and thunder, (and) all the people were frightened and fled. When the rain had stopped, they returned again to find that the stones of the mountain were once again scattered about, the grass and trees were very green, and they were not able to make out the grave site anymore.¹⁵ From that time forth, any time a sacrifice or ritual was to be held, it would be held somewhere in those mountains. In the second year of the reign of Minh-mệnh, these mountains had bestowed upon them [the name] Triệu-tường [Auspicious Omen] mountains). At this time the nation-founding lord's¹⁶ venerated and auspicious name was Huệ Triết Hiển Hựu Hoàn Hữu Tế Thế Vĩ Tích Chiêu Huân Tĩnh Emperor. The Generational Venerating Filial and Military Emperor¹⁷ also posthumously venerated (Nguyễn Kim) as the Di Mưu Thùy Dụ Khâm Cung Huệ Triết Hiển Hựu Hoàn Hữu Tế Thế Vĩ Tích Chiêu Huân Tĩnh Emperor, and posthumously venerated his concubine as the Từ Tín Chiêu Ý Đức concubine. In Gia-long's fifth year, he was also posthumously venerated as Di Mưu Thùy Dụ Khâm Cung Huệ Triết Hiển Hựu Hoàn Hữu Tế Thế Khải Vận Nhân Thánh Tĩnh Emperor¹⁸, and the name of the dynastic temple was Triệu tổ¹⁹, and the mausoleum was called the Trường nguyên, and the venerated concubine was called the Từ Tín Chiêu Ý Hoảng Nhân Thục Đức Tĩnh queen. (According to tradition the concubine was buried with Triệu tổ). The lord²⁰ had the appearance of a tiger; he had the back of a tiger, the eyes of a phoenix, and he had the forehead of a dragon; his official manner was very

¹⁴ huân tĩnh công

¹⁵ in other words - it was as though it had never taken place

¹⁶ A reference to Nguyễn Hoàng.

¹⁷ This was Phúc Khoát (1739-1765)

¹⁸ hoàng đế

¹⁹ This name was given for each of the kings who had died that they might be worshipped in the venerating temple.

²⁰ The lord being referred to here is Nguyễn Hoàng.

handsome. He was intelligent and had talents and ability, (and) learned officials all knew that he was an unusually outstanding man.²¹

When Triệu tổ had avoided the Mạc family, he had fled over to Ai-lao. Since the lord had been just two years old, he was sent to be raised in the house of the *thái phó* Nguyễn Ứ Dĩ (his personal name was Vô-sự, at that time he was called the Uy Commandary Duke, an elder brother and blood relative of the Tĩnh queen). Ứ Dĩ protected him with all his heart, and when he was older he often brought him to discuss matters related to establishing the state in order to stimulate (his skills). At first he had served as an official in the Lê court, and he was promoted to Hạ-khê Marquis. He brought troops to attack Mạc Phúc Hải (the first son of Mạc Đăng Doanh), and was able to behead the general Trịnh Chí in the district of Ngọc-sơn. Upon his triumphal return the king was at peace and praised him saying: “Truly, the father tiger has produced a tiger as an offspring.”²²

Until around the year Thuận-bình [?] in the time of Lê Trung tông, he was, because of his military accomplishments, advanced and promoted as the Đoan Commandary Duke. At that time the lefthand general of the Lê dynasty, Trịnh Kiểm (at that time established as the Lượng Grand Duke), retained and defended the power of the soldiers, and he had dictatorial (control) over every action. The righthand general Lãng Công Uông (the eldest son Triệu tổ) was murdered by Kiểm. Kiểm also saw that the lord’s (Chúa) renown for his meritorious service increased every day and therefore he hated him very much. The king saw this and because of it his heart was not at peace, and he talked and planned with Nguyễn Ứ Di and then pretended to fall ill, this being essential to protect himself discreetly so that the Trịnh family would suspect nothing.

The lord heard about the reputation of Nguyễn Bình Khiêm (a person from the village of Trung-

²¹ bậc phi thường.

²² Like father, like son. (cha nào con nấy)

am, in the region of Hải-dương, who had passed the (exam) to be a first-rank doctorate and first laureate in the Mạc dynasty, and had gone from the position of great tutor²³ back to that of a retired official); that he was good at the art of divination. Therefore he secretly ordered people to go and question him. Bình Khiêm looked at the decorative rock garden hills in front of his courtyard and sang a chant: “One single range of mountains, a refuge for ten thousand generations.” An envoy brought this story back to recount it. The lord understood its meaning. At that time the region of Thuận-hóa had just been pacified, therefore the Lê house had already set up three offices (capitol office, surplus office, offerings office) and prefectures and districts in order to be administered, but the people were not yet of one heart. Kiểm continued to be worried. The lord then relied on his sister Ngọc-bảo to speak with Kiểm in order to ask him if he (the lord) could go down to suppress the area of Thuận-hoa. Kiểm saw that that area was dangerously poor and was far off so he gave it away. Anh tông ascended the throne, (and) Kiểm sent him a petition saying: “Thuận-hoa is a very important place; we have troops and property there, (but) half of the country is primitive and relies on us and therefore it is a big undertaking. The heart of the people must still continuously be taught to change, (and) there are many people crossing the sea in order to follow the Mạc family. I am afraid that there are people leading the aggressors to come in and loot, (and) because we do not have a talented general who can guard the area militarily, we have not yet been able to achieve peace. The Đoan Duke is the son of the general. He has a talent for strategizing and perhaps he can be ordered to suppress that area, in order to go with the guard general of Quảng-nam to help one another to be strong and then they can break up our worries about the southern region.” The Lê king heard and followed (this advice) and ordered that the lord be given the position of temperate suppressor,²⁴ (and) that without exception all the work be entrusted to him, and that each year he only had to submit the taxes.

²³ thái bảo

²⁴ trấn tiết

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In *mậu ngọ*, the first year²⁵ (1558) (The first year of Lê Chính-trị; the 37th year of Minh Gia-tĩnh) in the winter, in the tenth month, the lord began his campaign to suppress Thuận-hoa – he was 34 years of age. Some people of the infantry division were compatriots in Tống-sơn, and some loyal, brave people were in the region of Thanh-hoa and they were all equally happy to follow [him]. He established a military camp in the village of Ái-tử (in the district of Vũ-xương, also known as Đãng-xương).²⁶ All the officials in the three offices that the Lê house had set up followed the orders of the lord.

The lord consoled the troops and people, and he gathered heroes to use them. The head tax was lightened; he showed the people admiration and respect, and at that time he was established as the Tiên lord. The imperial state was established, (and) truly the foundation was built from that time.

In *kỷ mùi*, the second year (1559), in the fall in the eighth month, Thanh-hoa and Nghệ-an suffered from flooding and many people fled down toward the south.

At that time all the work had just begun. The lord stayed up late and arose early to worry [industriously], thinking about the task of strengthening the foundations. Nguyễn Ơ Dĩ along with the group of Tống Phước Tị (at that time called the Luân Duke), Mạc Canh Huống were all of the same heart combining their strength and drawing up plans in many directions, (and) the lord fully believed in all they were doing.

In *canh thân*, in the third year (1560) in the winter, they set up a fortified port in order to defend the coastal area (for at that time the troops of the Mạc often followed the coastal routes in order to come down to loot Thanh Nghệ and that is why they had to be on their guard).

Tân dậu, the fourth year (1561).²⁷

²⁵ That is, the first year of the semi-autonomous “reign” of the Nguyễn ruler, Nguyễn Hoàng.

²⁶ Now the district of Triệu-phong.

²⁷ For some years the chronicle does not record events.

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Nhâm tuất, the fifth year (1562).

In *quý hợi*, the sixth year (1563), in the fall, in the seventh month, on the day *giáp thìn*, the next crown prince (that is to say the Hy tông Hiếu văn Emperor) was born.

Giáp tý, the seventh year (1564).

Ất sửu, the eighth year (1565).

Bính dần, the ninth year (1566).

Đinh mão, the tenth year (1567) (The tenth year of Lê Chính-trị; the first year of Minh Long-khánh).

In *mậu thìn*, the eleventh year (1568), in the spring, in the third month, the suppressor commander²⁸ of Quảng-nam, Búi Tá Hán (at that time he had been established as the Trấn Commandary Duke) died. The Lê king took Nguyễn Bá Quỳnh (at that time established as the Nguyên Commandary Duke) to serve as the troop commander, and to oversee defense of that area.

In *kỷ ty*, the twelfth year (1569), in the fall, in the ninth month, the lord went to Thanh-hoa, and paid his respects to the Lê king in the traveling palace²⁹ of Khoa-trường.

In *canh ngọ*, the 13th year (1570), in the spring, in the first month, the lord went back from the Western capitol, and he stopped at the military camp in the village of Trà-bát (in the district of Đăngxương).

The Lê king summoned the troop commander of Quảng-nam, Nguyễn Bá Quỳnh, to return and serve as Governor of Nghệ-an. The lord immediately (gave him) concurrent leadership of the two regions

²⁸ tổng trấn

²⁹ hành cung

of Thuận-hóa and Quảng-nam.

Thuận-hóa had two prefectures, nine districts, and three highland districts. The prefecture of Tiên-bình (in old times Tân-bình), had three districts: Khanh-lộc, Lê-thủy, Minh-linh and one highland district: Bối-chánh; the prefecture of Triệu-phong, had six districts: Vũ-xương, Hải-lăng, Quảng-diên (formerly Tư-vang), Hương-trà (formerly Kim-trà), Phú-vang (formerly Tư-vang), Điện-bàn, and two highland districts: Thuận-bình and Sa-bồn. Quảng-nam had three prefectures and nine districts. The prefecture of Thăng-hoa consisted of three districts: Lê-giang, Hà-dông, Hy-giang; the prefecture of Tư-nghĩa consisted of three districts: Bình-sơn, Mộ-hoa, and Nghĩa-giang; the prefecture of Hoài-nhân consisted of three districts: Bồng-sơn, Phù-ly and Tuy-viễn). Wearing the seal of the commander suppressor troop general, [he] set up a troop whose name was the military company of Hùng nghĩa.

At that time Mạc Mậu Hợp ordered his general of the group of Kính Điển to bring troops to invade Thanh Nghệ. The General and Governor of Nghệ-an, Nguyễn Bá Quỳnh, heard this news and fled; the aggressor's power was savage, and the hearts of the people were upset.³⁰ The prince had originally had prestige, and many strategies; his discipline had been very clear, and his defenses had been vigilant, (and) for this reason the troops of the aggressors did not dare to invade the frontier, thus in particular the two regions of Thuận and Quảng were able to remain at peace.

In the second month, Trịnh Kiểm of the Lê house died. His second son Tùng (the son of Ngọc-bảo) ascended the throne in his place. The lord [Nguyễn Kim] ordered an envoy to go and pay a visit of condolence.

In *Tân mùi*, the 14th year (1571), in the fall, in the seventh month, people from the district Khang-lộc (at present known as Phong-lộc) by the names of Mỹ Lương, Văn Lan and Nghĩa Sơn (all

³⁰ xao xuyên

the last names unclear) rose up in rebellion, and they were attacked and pacified. Earlier Mỹ Lương along with his younger brother Văn Lan and Nghĩa Sơn had all offered rice (as a bribe) to be allowed to serve as officials, and they concentrated their efforts on gathering taxes of the state. The Lê house ordered Mỹ Lương go to to serve as Consulting Overseer,³¹ and Văn Lan and Nghĩa Sơn served as Acting Guard.³² Trịnh Kiểm used that opportunity to secretly order them to launch a sudden attack against the military camp of Vũ-xương, (saying) that if they were successful they would receive a substantial reward. At that point Lương ordered Văn Lan and Nghĩa Sơn to bring respected troops to the district of Minh-ling,³³ and then personally to lead the troops to sneak along the mountain road to Cầu Ngói in Hải-lăng to lie in ambush, their plan being to fight up close. (There is an account that says that when the naval soldiers of the Mạc looted Nghệ-an, then Thuận-hoa was stirred up, and the group of Mỹ Lương planned to launch a sudden attack on Vũ-xương in order to (force the) Mạc to surrender). The lord knew of this plan, and he immediately ordered the assistant general Trương Trà (at that time established as the Trà Commandary Duke) to attack Nghĩa Sơn, and personally to bring troops secretly to Cầu Ngói to suddenly attack Mỹ Lương and to set fire to his camp. Mỹ Lương fled, and they followed him (and) were able to cut off his head. Trà advanced his troops to the village of Phúc-thị, and fought with the aggressors, and he was shot and killed by Nghĩa Sơn. Trà's wife Trần thị (a person of the village of Diêm-trường) heard this news and became very angry, and she put on the clothes of a man and joined the troops to fight, and she was able to shoot and kill Nghĩa Sơn in the battle. The troops of Văn Lan lost, and they fled back with the Trịnh. This was the final suppression of the band of aggressors. The lord brought the troops back. He bestowed on Trần thị the title of county/district woman.³⁴

³¹ *tham đốc*

³² *thự vệ*

³³ At present the district of Do-linh.

³⁴ *quận phu nhân*: phu nhân = Mrs. (for an official's wife)

At that time Quảng-nam also had a group of vagabonds who rose up in rebellion, and they looted and killed each other. The lord ordered the local general, Mai Đình Dũng, to pacify them, and taking that opportunity he ordered them to remain to defend that area in order to gather up the (remaining) people and to restore normality among the defeated army's remnants.

In *Nhâm thân*, the 15th year (1572) (The first year of Lê Hồng-phúc, the sixth year of Minh Long-khánh), in the spring, in the first month, the Lê king changed the dynastic reign name to Hồng-phúc.

In the fall, in the seventh month, the general of the Mạc, Lập Bạo (last name unclear, (but) who had styled himself as a Commandary Duke) took people in the highland district of Bắc Bỗ-chính (the district of Bình-chính)³⁵ and led them along a road to bring 60 troop ships to cross the sea to go down to attack and loot, (and) he built a military barracks from the road of the village of Hồ-xá to the temple of Thanh-tương in the village of Lãng-uyển. The power of the aggressors was very strong. The lord brought troops to resist them, stationing them at the river of Ai-tử, and that night he heard from the middle of the river a voice calling out “trao-trao”, which seemed very strange. And he prayed: “If the spirit of the river is sacred, then help us fight the aggressors.” That night, as the lord slept he dreamt he saw a woman wearing a green outfit, and in her hand she held a (transparent) silken fan. She came before him and said: “If you want to labor to suppress the aggressors, then you must use a beautiful ruse to lure them to the beach, and I will help give you strength.” When he awoke, the lord reflected: “The woman in my dream told me that I should use a ‘beautiful ruse,’ so why don’t I use as a ruse a beautiful person?”³⁶

Among the group of gentlewomen there was one Ngô thị (known as Ngọc-lâm, of the hamlet of Thế-lại, and who was also called thị Trà) who was a great beauty, and so he plotted and discussed (this). The lord ordered that the young woman bring gold and silk to go to lure Lập Bạo to the place of the

³⁵ At present the district of Quảng-trạch

³⁶ kẻ mỹ nhân

river where (one could) hear the sound [ie. “trao-trao”] in order to kill him. Ngô thị went to the military camp of Lập Bạo and said: “I, the lord’s concubine, have heard that your officers and troops have come from afar, and they have sent me to bring this humble gift in order to make peace, that you would no longer attack one another.” Lập Bạo liked the beauty of Ngô thị, but he pretended to be angry, and said: “Could it be that the people there are trying to lure me into a snare?” Ngô thị spoke to him in a respectful melodious way, and he immediately believed her, and retained her within his mosquito net.³⁷ Ngô thị took that opportunity to invite him to the edge of the river in order to meet for an oath with the lord. Lập Bạo heeded her advice. Ngô thị secretly reported this action to the lord. The lord set up a black reed throne on the side of the river, at the place where the sound could be heard, to serve as the place for the oath meeting, and he excavated a trench for ambush troops. Arriving as promised, Lập Bạo and Ngô thị rode in a small boat, with only ten retainers following them. When they had arrived at the landing place, they saw that under his banner the lord also only had ten people. Lập Bạo was relaxed and did not suspect anything, and so he directly stepped slowly out [of the boat] toward the entrance of the temple. Suddenly the ambush troops rose up. Lập Bạo was frightened and fled back down to his boat, but the boat was already far from the shore. Lập Bạo dove after it, and fell into the water, (and) the lord’s troops shot and killed him right away, (and) then they took this opportunity to advance straight to the military camp of Thanh-tương. A great wind rose up, and the boats of the aggressors were all sunk. The troops of the aggressors brought themselves out to surrender, and the lord ordered them to stay in the area of Cồn Tiên³⁸ (which is the same as the canton of Bài-ân today), and to set up 36 guilds. The lord brought the troops back, and gave a public reward to Ngô thị, and called out the assistant *đoán sự* *vệ Thiên vō*, Vũ Doãn Trung, to marry her. He also directed officials to designate the river spirit as the *trảo thảo spirit gathering and disseminating great forgiving woman*,³⁹ and he set up a temple for (her)

³⁷ trướng

³⁸ near Cửa Tùng.

³⁹ thảo thảo linh thu phổ trạch tướng hựu phu nhân.

worship.

In the winter, in the eleventh month, the lord ordered an envoy to return to the western capital⁴⁰ to bring the news of the victorious battle. The Lê king ordered Phan Công Tích (at that time called the Lai Duke) to go to comfort the officers. The lord, together with his envoy, held a banquet and they were very happy, and when the envoy returned he was generously (rewarded) with gifts.

At that time the lord had been in that area [*trấn*] for more than ten years, and the political control had been greatly expanded; military orders were taken seriously; the people were all at peace and they were content with their lot.⁴¹ The market did not have two prices, (and) there were not any bandits. Many merchant ships came from all the countries. The market thus became a place of very large gatherings.⁴²

In *Quý dậu*, the 16th year (1573) (The first year of Lê Gia-thái; the first year of Minh Vạn-lic h) in the spring, in the first month, the Lê king was captured by Trịnh Tùng and he was forced to hang himself to death at Lôi-dương, and his second son Duy Đàm was established as the king, changing the reign name to Gia-thái, also called Thế tông. From that time Tùng increasingly encroached upon his power, and the Lê king in the family tradition gave him the title of Prince,⁴³ and from that time onward it was made hereditary.⁴⁴

In the second month, the Lê king ordered the envoy to bring a royal order to swear in the lord as the *thái phó*, ordering him to set aside paddy rice in order to have it ready as supplies in the border area, and the amount of cash (tax) ordered to be collected and submitted each year was changed to 400 cân of

⁴⁰ Hanoi

⁴¹ lạc nghiệp

⁴² ie. it had become a sizeable city.

⁴³ vương

⁴⁴ thế tập

silver and 500 bolts of silk.⁴⁵

Giáp tuất, the 17th year (1574).

Ất hợi, the 18th year (1575).

In *bính tý*, the 19th year (1576), in the summer, in the fourth month, the second prince Hà died, and he was awarded the title of thái bảo Hòa Duke.

In *đinh sửu*, the 20th year (1577), in the winter, in the eleventh month, a comet appeared in the southeast. The Lê king changed the regnal title to Quang-hưng.

Mậu dần, the 21st year (1578) (Lê Quang Hưng's first year; the sixth year of Minh Vạn-lic)

Kỷ mao, the 22nd year (1579).

Canh Thìn, the 23rd year (1580).

Tân ty, the 24th year (1581).

Nhâm ngọ, the 25th year (1582).

Quý mùi, the 26th year (1583).

Giáp thân, the 27th year (1584).

In *ất dậu*, the 28th year (1585), at that time there was an aggressor general from a western country who had taken the name of Hiễn-quý (Hiễn-quý is the name of the group of a rotating tribal chief, it is not the name of a person) who went by means of five large ships, and stopped at the port of Việt in order to loot along the coastline. The lord ordered the 6th prince to lead more than ten ships, and

⁴⁵ a cân = 16 lạng (1 1/3 pounds)

to advance straight to the port, and they attacked and destroyed two of the aggressors' ships. Hiễn quý was frightened and fled.

The lord praised him fully saying: "My son is truly an outstanding man," and he rewarded him very generously. From that time the sea aggressors were completely silenced.

In *bính tuất*, the 29th year (1586), in the spring, in the third month, the Lê king ordered the examining justice envoy,⁴⁶ Nguyễn Tào, to go and search some fields that appeared to be cultivated in order to collect the tax. (At that time the field tax from the two regions of Thuận Quảng had not yet been listed, and each year when the harvest was finished, he ordered people to base the amounts of the fields on what they saw of the plowing and simply to collect the tax). When Tào arrived, the lord took his successful heart and welcomed him. Tào felt great admiration, and then he did not go to search for special (things) any more, and ordered all of the prefectures and districts to make their own registers, and when the registers were completed they were to be sent back.⁴⁷

In *đinh hợi*, the 30th year, (1587), in the fall, in the ninth month, on the first day, there was a solar eclipse.

Mậu tý, the 31st year (1588).

Kỷ sửu, the 32nd year, (1589). At that time there had been many years of continuous harvests and the people were rich and prosperous. The Lê king then immediately attacked to suppress [ie. the Mạc], (but) the troops he employed were not sufficient. The lord then sent down an order that taxes be collected in order to assist with military expenditures, as they had not yet experienced any lack. The western capitol could rely on this.

⁴⁶ hiễn sát sứ

⁴⁷ Now that the state had a baseline for the taxes, they could leave it up to the local areas; an abnormalities would become evident.

In *canh dần*, the 33rd year (1590), in the fall, in the seventh month, on the first day, there was a solar eclipse.

Tân mão, the 34th year (1591).

In *nhân thần*, the 35th year (1592), in the fall, in the first month [sic], the Lê king ordered Trịnh Tùng to lead the great army to fight Mạc Mậu Hợp (the son of Mạc Nguyên), and he was able to retake the eastern capital (Hà-nội).

In *quý ty*, the 36th year (1593), in the summer, in the fourth month, the Lê king returned to the eastern capital.

In the fifth month, the lord brought troop ships [up to Thăng Long] in order to pay tribute. The Lê king praised him saying: “You are the governor of two regions; the people there rely on you for their tranquility, this is a great accomplishment.” He immediately inducted him as the Central Troop Supervising Prefectural Righthand and Supervising Overseeing Prefectural Great Officer Grand Duke Doan.⁴⁸

The lord returned to Thanh-hoa, and paid a visit to the venerated royal tomb.

At that time the Mạc generals Kiền and Nghĩa (two people whose last names are unclear), who styled themselves as Commandary Dukes), both met together and had many ten thousands of troops. Kiền was able to seize the prefecture of Kiến-xương, and he constructed an earthen rampart on the edge of the river, Nghĩa was able to seize the district of Thanh-lan (now the district of Thanh-quan), where he planted stakes at the entrance to the river of Hoàng-giang in order to resist the Lê house. The Lê house generals Bùi Văn Khuê and Trần Bách Niên fought but without success. The lord oversaw the officers of the military camp, and he served as commander-in-chief of the battleships of the naval forces

⁴⁸ *đô đốc phủ tá đô đốc chưởng phủ sự thái úy*

of all the regions as they advanced, and he used firearms and fought broadly and was able to destroy them, and he was able to kill Kiến and Nghĩa in the battle. Then he captured alive, [but later] killed 10,000 men in their ranks. The province [*trấn*] of Sơn-nam (now Nam-dịnh) was finally pacified. Mạc Kính Chương (who styled himself as the Tráng King) seized and defended Hải-dương with his gang. The lord led troops across to fight and was able to pacify it, and he was able to capture alive countless numbers [of troops].

Earlier, in the campaign in Sơn-nam, the second prince Hán (who was serving as an official in the Lê court, having troops who were able to perform actions serving as the lefthand commander-in-chief Ly Duke) followed the lord to go to fight the aggressors, and he exerted his strength to fight, but was lost in the battle. The Lê king posthumously bestowed on him the title of Ly-nhân Duke (it is also said that this was called the Ly-trung Duke) (in Gia-long year's second year, he was interred in the Well-spring Temple⁴⁹), and ordered his son Hắc to be given his father's former title and position, and then he served as an official to the Great Tutor. (His nephew in Thanh-hoa, was of noble descent and was also very prosperous. In the first Gia-long year, he was given the family name of Nguyễn Hựu).

In *giáp ngọ*, the 37th year (1594), in the summer, in the fifth month, Mạc Ngọc Liễn attacked the mountains of Yên-tử, and he attacked and looted the district of Vĩnh-lại. The lord brought naval forces to advance to Hải-dương where they attacked and destroyed (his forces). Ngọc Liễn was defeated and fled, (and) he died in the highland district of Vạn-ninh.

In the fall, in the ninth month, Mạc Kính Dụng (who styled himself as the Mighty King) ordered (two) people from his clique Văn and Xuân (both people whose last names are unclear, and who styled themselves as Grand Dukes) to launch a sudden attack on Thái-nguyên.

⁴⁹ *Nguyễn miếu*

The lord brought the great army to attack Mạc's soldiers in the district of Võ-nhai, and they were able to pacify them.

In the winter, in the tenth month, the general who had betrayed the Lê house, Vũ Đức Cung, looted and destroyed all the districts in the area of Sơn-tây, and forced many of the residents of the two districts of Đông-lan and Tây-lan (now Hùng-quan and Tây-quan) down into the area of Đại-dồng. The lord led naval troops along with the *thái úy* of the Lê house, Nguyễn Hữu Liêu, to lead the infantry troops to advance together, and they went directly to Đại-dồng, where they attacked at close hand and were able to destroy (the aggressors). Đức Cung fled to the area of Nghĩa-đô. The lord led his troops back.

In ất mùi, the 38th year (1595), in the spring, in the third month, the Lê house had tests for the doctorate, and the lord served as judge, and he selected six people in agreement with his method, including Nguyễn Việt Tráng.

In *bính thân*, the 39th year (1596), in the summer, in the fourth month, the lord followed the Lê king to go to Lạng-sơn. Earlier Mạc Kính Dụng had fled over to Long-châu in China, and had falsely reported to the Ming king that at that time there was a person who was proclaimed as the Lê king who was in actuality a member of the Trịnh family, and not a nephew of the Lê house. The Ming believed this and ordered the judge assistant envoy of Tả-giang troops patrolling the area (by the name of) Trần Đôn-lâm, to go over to the Trấn-nam city, and to bring a letter promising a meeting and investigation. The Lê king had earlier ordered the group of the thị lang Phùng Khắc Khoan to bring two old ink seals, 100 cân of gold, 1,000 taels of silver, along with several tens of kỳ lão from in the country to this court.⁵⁰ Trần Đôn-lâm also brought a diplomatic note demanding that the Lê king make an appointment to go right away to the court. But when the king arrived there the envoy of the Ming had made an

⁵⁰ cửa quan - that is the investigative court

excuse and did not fulfill his promise. The lord then immediately urged the Lê king to turn back.

Đinh dậu, the 40th year (1597), in the spring, in the second month, the Ming house again ordered a trusted official, Vương Kiến-lập, to go to the court to bring the news in order to have the meeting and investigation. The lord again followed the Lê king to the court, and along with Vương Kiến-lập and Trần Đôn-lâm they performed the ceremonial meeting and investigation, and (then) they met one another and were very happy. From that time North and South were again in understanding.

In the winter, in the eleventh month, Hải-dương bandit group of Thủy, Lẽ, Quỳnh, Thụy (all last names unclear, though they styled themselves as Commandary Dukes), bound together a clique of many thousands, and launched a sudden attack and killed the pacifying general, and looted and destroyed the districts of Thủy-dương, Nghi-dương, and Tiên-minh. The fourth prince Diễn (who also had the name Miện, and served as an official in the Lê dynasty with the position of righthand commander-in-general Commandary Duke Hào) along with the generals of the Lê house Bùi Văn Khuê and Phan Ngạn, led 50 troop ships to fight at the river of Hồ-mang. Diễn brought four troop ships and infantry down to go ahead to finish the attack, and he died in the battle. The Lê king posthumously bestowed upon him (the position of) Great Tutor.

Mậu tuất, the 41st year (1598), in the spring, in the third month, the lord brought naval forces to fight and pacify the area of Hải-dương, and he was able to destroy the troops of the bandit in the mountains of Thủy-dương, and he was able to capture the gang of rebels and to bring them back.

In *kỷ hợi*, the 42nd year (1599), in the fall, in the eighth month, the Lê king died. His second son Duy Tân ascended the throne, and changed the reign name to Thận-dức, or Kính tông. The lord was sworn in to serve as the righthand general.

In *canh tý*, the 43rd year (1600), [In Lê Thận-dức's first year, in the winter, in the eleventh

month, the reign era was changed to Hoǎng-dịnh; the 28th year of the reign of Minh Vạn Lịch), in the summer, in the fifth month, the lord returned [back to the south] from the Eastern capital. At that time the lord had already been in the eastern capital for eight years, and had fought and pacified the four directions and been victorious [everywhere], [and] because of his great accomplishments the Trịnh family hated him. At that time the group of the Lê generals, Phan Ngạn, Ngô Đình Nga and Bùi Văn Khuê, acted as traitors at the port of Đại-an (now in the area of Nam-dịnh), and the lord used this opportunity to bring troops to advance them to fight, [and he] immediately brought all of the officers in small boats and the infantry, along the coastal route directly to Thuận-hóa, leaving behind the fifth prince Hải and his grandson Hắc as hostages.⁵¹ When they heard this news, the people's hearts were very upset. Trịnh Tùng suspected that the lord would come down to seize the western capital so he immediately took the Lê king back to the western capitol in order to defend the area of the base. He went to the district of An-sơn, and the group of the prince Hải met him on the road and told him that the lord had returned to Thuận-hoa, and was only thinking about protecting the territory, and truly did not have any other intention. The Lê king consoled them, and ordered the group of Hải to lead the troops as earlier. Not long thereafter, the Lê king again returned to the eastern capital.

The lord went to Thuận-hoa, and ordered that the military camp be moved to the east of the military camp of of Ai-tử (at that time called Dinh Cát). The Lê king ordered the *thiêm đô ngự sử* Lê Nghĩa Trạch to bring a royal order to the prefecture (as an) inducement, for (the lord) to remain there and to continue his services as Governor, and each year he was to submit taxes. Trịnh Tùng also sent along a letter, advising them to continue to send tribute taxes. The lord treated the envoy generously and ordered the envoy to give thanks to the Lê king; and he again sent a letter to Trịnh Tùng promising to marry into an alliance with him.⁵²

⁵¹ ie. signs of trust that he had not left permanently.

⁵² kết nghĩa thông gia

In the winter, in the tenth month, the lord gave his daughter Ngọc-tú in marriage to Trịnh-Tráng (the eldest son of Trịnh Tùng). From that time onward the lord did not again return to the eastern capital. The court officials of the Lê house often said that he should act, but Trịnh Tùng was frightened when it came to matters of using soldiers, and did not dare to mention this.⁵³

In *tân sửu*, the 44th year (1601), in the summer, in the sixth month, a rice warehouse was set up in Thuận-hóa.

Construction was begun on the Thiên-mụ pagoda. At that time the lord was strolling to see the situation in the mountains and rivers, and he saw on the equal fields in the hamlet of Hà-khê (in the district of Hương-trà), that a tall mound had risen up, which looked like the head of a dragon turning around, and in front of it he saw a large river, and behind it he saw a broad lake, and the scenery was very beautiful. He took that opportunity to question local inhabitants, and they all said that the mound was very sacred. There was a tradition that said: “In days past there was a person who had one night seen an old women (wearing) a red shirt and green pants sitting on top of the mound and she said: “There will be a true lord who comes here to erect a pagoda, in order to bring together the sacred spirits.” Having finished her speech, the old woman disappeared. From the time of this occurrence it was then called the mountain of Thiên-mụ. The lord saw that this hill had a supernatural air, and he then erected a pagoda to be called the Thiên-mụ pagoda.

In the fall, in the seventh month, on the day *tân hợi*, was born the grandson of the lord (that is the Thần tông Hiếu chiêu Emperor).

In *nhâm dần*, in the 45th year (1602), in the fall, in the seventh month, the pagoda of Sùng-hóa was repaired. The lord took advantage of the festival of Trung nguyên⁵⁴ to go to the Thiên-mụ pagoda,

⁵³ The Lê king was upset that the king (in the southern region) had good relations with the Trịnh.

⁵⁴ The Vietnamese All Souls Day (the 15th day of the 7th lunar month)

and he set up a vegetarian altar to serve for the ceremonial giving of the alms. When his boat had crossed the river to the hamlet of Triêm-ân (in the district of Phú-van), he saw on the edge of the river, to the northeast, thick vegetation, and animated, busy birds, and he liked very much what he saw, and the lord ordered that his boat be brought closer so he could see. At that point he saw the foundations of an ancient pagoda, and he immediately ordered that it be restored, and called it the Sùng-hòa pagoda.

The lord ordered the sixth prince to serve as the Governor of the Quảng-nam military camp. Quảng-nam was a good area and well populated. It was rich in produce, and the amount of tax submissions was more than that in Thuận-hóa, while the number of soldiers was only one half that (of Thuận-hóa). The lord had often had the intention of (building) a capital military camp in that area. At that time he went for recreation in the mountains of Hải-vân, and he saw the spread of tall mountains stretching out along many hundreds of kilometers sprawling toward the seacoast. The lord praised this saying: “This place is the throat area of the Thuận Quảng region.”⁵⁵ And he immediately crossed over the mountains in order to investigate the situation, and he set up a military camp in the hamlet of Cần-húc (in the district of Duy-xuyên), and erected a warehouse, and gathered supplies. Then he ordered the sixth prince to defend the area. He also erected the pagoda of Long-hưng to the south of the guard station.

At that time the *khám lý*⁵⁶ of the prefecture of Hoài-nhàn (now in the area of Bình-dịnh), Trần Đức Hòa (at that time called the Cống Commandary Duke, the son of the Dương-dàm marquis Trần Ngọc Phân, who was the assistant general of the military camp of Quảng-nam), came to pay tribute, and the lord treated him very generously. Then he returned to Thuận-hóa.

In that year the country of Champa (Chiêm-thánh) came over to establish good relations.

⁵⁵ *yết hầu* literally means throat, a reference to the narrow pass that exists at Hải Vân, beyond which spreads out the broader coastal region of Quảng Nam.

⁵⁶ Lit. “investigating examiner”

Đại Nam Thực Lục Tiên Biên: Chapter 1 (1525-1613)

In *quý mão*, the 46th year (1603), in the spring, in the third month, in the moon there were three black spots.

In the summer, in the fourth month, on the first day there was a solar eclipse.

In *giáp thìn*, the 47th year (1604), the district of Điện-bàn in the prefecture of Triệu-phong was established as the prefecture of Điện-bàn, and oversight over five districts (Tân-phúc, An-nông, Hòa-vang, Diên-khánh, Phú-châu) was, per custom, put into the region of Quảng-nam. The prefecture of Tiên-bình was changed to be the prefecture of Quảng-bình, the prefecture of Tư-ngãi was changed to be the prefecture of Quảng-ngãi, the district of Lê-giang in the locality of the prefecture of Thăng-hoa (now changed to be Thăng-binh) was changed to be the district of Lê-dương, and the district of Hy-giang was changed to be the district of Duy-xuyên.

Ất ty, the 48th year (1605).

Bính ngọ, the 49th year (1606).

In *đinh mùi*, the 50th year (1607), the pagoda of Bảo-châu was erected at Trà-kiệu (in the area of Quảng-nam).

In *mậu thân*, the 51st year (1608), there was a large harvest, and each peck [dấu] of raw rice had a price of 3 bronze cash. At that time from Nghệ-an to the north there was a great drought, and the price of raw rice became expensive, and many people dispersed and fled to join the lord.

In *kỷ dậu*, the 52nd year (1609), the pagoda of Kính-thiên was erected in the area of Thuận-trạch (in the area of the district of Lê-thủy, in Quảng-bình; in the 7th year of Minh-mệnh, this was changed to be (called) the Hoǎng-phúc pagoda).

Canh tuất, the 53th year (1610).

In *tân hợi*, the 54th year (1611), was begun the establishment of the prefecture of Phú-yên. At that time the troops of Champa had invaded the border area. The lord ordered the *chủ sự* Văn Phong (last name unclear) to bring troops to attack and take that area, he immediately set it up to be a prefecture, and ordered there to be 2 districts within it - Đồng-xuân and Tuy-hòa. Nhân ordered Văn Phong to serve as circuit chief of that area.⁵⁷

Nhâm tý, the 55th year (1612).

In *quý sửu*, the 56th year (1613), in the summer, in the fifth month, on the day *mậu ngọ*, the lord was not well, and he summoned the sixth prince to come back from Quảng-nam to serve him.

In the sixth month, on the day *canh dần*, the lord was very feeble, and he summoned the sixth prince and his close associates to his bedside, and he advised them that: “Together with all of you, I have been through prosperity and adversity for a long time, wanting to establish a great undertaking. Now I am taking the heavy yoke and passing it on to my son. All of you should help him with one heart, in order to succeed in this task.” Then the lord took the hand of the sixth prince and advised him saying: “Being a son you must be filial, and being a subject you must be loyal; older and younger brothers must first and foremost love one another. If you are able to heed these words of instruction, the you will face no limitations.” He also said: “The area of Thuận Quảng in the north has a mountain named Ngang (Hoành sơn) and a river called Gianh (Linh giang) which constitute obstacles. In the south there are the mountains of Hải-vân and Đá-bia (Thạch-bi sơn) which are durable. The mountains provide both gold and steel, and the sea has fish and salt. Truly this is an area in which heroes can put their talents to use. If you know that you can teach the people to train as soldiers to fight and resist the Trịnh family, then you will have sufficient (things) to establish a state to endure for 10,000 years. If you cannot resist

⁵⁷ *lưu thủ*

the enemy, then you must work hard to defend the great area in order to wait for an opportunity. Never abandon these words of advice I have given you.” The sixth prince and all of the relatives cried and bowed low to obey his order. On that day the lord died. He had been on the throne for 56 years, and was 89 years old. At first he was buried at the mountain of Thạch-hãn (a hamlet in the district of Hải-lăng), and then was buried at the mountain of La-khê (a hamlet in the district of Hương-trà) (In the second year of the reign of Minh-mệnh, this mountain was renamed the mountain Khải-vận). At the time of the state founding he was granted the posthumous title of Cẩn Nghĩa Đạt Lý Hiển Ứng Chiêu Hựu Diệu Ling Gia dụ Emperor.⁵⁸ The Thế tông Hiếu Emperor⁵⁹ honored him as the Liệt tổ Triệu Cơ Thùy Thống Khâm Minh Cung Ý Cẩn Nghĩa Đạt Lý Hiển Ứng Chiêu Hựu Diệu Ling Gia dụ thái Emperor and honored his wife as the Từ Lương Quang Thục Ý concubine. In the fifth year of the Gia-long reign, he was venerated as the Triệu Cơ Thùy Thống Khâm Minh Cung Ý Cẩn Nghĩa Đạt Lý Hiển Ứng Chiêu Hựu Diệu Ling Gia dụ Emperor, and his temple name was Great Ancestor, and his tomb was called Trường cơ; and his queen was venerated as the Từ Lương Quang Thục Minh Đức Ý Cung Gia dụ Empress, and her tomb was called Vĩnh cơ.

⁵⁸ Cautiously Righteousness Attaining Comprehending Glorious Peaceful (Calming) and Welcoming Forgiving Marvelous and Miraculous Expanding Good Fortune Emperor

⁵⁹ Nguyễn Phúc Khoát (1738-1765)

Some Additional Translation Notes:

The titles and positions are extremely difficult to translate, and imperial honorifics even more so. I have thus left many of them in the original, giving glosses of one or two of them. Even literal translations of titles, which are given in some cases, are not of any great help, nor do they help to indicate a particular rank. I hope to be able to render workable English equivalents of them in a future revision. Below I provide just a few terms and the English equivalents that I employed in the translation.

Noble Titles

- 1) Emperor = Hoàng Đế – 皇帝
- 3) King = Vua (This is a *nôm* term, which I cannot produce on my wordprocessor)
- 2) Prince = Vương – 王
- 3) Lord = Chúa – 主
- 4) Grand Duke = Quốc Công – 國公
- 5) Commandary Duke = Quận Công – 郡公
- 6) Duke = Công – 公
- 7) Marquis = Hầu – 侯

Positions

- 1) Governor = Trấn thủ – 鎮守
- 2) Commander-in- chief = Đô đốc – 都督
- 3) Grand Mentor - Thái phó – 太傅

Places

- 1) Eastern Capitol = Thăng Long/Hà Nội
- 2) Western Capitol = Thanh Hóa province (original home of the Lê rulers)

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