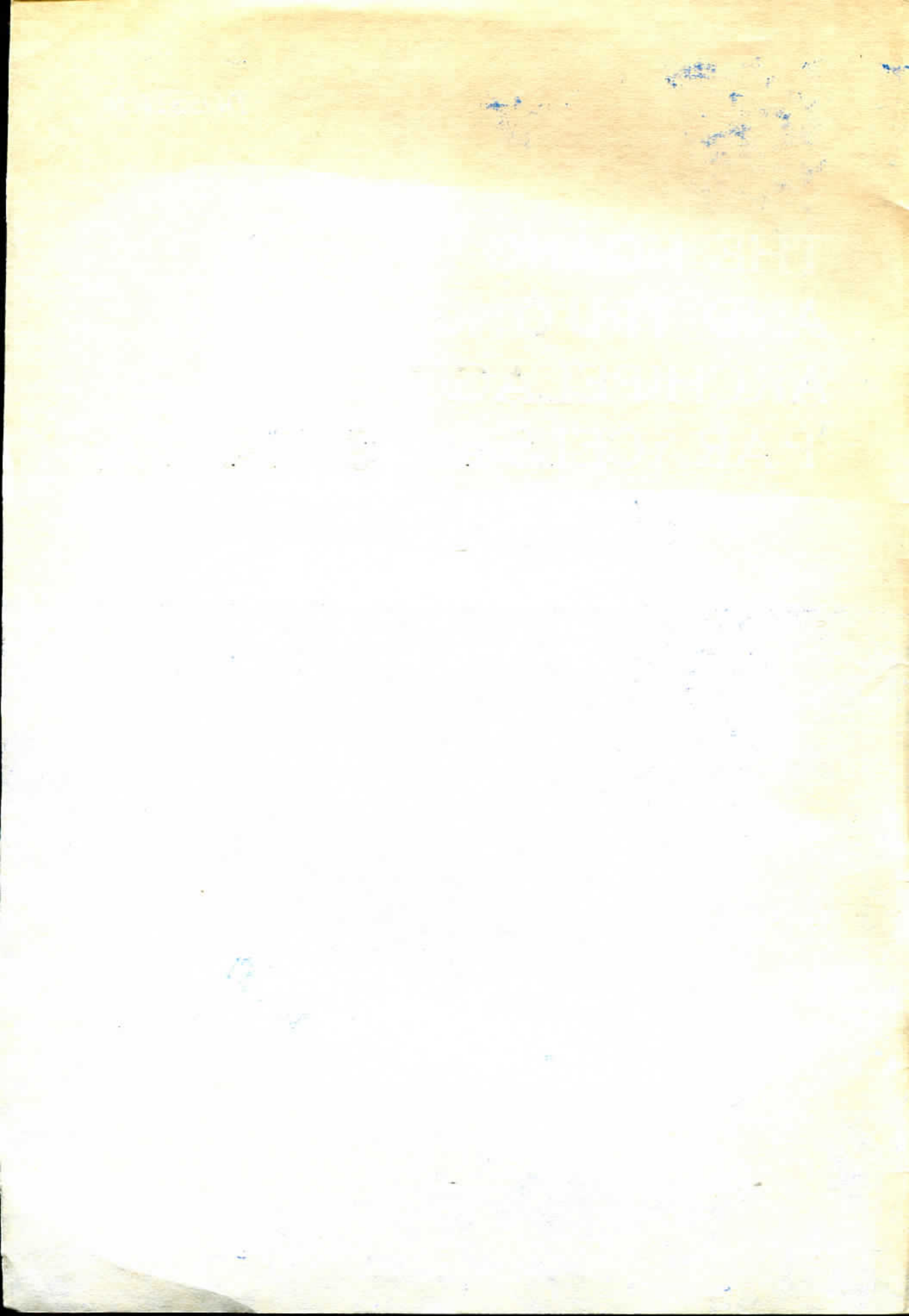


*DOSSIER*

**THE HOÀNG SA  
AND TRƯỜNG SA  
ARCHIPELAGOES  
(PARACELS and SPRATLY)**

**I**

*Published by*  
**VIETNAM COURIER**  
HANOI - 1981



THE  
HOANG SA AND TRUONG SA  
ARCHIPELAGOES  
*(Paracels and Spratly)*

THE

BOARD OF AND TRUSTEES OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 1907

**DOSSIER**

**THE HOANG SA  
AND TRUONG SA  
ARCHIPELAGOES  
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## FOREWORD

*The coral archipelagoes of Hoang Sa and Truong Sa, located respectively at 170 nautical miles from Da Nang and 250 nautical miles from Cam Ranh, are Vietnamese territories as has long been known by Western navigators who called them Paracels and Spratly. Vietnam's sovereignty over these islands is recorded in official texts as well as in numerous historical documents still preserved not only in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City but also in major libraries in Paris, Tokyo, London, Washington, Moscow, and even in Beijing, unless they have not been destroyed.*

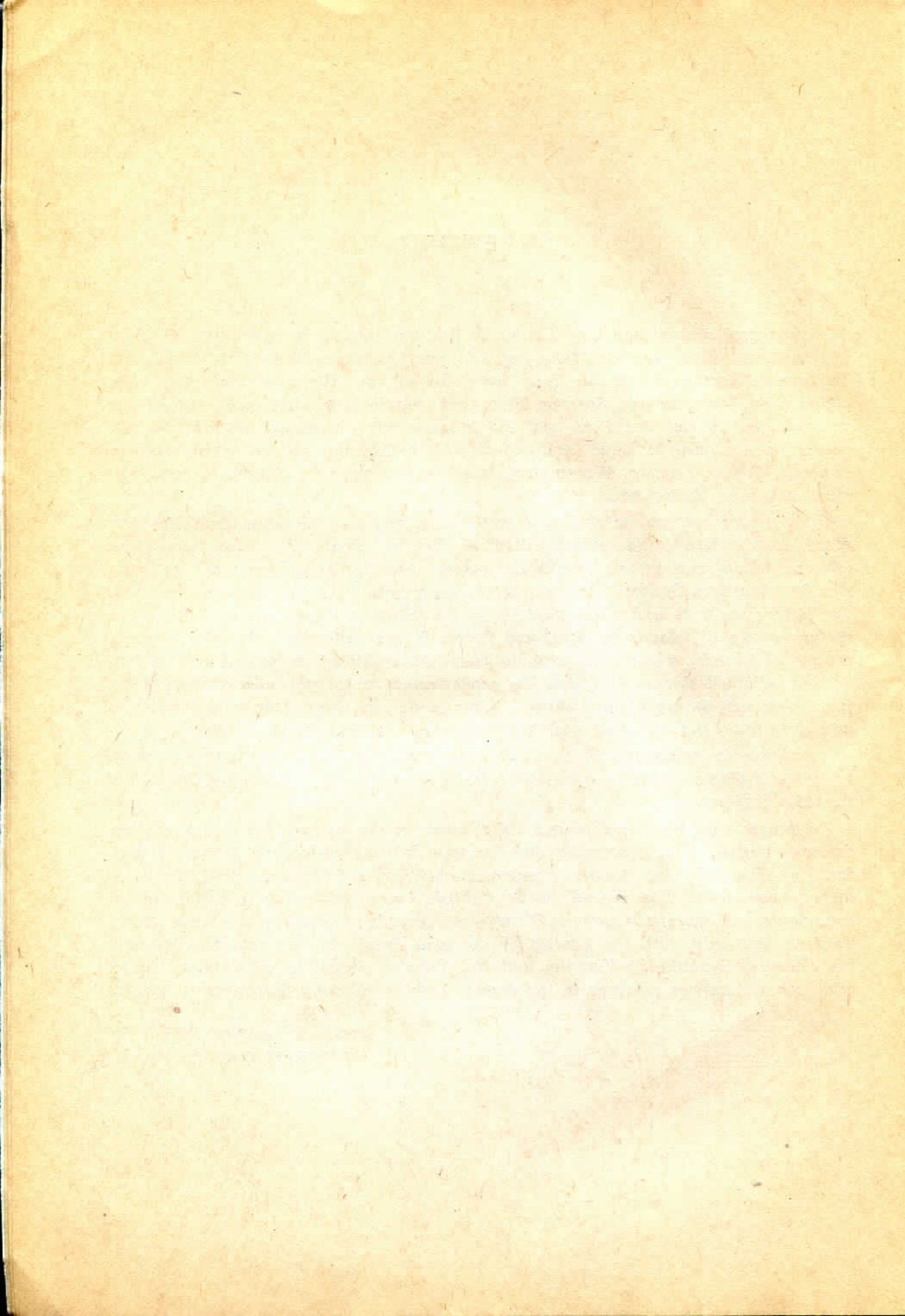
*The People's Republic of China, which has long coveted these territories, has given to the Hoang Sa islands (literally Yellow Sand) the name of Xisha (Western Sand) and to the Truong Sa islands (literally Long Sand) the name of Nansha (Southern Sand). It has in two stages occupied the first archipelago when the latter was still under the control of the Saigon administration, seizing the eastern group of islands in 1956, and fifteen years later, in 1974, the western groups of islands, while continuing to claim ownership of the second archipelago. Having occupied Hoang Sa, China has orchestrated a propaganda campaign to justify its act, interpreting historical texts in its own way, distorting documents and even invoking the so-called "archaeological excavations at Xisha".*

*Anxious to safeguard peace, the Vietnamese side has on many occasions invited the Chinese side to open talks on this subject. But each time China has turned a deaf ear.*

*Vietnam Courier wants to put its readers in the picture by means of two dossiers entitled "The Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Archipelagoes" (Paracels and Spratly). The following dossier groups a number of articles presenting the Vietnamese viewpoint. The second to be published soon will comprise various texts, documents and materials proving Vietnamese sovereignty over these islands. These dossiers deal only with the aspects of the issue concerning the relations between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China, leaving aside other countries involved in the dispute over the Truong Sa (Spratly) islands.*

Hanoi, September 1981

VIETNAM COURIER



## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

QUANG LOI

In the past it was known that in the *Bien Dong*<sup>1</sup> lay a vast area which was very dangerous for navigation because of its numerous reefs upon which boats can go aground or capsize. The Vietnamese called it variously Bai Cat Vang, Hoang Sa, Truong Sa, Dai Hoang Sa, Dai Truong Sa, Van Ly Truong Sa... For many centuries Western navigators, particularly the Portuguese, Dutch, British and French called this area Pracel, Paracel or Parcel, and recorded it on the maps by a dotted line in the *Bien Dong*. Thus both the Vietnamese living on the shores of the Eastern Sea and the Western navigators gave one name to what are now, thanks to the advances in navigation and geography, two separate archipelagoes in the Eastern Sea: Hoang Sa (Paracels) and Truong Sa (Spratly or Spratley). Hence such names as Bai Cat Vang, Hoang Sa, Truong Sa, Dai Hoang Sa, Van Ly Truong Sa on ancient Vietnamese maps or in old geography or history books, and Pracel, Parcel, Paracels in the books and maps of Western navigators and missionaries in the 19th century encompass both archipelagoes.

These archipelagoes occupy different positions in the Eastern Sea but share some common features:

First, all their islands are coral islands.

Second, all these islands are low and small, about 5-6 metres at most above the water, and are spread over a large area. Truong Sa covers 160,000 square kilometres, 12 times the area of Hoang Sa. The biggest island in Hoang Sa is *Linh Côn* (Lincoln)—about 2 square kilometres; the biggest in Truong Sa is the *Ba Binh* (Itu Aba)—about 0.6 square kilometre. The total land area of each archipelago is about 10 square kilometres.

Thus, both archipelagoes are taking on increasing strategic importance, for they lie on the routes linking the Pacific to the Indian Ocean; Asia's crucial eastern flank to the rest of Asia, and to Europe and Africa. To control these archipelagoes is to control the maritime and aerial navigation routes of the *Bien Dong*. Before launching its war to conquer Southeast Asia and South Asia, Japanese militarism occupied Hoang Sa and set up a submarine base on Truong Sa.

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1. Also called *Eastern Sea* (by Vietnamese) and *China Sea* or *South China Sea*.

Fourth, both archipelagoes are rich in natural wealth: guano (estimated at several million tonnes), marine products from fish to lobsters, tortoises, abaloni, shellfish, and above all large potential oil and gas reserves.

### Hoang Sa archipelago.

Hoang Sa (Paracels), which the Chinese call Xisha, lies near the entrance of Bac Bo gulf, about 120 nautical miles from Ré island, a Vietnamese offshore island, and about 170 nautical miles from Da Nang. The archipelago lies approximately between 111° and 113° longitude east of Greenwich, 15°45' and 17°05' latitude north. The total number of islands depends on the method of counting them for, apart from the islands proper, there are numerous shoals and reefs which lie awash or which only emerge when the tide ebbs. In all, there are roughly 30 islands, shoals and reefs. There are large reefs some 10 to 20 metres below the water like Bremen Reef, Jehangire Reef, etc. There are immersed flat-topped islands at shallow depths; typical of these is Discovery Reef 30-35 km long and 6-7 km wide. There are also crescent-shaped reefs with an outer ring (often emerging at low tide) enclosing a calm lagoon 8-10m deep, such as Antelope Reef, *Dao Bac* (North Reef), *Bong Bay* (Bombay Reef)... The islands proper are of various types: bare sand banks or sand banks with sparse vegetation or clumps of trees.

The archipelago includes two groups:

The *Eastern group*, also called *Amphitrite group*, after the name of a French boat which was stranded there on its way to China in 1698. It has about 10 small islands, including:

- Dao Tay* (West Bank)
- Dao Cay* (Tree Island)
- Dao Bac* (North Island)
- Dao Giua* (Middle Island)
- Dao Nam* (South Island)
- Dao Hon Da* (Rocky Island)
- Dao Phu Lam* (Woody Island)
- Dao Linh Côn* (Lincoln Island).

The *Western group*, also called *Crescent group*, after its shape. It has the following main islands:

- Dao Hoang Sa* (Pattle Island)
- Dao Huu Nhat* (Robert Island)
- Dao Quang Anh* (Money Island)
- Dao Quang Hoa* (Duncan Island)
- Dao Duy Mong* (Drummond Island)
- Dao Tri Ton* (Triton Island).

The easternmost island is Lincoln, the southernmost is Triton.

After a scientific survey conducted in 1926 by Krempf, the Director of the Nha Trang Oceanographic Institute, French hydrologists concluded that:

"The Paracels are but the end of a continental shelf which, owing to submarine terraces, prolongs the Annamese (Vietnamese) Cordillera from Cloud Pass between Hue and Tourane (Da Nang). To the West, the sea floor is less than 1,400 metres deep, while to the East the islands are bordered by depths reaching 5,000 metres, and even more to the South.

Geologically, the Paracels are part and parcel of Vietnam."

Meteorologically, Hoang Sa archipelago has no cold season, only a rainy season from June to December and a dry season from January to May. The mean temperature in January is 23°C, in July 28°C. The annual average rainfall is about 1,170 mm (according to 1933—43, 1948—62 figures). From June to August, the Hoang Sa area is hit by tropical storms. Storms also break out occasionally from September to January.

The islands' original vegetation has been destroyed by man. Most common now are coconut trees and filao pines; besides these there are *bang bien* (sea almonds) and *mu u* (*calophyllum inophyllum*). Under the taller trees grow *convulnaceae*, *gramineae*, and a number of other plants. According to Father H. Fontaine, all the plants on Hoang Sa archipelago are to be found in Vietnam, particularly Central Vietnam, from which they were imported by various means. There are no indigenous species.

The waters around the islands abound in a great many fish, shellfish, lobsters, tortoises and various kinds of algae. On the islands seagulls are the most common birds.

Guano is an interesting resource. After the 1926—1927 survey, French geologists concluded that guano deposits on Hoang Sa archipelago may run to 10 million tonnes. According to the Ministry of the Economy of the former Saigon administration, the deposits on Hoang Sa (Pattle), Huu Nhat (Robert), Quang Anh (Money) and Duy Mong (Drumond) islands vary between 3,200,000 and 4,200,000 tonnes.

Administratively, Hoang Sa archipelago (including both Hoang Sa and Truong Sa) formerly belonged to Quang Nghia district, Quang Nam province, as recorded in Do Ba (alias Cong Dao) and Bui The Dat's maps. On 30 March 1938, King Bao Dai signed ordinance No. 10 whereby Hoang Sa archipelago was merged with Thua Thien province. On 15 June 1938, Governor-General of Indochina Jules Brévié set up an administrative unit in Hoang Sa archipelago called the Hoang Sa Administrative Delegation attached to Thua Thien province. On 5 May 1939, he signed a decree amending that of 1938 and establishing two administrative units: the Crescent Group and dependences on the one hand, and the Amphitrite Group and dependences on the other. Their seats lay respectively on Hoang Sa (Pattle) and Phu Lam (Woody) islands. On 13 July 1961, the Saigon administration merged Hoang Sa archipelago with Quang Nam province, and created an administrative unit for the entire archipelago called Dinh Hai commune attached to Hoa Vang district. On 21 October 1969, it merged Dinh Hai commune with Hoa Long commune of the same Hoa Vang district.

## Truong Sa archipelago.

Truong Sa archipelago (Spratly or Spratley), which the Chinese call Nansha and the Filipinos Kalayaan [excluding Truong Sa island (Spratly)], lies about 250 nautical miles from Cam Ranh bay and 210 nautical miles from Hon Hai island. It is about 1,150 km from Hainan island (China) and about 1,780 km from Taiwan. It lies south of Hoang Sa archipelago, between approximately  $111^{\circ}30'$  and  $117^{\circ}20'$  longitude east of Greenwich,  $6^{\circ}50'$  and  $12^{\circ}$  latitude north.

Like Hoang Sa archipelago, Truong Sa archipelago includes islands lying above water, islands and reefs which are awash or underwater reefs which emerge when the tide ebbs. In all there are about 100 islands, shoals and reefs. The main islands are:

*Song Tu Dong* (Northeast Cay)

*Song Tu Tay* (Southwest Cay)

*Thi Tu* (Thitu)

*Loaita* (Loaita)

*Nam Ai or Nam Yet* (Namyit)

*Sinh Ton* (Sin Cowe)

*Truong Sa* (Spratly)

*An Bang* (Amboyna Cay)

*Ba Binh* (Itu Aba)

*Vinh Vien* (Nanshan)

*Ben Lac* (West York)

*Cong Do* (Commodore)

All the islands, shoals and reefs are coral, a few metres above or under the water. Their climate, resources, vegetation and fauna are similar to those of Hoang Sa archipelago.

According to the survey made by the French laboratory-ship *De Lanessan* in 1926 and 1933 in the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa area, Vietnam's geological limit follows the 100-fathom isobath. This is the limit of Vietnam's continental shelf. It thus encompasses both the Hoang Sa and the Truong Sa archipelagoes as well as the entire submerged area within the 100-fathom isobath.

Worthy of mention in Truong Sa archipelago is the Tizzard Shoal and Reef, a sizeable area of islands and atolls lying upon a socle 80 m below sea level.

As for fish, according to the Naga Expedition (California University) to the Truong Sa area there are many kinds of midwater fish. There are also numerous flocks of birds, and shoals of fish near the surface of the water. The expedition concluded that the area is extremely rich in fish.

According to the Japanese laboratory-ship *Kyocho Maru 52* operating in the Bien Dong, most of the fish in this area and particularly in the Truong Sa area migrate following seasonal winds in small scattered bands, except for the halibut.

Administratively, according to a decree of Cochinchina's Governor J. Krauthemer (21 December 1933), Truong Sa archipelago was merged with Ba Ria province. Then by a decree of 22 October 1956 altering the boundaries and names of Saigon—Cholon and the provinces and provincial capitals of South Vietnam, the Saigon authorities merged Truong Sa archipelago with Phuoc Tuy province. Finally, on 6 September 1973, they signed a decree merging the islands of Truong Sa (Spratly), An Bang (Amboyna Cay), Ba Binh (Itu Aba), Song Tu Dong (Northeast Cay), Song Tu Tay (Southwest Cay), Loaita, Thi Tu, Nam Ai (Namyit), Sinh Ton (Sin Cowe) and other adjacent islands with Phuoc Hai commune, Dat Do district, Phuoc Tuy (now Dong Nai) province.

## THE HOANG SA AND TRUONG SA ARCHIPELAGOES ARE VIETNAMESE TERRITORY

THANH THUY

The Hoang Sa and Truong Sa (Paracels and Spratly) have always been part of the Vietnamese territory. Numerous juridical and historical documents have irrefutably demonstrated that:

— *Before Vietnam took possession of these archipelagoes they did not fall under the sovereignty of any other State in the world.*

— *Ever since, Vietnam has uninterruptedly exercised its sovereignty over these islands.*

### A longstanding Vietnamese occupation

The Beijing authorities have gone all out to demonstrate, citing numerous ancient texts—17 in all—, that Chinese travellers on the Bien Dong had landed on the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes which they named respectively Xisha and Nansha. This is lost labour because such facts have no juridical value. The essential thing is to *prove in an irrefutable manner that China has effectively occupied these archipelagoes before they belonged to any other State and that since then it has exercised, without discontinuity, its sovereignty over these islands.* This is something Beijing still has to do.

The Chinese were not the only navigators to sail on this sea in the remote past. There were also Vietnamese, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch and French. Chen Lun, a Chinese author at the time of the Qing, wrote in his travel book entitled "*Things Seen and Heard on the Lands in the Sea*": "The junks of the barbarians (as the Chinese then called inhabitants of other countries in the region—The author) and vessels of the Western countries going to Indonesia, Luzon, Wengai, Sulu... all pass by the gate of Changsha". This means that inhabitants of many other countries and not China alone, travelled on the Bien Dong Sea. Referring to the Hoang Sa area, Le Qui Don, a Vietnamese encyclopedist in the 18th century, noted in his *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (Miscellaneous Records on the Government of the Frontiers): "Inhabitants of our country who went there sometimes met with men from the North (Chinese—Ed.)."

All the Chinese feudal dynasties who invaded or occupied Vietnam sought to destroy books and other cultural works they found in the country. The greatest



infamy was committed by Zhang Fu. This general of the Ming (15th century) ordered books burnt and steles demolished. Thus, all the ancient texts which might have given us information about Truong Sa and Hoang Sa have either been destroyed or taken to China. One of the rare works written before the Later Le dynasty in Vietnam and preserved until today is the *An Nam Chi Luoc* (Summarized Monograph of An Nam) by Le Tac. However, the first chapter, entitled *Geographical Data*, has been lost. Moreover, none of the reference books cited by the author in his preface such as *Giao Chi Do Kinh* (Capital of Giao Chi) or *Phuong Kim Hoi Nhat Dien Co* escaped the destructive fury of the Ming general or the many big fires that devastated Hanoi during the civil wars. So, we are left with practically no geographical or historical sources to throw light on the Vietnam of that time and the activities of the Vietnamese on the archipelagoes which undoubtedly had become for them a much frequented site by then.

However, Vietnamese writings which appeared after the Later Le period (from the 15th century) and certain texts by foreign authors largely suffice to testify in favour of Vietnamese sovereignty.

Let us cite first of all the *Toan Tap Thien Nam Tu Chi Lo Do Thu* (Complete Atlas of the Southern Country) by Do Ba alias Cong Dao. It contains maps of Vietnam in the 15th century covering the entire territory from North to South as well as the Eastern Sea. The Hoang Sa archipelago was referred to in the book as Bai Cat Vang (which means the same as Hoang Sa). It goes without saying that this atlas, like all the other documents we are referring to, is authentic. They are still kept at the Hanoi Social Sciences Library (formerly the Library of the French Far Eastern School) and at the Toye Bunke Library in Tokyo. Another source of reference is to be found in a work of great scientific value by H. Dumoutier published in the *Bulletin de Géographie historique et descriptive* (1896) and many relevant books.

Beijing contends that this atlas has no value since it contains the following sentence cited in the White Book published in October 1979 by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry: "To go there it took one day and a half starting from Dai Chiem and half a day starting from the Sa Ky estuary," which was impossible with the means of navigation at the time. But this is not the question. Errors are common in ancient texts, be they Vietnamese or Chinese. We have however taken care to reproduce these maps in their original form without the least modification. We wish only to point out that the 15th century maps of Vietnam which were redrawn in the 17th century already mentioned the Hoang Sa archipelago (known as Bai Cat Vang) as belonging to the Vietnamese province of Quang Ngai. What is more, in the same White Book, two pages after the above-mentioned passage, another quotation was made from the *Phu Bien Tap Luc*: "...Farther off (i.e. beyond Re Island — Ed.) there are also the Dai Truong Sa islands harbouring many sea products... The Hoang Sa workgang has been formed with the mission of going to collect them. To go there, one must sail for three days and three nights" (underlined by the author). Other ancient books

of Vietnam not yet quoted by our Foreign Ministry, also affirm that it took about three days and three nights to go from Re Island to the Hoang Sa Archipelago :

“The members of the Hoang Sa workgang each received six months' supplies. They boarded five junks and have to row for three days and three nights to reach the island (Hoang Sa) (*Phu Bien Tap Luc*).

“They (Hoang Sa workgang) boarded five junks stocked with six months' supplies and put to sea. They had to sail for three days and three nights to reach the island (Hoang Sa) (*Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi*—Chronicle of Dynasties—by Phan Huy Chu, early 19th century).

“Each year, in the 3rd month they (the Hoang Sa workgang) would go to the island (Hoang Sa—Ed.) on board junks. They would arrive after three days and three nights.” (*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien*—Truthful Accounts About Dai Nam, 1848).

“The island (Hoang Sa) lies to the east of Ly island (also called Re—Ed.) in the district of Binh Son. From this coastal area of Sa Ky one can go there in favourable weather, in three or four days.” (*Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi*—Monograph of Unified Dai Nam).

According to H. Dumoutier, Do Ba drew up these maps basing himself on the data he had gathered while accompanying King Le Thanh Tong in his expedition against the Champa in 1470. Thus, as early as the 15th century, Vietnamese had already landed on Hoang Sa.

It is known that the feudal State of Vietnam was founded long before that date, following Ngo Quyen's victory over the Chinese invaders on the Bach Dang river in 939. Therefore, the centralised organisation and management of the country's affairs was nothing new. In particular, in the field of maritime navigation and external trade, Vietnamese junks already sailed in the Eastern Sea to reach Luzon, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand... Also by then Van Don in the Tonkin Gulf was widely known to the world. Other ports were also accessible to vessels of big tonnage.

The Nguyen lords, administrators of the southern half of Vietnam south of the Gianh river (later called Cochinchina), had since the 16th century attached great importance to the protection and exploitation of maritime resources. All the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Filipino boats docking at Dai Chiem, Hoi An (Faifo), Da Nang (Tourane) or Re island were subject to control and had to pay customs duties. Tariffs were mentioned in the *Phu Bien Tap Luc* of Le Quy Don.

They organised the Thanh Chau workgang whose task was to gather salangane nests on the islands off Qui Nhon, and the Hai Mon gang which operated in the Phu Qui archipelago. The farther islands such as Hoang Sa, Truong Sa and Phu Quoc were accorded still greater attention. The Hoang Sa workgang was created to exploit the resources on the archipelago of the same name. So was the Bac Hai workgang belonging to the Hoang Sa gang whose task was to

defend and exploit the islands further to the south including the Truong Sa archipelago, Con Lon (Poulo Condor) island and Vietnamese islands in the Gulf of Siam. Here are some extracts from ancient books:

"Each year, in the last month of winter, the Nguyen lords sent there (to Hoang Sa—Ed.) 18 junks in order to bring back merchandise, gold and silver as well as arms." (*Toan Tap Thien Nam Tu Chi Lo Do Thu*). In the past, the Nguyen formed the Hoang Sa workgang composed of 70 members, all natives of An Vinh commune, who served on a rotating basis. In the first month of the year they went to receive their orders from the higher authorities then put to sea. Each member of the workgang received six months' supplies. They boarded five small junks and sailed for three days and nights on end to reach the island (Hoang Sa—Ed.). There they fished and caught birds to enrich their meals. They also collected arms, silver wares, coins, porcelain, turtle shells, sea cucumbers, and shells in great quantities. Returning to the mainland in the 8th month by the Cua Eo estuary they reported to Phu Xuan (Hue, capital of the Nguyen dynasty—Ed.) to hand over to the Nguyen Lord all that they had gathered. After making the inventory, they sold for their own account such things as shells, turtles and sea cucumbers. After each receiving a diploma they were allowed to return to their homes. The value of their collection varied and sometimes they came home empty-handed." (*Phu Bien Tap Luc*).

The *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi* by Phan Huy Chu and the *Hoang Viet Dia Du Chi* (Geography of the Viet Kingdom) compiled in 1833 referred to this workgang of Hoang Sa almost in the same terms.

From 1802 onward, the first kings of the Nguyen attached greater attention to national construction. The Hoang Sa and Bac Hai gangs were maintained and their activities extended. They were spoken of in detail in different historical works such as *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (Truthful Accounts about the Dai Nam), *Viet Su Cuong Giam Khao Luoc* (Glimpse of the History of the Viet) by Nguyen Thong (1876) or again in the *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (1910).

From these testimonies we may come to the following conclusions:

— *For more than three centuries* from the Nguyen Lords to the Nguyen kings, Vietnam uninterruptedly exploited the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, islands in the south like Con Lon (Poulo Condor) and some others in the Gulf of Siam.

— *This exploitation*, like the levying of taxes and sea patrols, was organized and led by the State.

The workgangs exploited these islands for five to six months each year without any other country's opposition. How could that be done if Hoang Sa and Truong Sa had not been recognised as Vietnamese territory? With regard to China, the following official letter from the Chinese mandarin head of the district of Wenchang, Qiongzhou (Hainan island) addressed to the authorities of Thuan Hoa (Vietnam) constitutes a significant testimony:

"In the 18th year of the Qianlong reign (1753) ten soldiers native of An Binh commune taking part in a seafood collecting team of Chuong Nghia district, province of Quang Ngai, Vietnam, arrived one day in the 7th month at Wanlichangsha to gather sea products. Eight of them landed and the two others

stood guard on the junk. A gust of wind having broken the rope, the two were carried by the current as far as Qinglan port (China). The local authorities, after checking on the facts, had the two men taken back to their homeland. The Vietnamese lord Nguyen Phuc Chu ordered the earl of Thuc Luong, mandarin head of Thuan Hoa province, to send a message of thanks to the mandarin head of district of Wenchang." (after Le Qui Don in *Phu Bien Tap Luc*).

This anecdote clearly shows that the Chinese authorities in Hainan were not opposed in any way to the exploitation by the Hoang Sa workgang of the Nguyen Lords on the Hoang Sa archipelago which they called Wanlichangsha.

Thus, before the Vietnamese State established its authority on the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, these islands had not come under the sovereignty of any other country. Subsequently, this Vietnamese sovereignty was exercised through the organisation and exploitation of these archipelagoes without opposition from any other country.

### Uninterrupted sovereignty.

After his accession to the throne, Emperor Gia Long decided to build Vietnam into a powerful country. He gave special attention to agriculture, strengthened the dykes, carried out reforms: in the fiscal system, in the literary contests to choose mandarins, in the judiciary field, and built ramparts and citadels.

Meanwhile, during the first three decades of the 19th century, the capitalist countries — Great Britain, France, Holland, the United States — vied with one another to subjugate Asian countries from India, Indonesia, Malaysia to the countries in Eastern Asia and Oceania. Therefore, Gia Long had to increase sea patrols and seek every possible means to strengthen Vietnam's sovereignty over the islands which already belonged to it.

In his "Memoirs of Cochinchina" which were published in the French *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué* (1923, Vol. II, p. 257), Jean Baptiste Chaigneau wrote:

"Cochinchina of which the sovereign has now assumed the title of emperor comprises Cochinchina proper, Tonkin, some inhabited islands not far from the coast and the Paracel archipelago composed of islands, reefs and uninhabited rocks. Not until 1816 did the emperor take possession of this archipelago."

Again in 1837, Jean-Louis Taberd, apostolic vicar of Cochinchina, wrote:

"Although this kind of archipelago presents nothing but rocks and great depths which promises more inconveniences than advantages, the King Gia Long thought he had increased his dominions by this sorry addition. In 1816 he went with solemnity to plant his flag and take formal possession of these rocks, which it is not likely anybody will dispute with him." (Note on the geography of Cochinchina by the Right Rev. Jean Louis, Bishop of Isauropolis, Vic. apost. of Cochinchina)<sup>1</sup>.

1. *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VI. part II, July — December 1837, p. 745.

In his book "The Universe, the History and Description of all the Peoples, their Religions, Habits and Customs" published in 1850, Dubois de Jancigny noted that "during the last 34 years the Paracel archipelago called by the Annamites "Cat Vang" or "Hoang Sa" (Yellow Sand), a real labyrinth of small islets, rocks and sand banks rightly dreaded by navigators, has been under Cochinchinese occupation.

"It is not known whether they have founded there an administration but Emperor Gia Long made it a point to add this laurel to his crown because he actually went there to personally take it into possession and in 1816 he personally planted the Cochinchinese flag there:"

While the Hoang Sa and Bac Hai workgangs continued their work the Nguyen kings took a series of measures to demonstrate and exercise Vietnamese sovereignty on the archipelagoes.

In the 14th year of the Minh Mang reign (1833) a royal order to the Ministry of Public works said: "Seen from a distance, the Hoang Sa archipelago, which lies in the waters of Quang Ngai, seems to be lost between sky and sea. Nobody knows how deep the water there is. Of late, commercial junks sailing in the neighbourhood have been frequently attacked. So, prepare boats. Next year you will send your men there to build a temple and erect a stele and plant trees" (*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien*—Truthful Accounts about Dai Nam—Vol. II).

Other works such as *Kham Dinh Dai Nam Hoi Dien Su Le* (Codes and Rules of Dai Nam), and the *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (Monograph of Unified Dai Nam) or the *Quoc Trieu Chinh Bien Toat Yeu* (Summary of the Annals of the Nguyen Dynasty) also report that the Nguyen kings had a stele set up there to symbolize Vietnamese sovereignty. Others give the following details on the temple and the stele:

"... In the 16th year of the Minh Mang reign (1835) a request was addressed to the king for the building, on the southwestern part of Bach Sa island, of the Hoang Sa temple (made of stone according to a rule in force). A stone stele was erected on the left of the temple (1 *thuoc* 5 *tac* tall, 1 *thuoc* 2 *tac* wide)<sup>1</sup>. In front of the temple a stone wall was erected and on either side and behind the temple trees of different kinds were planted."

Besides, the Nguyen kings ordered the drawing up of maps, surveys of the topography of these places and measurement of the different routes leading there.

"In the first month of the year At Hoi (1815) the king ordered Pham Quang Anh of the Hoang Sa workgang to study and measure "the sea routes to the island..." (*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien*, Vol I).

The same order was given by Gia Long in 1816 (*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien*, Vol. I).

In 1836, King Minh Mang gave still more detailed orders on this question, in reply to the following request of the Ministry of Public Works: "The Hoang Sa archipelago which lies in our territorial waters is very rugged. The previous

1. Traditional Vietnamese units of measure: 1 *thuoc*: 0.40 metre, 1 *tac*: 0.04 metre.

dynasties have ordered a map of it to be drawn up but due to its wide area and its remoteness, the work has been only partly completed. What is more, we did not know how to tackle it. Each year men were sent there to survey the place and measure the routes of navigation. From this year onward, toward the end of the first month, we shall send sailors chosen from among the *bien binh* and *giam thank* who will sail to Quang Ngai and arrive there early in the second month on board a junk. There they will ask the authorities of the Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh provinces to hire four junks from the local population who will guide them to the Hoang Sa. On the island or beach where they land, they will have to measure the length, width, height, area perimeter and sound the surrounding sea to find out its depth, mark the sand banks, the reefs, the sub-marine topography and record all of them on the map. Besides, they will have to record the date and port of departure, the direction taken, the itinerary and evaluate the distance. They will also have to locate the place of disembarkation in relation to the coast, and determine by eye in what province and district it is situated and at how many nautical miles from the coast. All that must be reported in detail to the Court.

"The king agreed and ordered to Pham Huu Nhat to lead a naval unit with the mission of carrying ten wooden panels to be planted as landmarks. Each panel is 5 *thuoc* long, 0.5 *thuoc* large and 0.1 *thuoc* thick, and carries this inscription: In the year 17 of the Minh Mang reign, i.e. the year Binh Than (1836), by the king's order, Pham Huu Nhat, officer commanding a naval unit, came to inspect the Hoang Sa archipelago and planted this landmark as a testimony." (*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien*, vol. II).

The above event is also recorded in the *Quoc Trieu Chinh Bien Toat Yeu* (Summary of the Annals of the Nguyen Dynasty) compiled by the National History Institute.

The Nguyen kings also instituted taxes to be levied on foreign ships. In a study on Vietnam under the Nguyen kings when referring to Hoang Sa, Gutzlaff wrote:

"The Annam government, perceiving the advantages which it might derive if a toll were raised, keeps revenue cutters and a small garrison on the spot to collect the duty on all visitors, and to ensure protection to its own fishermen." (Geography of the Cochinchinese Empire in *Journal of the Geographical Society of London*, 1849, vol. XIX, p. 93).

While exercising Vietnamese sovereignty on these archipelagoes the Nguyen kings, however, did not overlook certain obligations in the framework of international law at the time. The Hoang Sa and Truong Sa, owing to their geographic position, their formation and topography, constitute a danger for the ships sailing nearby which risk running aground or being wrecked against some coral reef. Therefore, in 1833 after instructing the Ministry of Public Works to erect a temple and a stele there, King Minh Mang insisted that "it is necessary to plant trees there which when fully grown would constitute points of reference for the navigators and help them to avoid the risk of running aground." (*Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien*, vol. II)

Is this not proof of the sense of responsibility of a State conscious of its obligations toward vessels sailing in its territorial waters?

Since then, all Vietnamese soldiers going to these archipelagoes "would take along in their travelling bags seeds which they would sow around the temple in hopes that they would grow into trees that would constitute markers easily recognizable by navigators." (*Viet Su Cuong Giam Khao Luoc* — Glimpse of the History of the Viet Country — by Nguyen Thong)

It is worth remembering that the Hoang Sa islands, which are formed from sun-baked and wind-swept coral reefs and subject to rain storms for many months of the year, are not a hospitable land for the growth of trees.

In a review on the Hoang Sa archipelago published in 1974, Son Hong Duc, Professor of Geography at Saigon University, noted that on some islands (Huu Nhat or Robert Island) in the archipelago one can still find large rotten stumps of trees. As for the trees that are still growing there, they belong to the same families as those on the Vietnamese littoral. Many islands are covered with a lush vegetation well deserving the names given them by the navigators: Phu Lam (Woody Island), Dao Cay (Tree Island). Some of these trees were certainly planted by men, others came from seeds carried there by the currents or birds.

Among the documents produced by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, apart from some maps drawn up under the Qing (which it only mentioned but did not produce) there are only semi-official texts and a few regional monographs. *On the contrary, Vietnam produced official documents written by States organs or by their order.*

These include:

— *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* and *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien* which are annals of the Nguyen dynasty compiled by the National History Institute from the 2nd year of the reign of Minh Mang (1821).

— *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi*, a geography of Vietnam compiled from 1865 to 1882 by order of King Tu Duc but not published. It was corrected under the reign of Thanh Thai by the National History Institute. By 1910 only the first part dealing with the 17 central provinces had been completed.

— *Quoc Trieu Chinh Bien Toat Yeu*, a summary of the annals of the Nguyen dynasty compiled by the National History Institute from 1909.

— *Kham Dinh Dai Nam Hoi Dien Su Le*, (Codes and Rules of Dai Nam) written by order of the king in 1843 (under the reign of Thieu Tri) and in 1851 (under the reign of Tu Duc) recording all the works accomplished by the six ministries. It was followed by a second volume entitled *Kham Dinh Dai Nam Hoi Dien Su Le Tuc Bien*.

Some other works were written by high dignitaries of the Court such as *Phu Bien Tap Luc* by Le Qui Don, *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi* (of which one volume, *Du Dia Chi*, is devoted to geography) by Phan Huy Chu, *Viet Su Cuong Giam Khao Luoc* by Nguyen Thong, etc.

All those documents, spanning over more than a century, prove that prior to French colonisation, Vietnam was already the first State to discover and occupy the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes and had exercised its sovereignty for more than three centuries without interruption.

### On behalf of Vietnam

Toward the middle of the 19th century (1868-1884) the history of Vietnam reached a turning point as a result of the domination by French colonialism under two slightly different forms: colonisation of the Nam Ky (Cochinchina) and protectorate of the Trung Ky (Annam) and the Bac Ky (Tonkin). From then, France did, to all intents and purposes, represent Vietnam in international relations to defend Vietnamese archipelagoes as well as on the whole of the territory of the country.

Once installed in Vietnam France could not but take into account the traditional relations between this country and its neighbours, Laos and Cambodia and the China of the Qing. With regard to the first two, there was no problem due to the fact that they formed, together with Vietnam, the same entity: French Indochina. Up till then the Nguyen kings had always maintained good relations with the Qing while zealously defending the national independence according to a flexible strategy which consisted in continuing to recognize China's nominal suzerainty. France signed with the Qing a series of conventions, some concerning Sino-French relations, others concerning questions relating to China and Vietnam. It is worth mentioning the Convention of 1884 which put an end to the so-called suzerainty of China over Vietnam and the conventions of 1887 and 1895 on the delimitation of the Sino-Vietnamese frontier.

In the first days of their rule, while patriotic movements against the invaders broke out from North to South in which even some Nguyen kings took part (such as Ham Nghi, Thanh Thai and Duy Tan) the French sought first of all to quickly stabilize the situation, consolidate their administration and appease the population as a prerequisite for their economic exploitation of the country. At that time, Vietnam's neighbours were themselves subject to imperialist invasions. China, in particular, where the Qing Court was rotten to the core, became the target of Japanese and Western ambitions. The Sino-British accords (Nanking — 1842), Sino-American (Wanxia — 1844), Sino-French (Huangpu — 1844), Sino-British (Yantai — 1876) and Sino-Japanese (Shimonoseki — 1895) opened wide the door of China to foreign penetration. In the meantime, from inside China was shaken by widespread mass uprisings in Yunnan and in the Northwest...). Under such circumstances, the colonial authorities in Indochina did not see the need to take urgent measures concerning the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes. All that they did was to send gun-boats to patrol the area. In 1899, the governor general of Indochina, Paul Doumer, proposed setting up a lighthouse on the Hoang Sa island (Pattle Island) to stress Vietnamese sovereignty on the archipelago and also to help navigation in its neighbourhood. However, this project was not realised until 1938.



After World War I (1914-1918) France increased its investments in Indochina considerably, first of all in Vietnam, in order both to exploit raw materials and turn it into an outlet for the goods of the metropolis. In the framework of this policy, greater attention was accorded to the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes in view of their riches and strategic position.

From 1920, boats of the Indochinese Customs Office increased their patrols in the area of Hoang Sa to intercept contraband ships. The Chinese authorities in Guangdong province having revealed their dark intentions toward the archipelago. Than Trong Hue, the then war minister of the Hue Court, published the Declaration of March 3, 1925 affirming the unquestionable sovereignty of Vietnam over this archipelago.

At about the same time, a French delegation led by A. Krempf sailed on board the *De Lanessan* to Hoang Sa to inquire into the situation. In 1927 the same team went to the Truong Sa.

In the early 30's, in the face of the Chinese covetous designs on the immense guano reserves of the Hoang Sa archipelago, there erupted within the colonial authorities in Indochina heated debates on how to defend Vietnamese sovereignty over this archipelago. Some, including the governor general Pierre Pasquier, argued that conditions had not been ripe for a direct discussion over the matter with the Chinese. Numerous reasons were given, but the most important one which has never been explicitly acknowledged is that the political situation in Indochina had in fact reached an important turning point with the birth of the Indochinese Communist Party and the outbreak of the "Nghe Tinh Soviet Uprising".

Most of the French in Indochina did not approve of this reticence and openly made their point of view known. These included, among others, the MPs De Monzie and Bergeon, the engineer Paul Maurice Clerget, the industrialist Lapique, the army commander Sauvaire-Jourdan, the journalists Gustave Sale, Alexis Elie Lacombe, Olivier A. Saix, and especially Henri Cucherousset, editor-in-chief of the *Eveil economique de L'Indochine*. The second tendency eventually got the upper hand as shown by the intensified activity of the colonial authorities in these archipelagoes:

*On the Hoang Sa:*

— In 1928 the Tonkin New Society of Phosphates began to exploit guano there;

— In 1937 Gauthier, a civil engineer, went in person to the archipelago to find a convenient place for the construction of a lighthouse on the island and another one on the sea to facilitate the coming and going of hydroplanes. He also studied conditions for an eventual population of the archipelago;

— In 1938 the colonial authorities erected a stele to formalize Vietnamese sovereignty over the archipelago and set up a lighthouse, a meteorological station bearing the international index 48860 and a radio station;

— On March 30, 1938 the Vietnamese King Bao Dai signed the ordinance No. 10 placing the archipelago under the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities of Thua Thien (Central Vietnam);

— On June 15, 1938 the governor general of Indochina signed decree No. 156/SC making the Hoang Sa archipelago an administrative unit belonging to Thua Thien province;

— On May 5, 1939 the governor general of Indochina signed decree No. 3283 modifying that of June 15, 1938 and dividing the archipelago into two administrative units: the Crescent Delegation and the Amphitrite Delegation and dependencies whose administrative seats were respectively Hoang Sa Island (Pattle) and the Woody Island (Phu Lam).

*On the Truong Sa:*

— On December 22, 1929 the governor general of Indochina instructed the governor of Cochinchina by telegram to send the French navy ship "La Malicieuse" to Truong Sa to occupy this archipelago. In 1933 other ships—Alerte, Astro-labe, De Lanessan—went there one after another to plant the French flag on other islands of Truong Sa. A communiqué published in the Official Journal of the French Republic dated July 26, 1933 said that the occupation of the islands in the archipelago had taken place in the following order: the island of Truong Sa (Spratly) on April 13, 1930; An Bang (Amboyna Cay) on April 7, 1933; Ba Binh (Itu Aba) on April 10, 1933; the groups of Song Tu islands on April 10, 1933; Loaita island on April 11, 1933; and Thi Tu island on April 12, 1933.

Not only the big islands but also all the small surrounding islands were occupied.

On December 21, 1933 the governor of Cochinchina, J. Krautheimer, signed a decree integrating the aforementioned islands of Truong Sa (Spratly), An Bang (Amboyna Cay), Ba Binh (Itu Aba), Song Tu, Loaita, Thi Tu and the small surrounding islands into the province of Ba Ria.

After launching the Pacific War, Japan, ignoring the French authorities' protest, seized Hoang Sa islands in 1938 beginning with Phu Lam (Woody Island), then occupied Truong Sa in 1939.

### Since World War II

Following its defeat before the Allies, Japan committed itself at the San Francisco Conference in 1951 to "renounce all its rights, titles and claims on the Spratly islands and the Paracels islands." (Articles II of the San Francisco Accords). It was at this conference that the prime minister of the Bao Dai government, Tran Van Huu, made a declaration affirming Vietnam's sovereignty on these archipelagoes without any country present raising any protest whatsoever.

In the meantime, in May 1946, the French had sent the cruiser Savorgnan de Brazza to re-occupy the Hoang Sa archipelago. On January 13, 1947 they sent a note of protest to the Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) government which had illegally occupied many islands in the archipelago. This note reaffirmed once again Vietnamese sovereignty over the whole of the archipelago. At the same

time, the French sent to Hoang Sa (Pattle) Island the cruiser "Le Tonkinois" which landed a platoon to be stationed there. Immediately afterward, the French began the reconstruction of the meteorological station on the island.

In 1950 Jiang Jieshi troops withdrew from the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa islands. The French returned the Hoang Sa to the Bao Dai government represented by the governor of Trung Phan (Central Vietnam).

The fifties were marked by two series of important events:

—The occupation by Beijing troops of the Phu Lam (Woody Island) then other islands of the eastern group of Hoang Sa archipelago, the occupation by Taiwanese troops of Ba Binh Island (Itu Aba) in the Truong Sa archipelago. These were blatant acts of aggression because Chinese troops—whether from Beijing or Taiwan—attacked a sovereign territory.

—In 1956, as France moved out of Indochina, its troops left Hoang Sa. The Saigon government immediately replaced the French and planted landmarks on the islands of Truong Sa (Spratly), Thi Tu, Loaita, An Bang (Amboyna Cay) and the Song Tu group of islands.

—In 1956 the Saigon administration integrated the Truong Sa archipelago into the province of Phuoc Tuy and established on the Hoang Sa archipelago the Dinh Hai commune belonging to the district of Hoa Vang, Quang Nam province.

Between 1950 and 1975 the Saigon administration and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam many times protested against the infringements on the Vietnamese sovereignty over these two archipelagoes by other countries.

—In protest against the Philippines which claimed ownership of several islands on the Truong Sa archipelago and against Malaysia which claimed that the islands and the sand banks on the Truong Sa archipelago belonged to them, the Saigon administration many times proclaimed Vietnam's sovereignty over this archipelago.

—At the Caracas Conference on the law of the sea the Saigon administration proclaimed Vietnam's sovereignty on the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes.

—In February 1959, the Saigon administration arrested a group of fishermen of the People's Republic of China who had intruded into the islands of Huu Nhat (Robert), Duy Mong (Drummond) and Quang Hoa (Duncan) in the Hoang Sa archipelago.

—On January 20, 1974 when Chinese troops invaded the Hoang Sa archipelago, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam made public its views on the issue.

—On January 20, 1974 a message of the Foreign Ministry of Saigon Government to the President of the UN Security Council urged that a meeting be convened urgently to discuss the acts of aggression of the People's Republic of China against the Hoang Sa archipelago.

— On May 6, 1975, a communiqué of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam announced that the Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam had liberated six islands on the Truong Sa archipelago (others were liberated later).

— On September 18, 1975 a meteorological team of the Republic of South Vietnam published a statement asking the World Meteorological Organisation to continue recognizing the meteorological station No. 48860 of Vietnam. The statement also reaffirmed Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa archipelago.

— On June 5, 1976 the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of South Vietnam affirmed Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes.

Since 1976, through diplomatic notes and declarations as well as during the bilateral talks and international conferences, Vietnam has unceasingly protested against the continued occupation of the Hoang Sa archipelago by Chinese troops and affirmed its sovereignty over this archipelago as well as the Truong Sa archipelago.

### **The only valid conclusion**

On the question of the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, many other historical documents may be adduced and other juridical aspects of the problem may be examined. However, a scrutiny of the documents and facts produced so far by the Vietnamese and Chinese sides already allow us to arrive at a conclusion.

Two essential factors are to be taken into account: the real occupation and effective exercise of sovereignty on the territory under dispute.

In international law, the occupation of a territory is valid only when this territory has not yet been under the sovereignty of another country and when the occupying State has been exercising its sovereignty on this territory effectively and uninterruptedly.

In its White Book published on January 30, 1980 the Chinese Foreign Ministry produced a number of proofs intending to demonstrate that the Chinese people have long "discovered" the Xisha and Nansha archipelagoes. Whatever amount of truth there may be in these affirmations, this "discovery" will not give the Chinese authorities any priority over other peoples who themselves had discovered the said archipelagoes a long time ago. With regard to the exploitation of these archipelagoes, the Chinese side used rather vague terms such as "exploit" and "look after productive activities". Then, after claiming that China has found there many objects in ceramics, porcelain, knives, iron pots and other household utensils, they concluded: "Chinese began to settle on and conduct productive activities such as fishing, on the Xisha and Nansha archipelagoes in the epoch of the Tang or Song at the latest." Even if all that was true, these could be seen only as private

undertakings. And if all these productive activities consisted only of fishing, this has nothing special because fishermen of different nationalities had long operated in this particularly abundant zone. On the contrary, the Chinese White Book could not produce any answer, however elusive, to the question as to whether or not the Chinese State had really occupied — and since when — the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes and whether it has ever exercised in an effective and uninterrupted way its sovereignty there. What is more, nowhere has it affirmed that China has actually appropriated these islands. As for the facts happening after the Qing period (from the 18th century) invoked to demonstrate that China has “administered” these archipelagoes, they dated back to the time when these archipelagoes had already *become a sovereign territory* because they already belonged to Vietnam. The least that can be said of these acts is that they were illegal because they infringed upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

Meanwhile, things are very clear from the Vietnamese side:

—The Vietnamese people have long since discovered the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes which have become a traditional sector of activity for Vietnamese fishermen. These archipelagoes are nearer to Vietnam than to China and, moreover, linked to our country by longstanding historic ties.

—From the times of the Nguyen Lords (18th century) at the latest, the Vietnamese State already began occupying these islands when they had not previously belonged to any other country and exploiting them without interruption, founding Hoang Sa and Bac Hai workgangs which stayed there from five to six months a year to carry out fishing, recuperate things jettisoned by shipwrecks, and collect taxes, customs duties and undertake patrols organised by the State.

—Since Gia Long, the Nguyen kings have taken measures to strengthen the sovereignty of the Vietnamese State such as erecting steles symbolizing Vietnam's sovereignty, and temples, digging wells on Hoang Sa island (Pattle), sending naval units to draw up maps, measuring the sea routes, collecting taxes from foreign ships, planting trees to make the islands a point of reference for navigators, etc.

—During the colonial period, France exercised its sovereignty over Hoang Sa and Truong Sa in the name of Vietnam, sending administrative teams there, building a lighthouse, a meteorological station, and exploiting local resources, especially guano.

—After recovering independence, the Vietnamese government have, when necessary, proclaimed their sovereignty over these archipelagoes, strongly protested against all infringements on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam, organised these two archipelagoes in the administrative, economic and military fields.

After studying all the arguments produced by the concerned parties, Professor Charles Rousseau, a well-known specialist in international law, has concluded: “In fact, the long historic ties and the geographic nearness have been the

two major claims that Vietnam may invoke, which it did. The argument based on contiguity to the mainland is all powerful here. It is true that it might also be used by China at least with regard to the Paracels. But such a claim is valid only on condition that it is supported by a material effectiveness which Vietnam alone is capable of exercising or is better disposed than others to exercise."<sup>1</sup>

*Therefore, the only conclusion conforming to history and meeting the criteria of international law is the following:*

*The Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes belong to Vietnam, and come under Vietnamese sovereignty. They constitute an integral part of the Vietnamese territory.*

Though they claimed that "We will never seize any land belonging to another country", governments in Beijing have in fact invaded Hoang Sa archipelago which they continue to occupy. At the same time, Taipei invaded and occupied Ba Binh Island (Itu Aba) in the Truong Sa archipelago. These are acts of aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people's struggle against the occupation of the Hoang Sa archipelago by the reactionaries within the Beijing authorities who also claim ownership of the Truong Sa archipelago is part of the struggle against the latter's expansionism and hegemonism. By seeking to control and if possible to occupy the Bien Dong Sea and Southeast Asia, they have revealed their expansionist and hegemonist ambitions. The new occupants of the Zhongnanhai are trying now to realize by every possible means these dreams long nurtured by the ancient Chinese emperors. The sending of a 600,000-men invasion army equipped with considerable means of war against Vietnam, the installation of a so-called "Democratic Kampuchea" of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique, the unilateral delimitation of four danger zones on the approaches to Hoang Sa and Hainan in violation of international law concerning air traffic, the building of Hoang Sa into a military base in the Eastern Sea, the multiple acts of interference in the internal affairs of the countries in the area — are not all these acts tangible proofs of their expansionist policy?

The struggle of the Vietnamese people may be long and arduous but will certainly be victorious because it is a just struggle supported by all the fraternal and friendly countries throughout the world at a time that the three revolutionary currents of our era are rising ever higher to attack the last refuges of imperialism.

Some may think that the struggle to recover and defend the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes is the affair of the Vietnamese alone. In fact, this struggle has a much wider implication. A look at the map suffices. What would become of the face of Southeast Asia if the Beijing expansionists succeed in

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1. In "La Chine, la France, le Japon, les Philippines et le Vietnam" — Revue générale de droit international public, No. 3 July — September 1972.

seizing all these archipelagoes and controlling the Bien Dong Sea? Then, how can it be said that this question concerns the Vietnamese alone and they alone have to bear the consequences?

May this denunciation of the acts of aggression and the ambitions of Beijing serve as an alarm signal for all the peoples in Southeast Asia. Doubtless, there are many areas where disagreement still remains among the latter. However, faced with the danger posed by Beijing expansionism, there is no other option but to unite to resist and to preserve their independence, freedom, peace, stability and prosperity. The days when imperialism and colonialism could dictate their will to the peoples in the region are long gone. Whatever its schemes — armed aggression, economic, political and diplomatic manoeuvres, sabotage by Maoist groups — Beijing cannot achieve its sinister ambitions.

## FROM MAP WAR TO HOT WAR

VU CAN

Early 1974. Two years had passed since the signing by Zhou Enlai and Richard Nixon of the notorious Shanghai Communiqué. One year later, Saigon was liberated. Under the terms of the 1973 Paris Agreement then in force, Washington was committed to withdrawing its troops from Indochina. The resistance war waged since 1960 by the Vietnamese people against American aggression was entering its final phase. It had been a long and difficult revolutionary war, to which the Beijing authorities had pledged their full support in a spirit of proletarian internationalism. Indeed, had they not declared that they were Vietnam's staunchest rear base?

Yet Beijing chose this precise moment to attack the Hoang Sa archipelago, a cluster of Vietnamese islands some 170 nautical miles from the port of Da Nang, and at that time garrisoned by the Saigon army. To begin with, the Chinese navy sent a number of ships camouflaged as fishing boats into Hoang Sa waters, escorting a number of landing craft. At the same time several Chinese warships were deployed in the vicinity of the archipelago. The offensive was launched on January 19, and fighting raged the whole of the following day, with strong air support. The Saigonese defenders called for help, but in vain: a unit of the Seventh Fleet operating in the area ostensibly moved away. The attackers made 48 prisoners, including an American adviser, Gerald Kosch, who was treated with great courtesy and was soon handed over to the American authorities.

Following the liberation of Saigon, a highly significant document concerning the role of the United States in this affair was discovered in the archives of the Saigon Foreign Ministry. This was the telegram sent from Washington by Ambassador Tran Kim Phuong to Foreign Minister Vuong Van Bac on February, 2, 1974, exactly two weeks after the event. In particular it stated that "Secretary of State, Henri Kissinger, looks upon the conflict on the subject of the Hoang Sa (Paracels) islands as a marginal problem, even an inconvenience, within the framework of the joint efforts with Communist China to contain North Vietnam. (...) A spirit of compromise with Communist China prevails at present in both assemblies. They are ready to give us military assistance against North Vietnam but not Communist China".



Evidently, China had conquered a bridgehead into Vietnam with Washington's blessing. Both superpowers were determined to cement their new alliance at the expense of their respective allies. With ten years' hindsight, it can be said that the United States, before being forced out of that part of the world, covertly passed its powers as international gendarme to its potential successor, Beijing hegemonism.

### **Lying in wait: the underside of an expansionist strategy.**

The highly strategic position of the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes is due to the fact that they command not only the access routes to Vietnam but also all the major sea and air routes across the Bien Dong (Eastern Sea). The discovery of off-shore oilfields and large underwater mineral deposits off the coast of Vietnam has further underlined their importance.

Early in the 20th century, Imperial China, then a semi-colony of the Western powers, had already laid claim to these islands. Twenty-five years after the signing with France of the Tianqin (Tien Tsin) Treaty in 1884, under which China renounced its nominal suzerain rights over Vietnam, the Qing Court nevertheless mounted a lightning expedition upon Hoang Sa. This expedition was praised in the following terms by Shi Dizu in an article printed by *Guangming Ribao* on November 24th 1975, and on the following day by the *People's Daily*: "In April 1909, Admiral Li Zhun, assisted by Vice-Admirals Wu Jingyong and Liu Yike, led 170 men on gunboats Fubo and Chenhang in an expedition to Xisha (Hoang Sa). He landed on 15 islands, gave the archipelago the name of Loshi, planted the (Chinese) flag on Yongxing island and fired a cannon salute, proclaiming to all both within and without the country that the islands of the Southern Sea are a part of China's sacred territory."

In this article entitled "From Antiquity the islands of the Southern Sea have been part and parcel of the territory of our country", Shi Dizu claims nevertheless that China has exercised its sovereignty over Hoang Sa at least since the times of the Tang and the Song, over ten centuries ago. This would mean that Li Zhun's assertion of Chinese rights over the archipelago was superfluous. But it is not our wish to disentangle the contradictions, the unsupported affirmations, and the tendentious conclusions which abound in the typically Maoist works of Beijing's propagandists. Rather, let us try to find out how the contemporary press covered the incident.

Firstly, not one but two incursions were mentioned in its columns, both conducted by the Imperial Chinese navy into Hoang Sa waters in April and June 1909. Shi Dizu no doubt refers to the June rather than the April expedition. According to the *Guangzhou Kouo Che Pao* of June 20, 1909, later quoted by the French journal *Extrême-Asie* (number 38, August 1929), two small gunboats under the command of Li Zhun had left this town for Yulin, a port in the South of Hainan, with two agents from a German firm on board and 170 Chinese crewmen. The expedition had to put in for two weeks at Yulin to wait

for suitable weather, before finally reaching Hoang Sa on June 6. After stopping off on a few islands, the Chinese flag was flown on one of them, saluted by 21 salvoes. The expedition left on the following day, June 7. The Chinese side did not follow this up by any military or political action.

The event, far from taking on the grandiose and solemn proportions attributed to it by the *Guangming Ribao* and the *People's Daily*, was nonetheless a blatant violation of the territorial integrity of Vietnam, then administered as a French protectorate. The French colonial administration later explained its non-reaction to this provocation as being most opportune at the time, the Treaty of Beijing of 1898 having kept to the status quo concerning the islands in the South China Sea.

Without going into the controversy which followed in the Indochinese press, let us simply note the aggressive policy of expansion followed by the Qing Court right up to its demise in 1911, a policy later Chinese governments were to perpetuate. Under the Guomindang, China, then also in bondage, dismembered and humiliated, did not for all that shed its territorial claims over Vietnam. In December 1946, taking advantage of the fighting between Vietnam and France, Chinese troops partially occupied Hoang Sa and Truong Sa, neither side being in a position to intervene. But it was under Mao Zedong that China revealed its most cynical hand in playing for its expansionist aims.

Maoist China, much more powerful and cunning than earlier regimes, at first tried a double game. This was to create for itself, through excessive declarations and spectacular gestures, an ultra-revolutionary aura as an intransigent anti-imperialist and defender of world peace, while developing its strength and lying in wait for the most favourable moment to act. 'Lying in wait' (*Changqi meifu* in Chinese) was always one of the Maoists' main strategies of subversion and aggression, along with their equally typical opportunism and hypocrisy in standing on the mountain watching the tigers fight" (*zo shan guan hu dou*). Both were used against Vietnam.

In 1954, Beijing published, as an annex to its "Historical Sketch of Contemporary China", a map of China including territories "annexed by the imperialists": Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, parts of India, the People's Republic of Mongolia, Korea, Japan's Ryu Kyu archipelago, parts of Oriental Siberia and of the Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, and Tadjikistan and the Kirghiz Soviet Republic. At the time nobody imagined this was the beginnings of a "map war" later to be used to justify territorial claims. It did strike some as being rather strange, but rather than seeing it as a conscious move by the Chinese authorities, it was explained away in terms of the Chinese habit of overstatement, and even justified as a stand against the imperialists. Who indeed would have suspected the world's second socialist power of expansionist ambitions, initiator, together with India, of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, and one of the leading delegations to the Bandung Conference? But the world soon realized the duplicity of Maoist China when, claiming unilaterally declared sovereignty rights, it launched its troops against Burma in 1955, India in 1962 and the USSR in 1969, before attempting to "teach Vietnam a lesson" ten years later in 1979.

The annexation of the Hoang Sa archipelago was also preceded by a map war. The maritime borders drawn on the maps of the 1973 *Atlas of the People's Republic of China* extend in Southeast Asia as far as the Malacca Straits and North Kalimantan. This was predictable given the 1958 Declaration made public in Beijing on September 4 of that year which established the territorial waters of China as extending 12 nautical miles off-shore. In particular it was stated that "this stipulation applies to all territories of the People's Republic of China, including... the Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha, Nansha islands, and any other islands belonging to China". The insincerity of the Chinese position is now apparent in the intentional vagueness of this statement.

At that time, Washington had just scuppered the 1954 Geneva Agreements which contained provisions for general elections to be held throughout Vietnam in 1956 with a view to re-unifying the country. And the infamous dictator Ngo Dinh Diem, while conducting a onesided war of repression against the Southern population, was preparing to march on the North. Beijing could not have found a better occasion: after having forcibly occupied the Eastern group of the Hoang Sa islands in 1956, it now began to put pressure on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, only just recovered from the anti-French resistance, and which had at all costs to avoid making enemies on several fronts. This explains the terse note sent on September 14, 1958 by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to his counterpart Zhou Enlai, in which he confirmed that Vietnam respected China's territorial waters, without however making the slightest allusion to the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes and intentionally ignoring the Chinese names of Xisha and Nansha used in China's declaration.

But in 1959 Beijing pushed matters further, organising a landing on Hoang Sa, on the islands of the Crescent group, by 82 Chinese fishermen, all of whom were captured by the Saigon troops stationed there. The Chinese response was to issue strongly-worded warnings to the Saigon administration, "puppets of the American paper tiger", but not making any further moves. The Saigon puppet regime had been consolidated, and China could no longer expect easy victories in conquering new territories as it had done in 1956.

The beast had to lie in wait for another fifteen years before springing on its prey, sure this time of American complicity. Saigon, in effect, had its hands tied. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, for their part, had to swallow the bitter pill: the final stage of the anti-American struggle was approaching, and the liberation of southern Vietnam had to take precedence over all other considerations.

### Noisy, but hardly convincing.

A boa, after swallowing its prey, hides away to digest it. Maoist China is not like a boa: after having grabbed the Hoang Sa archipelago, and haunted by its conscience the Chinese leadership launched a noisy propaganda campaign claiming that the islands had always belonged to China. They brashly stated

that over a thousand years ago they had been populated by Chinese, apparently not aware of the fact that these islands are coral reefs and thus grow at a given rate, in given conditions. A thousand years ago the greater part of these islands were submerged reefs, only the largest of them standing out of the water. It is indeed plausible that the area could have been visited by Chinese fishermen as early as the Tang period, or by ancient explorers in the period of the Three Kingdoms, but to claim that they established themselves there is patently ridiculous: the only life these reefs could have supported was marine fauna.

Let us review this campaign which the Chinese mass media have waged since 1974 in an attempt to justify the annexation.

Immediately after the official announcement of the attack on Hoang Sa in the *People's Daily* on January 20, 1974, the entire Chinese press took up the issue. The event was described as a "counter-attack of a defensive character," the expression used five years later to explain the aggression against Vietnam along the entire length of its northern border. The *People's Daily* of July 29, 1977, actually went so far as to list the attack on Hoang Sa as one of the most glorious feats of the Chinese People's Army, along with the intervention in Tibet, the Chinese volunteers' part in the Korean war, the shelling of Jinmen island in the Taiwan Straits, the "counter-attacks of a defensive character" on the Sino-Indian and Sino-Soviet borders.

Chinese propaganda, while not ignoring the Truong Sa (Nansha) islands, has been particularly active on "Xisha". The handing over to the International Red Cross of the "Saigonese aggressors" trapped there, the production activities of "their inhabitants", the setting up of various building sites there, the patrols of the navy and people's militia in the area: all these are occasions for avalanches of stories, photographs, articles and declarations to appear in the Chinese press. Some inhabitant of Xisha, or some soldier stationed there, pours out his feelings of ecstasy about his home islands, deeply moved by the great solicitude of President Mao, then President Hua, and Vice-Presidents Ye and Deng, declaring his determination to defend to his death every inch of the sacred territory of his homeland. "I love Xisha, this corner of our homeland"; "I love Xisha more than I love my house"; "Xisha will remain forever part of Tienanmen"; "President Mao's children in Xisha", etc: such were the titles of articles in the Chinese press. They even managed to link the campaign for Chinese sovereignty over their islands to that criticising Lin Biao and Confucius, then Deng Xiaoping and the rightist deviationists, then Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four!

The Chinese propaganda machine has brought its entire panoply into action: not simply the press, but also the cinema, television, exhibitions, historical fantasy and even pseudo-archaeological excavations. Several volumes of illustrated tales about Xisha have been published, in millions of copies, by the Beijing and Guangdong People's Publishing Houses, including for instance "Never Shall We Yield an Inch of our Land". Several films about the islands have been shown in the capital and the provinces: "Wind and Cloud over the Southern Sea", "The Islands of the Southern Sea", "Exploring Xisha", etc., not to mention

"The Young Woman of Xisha", never finished because the initiative to make it was said to have come from the "Gang of Four". Contributing to the "people's movement", the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army composed countless poems and songs about Xisha, some of which were recorded after being performed during art festivals.

Here is Xinhua News Agency's coverage on November 7, 1974 of one of the numerous exhibitions on Xisha organised throughout China: "With the title 'Songs to the beautiful islands of Xisha, images of heroes and heroines', a recent commentary of the *People's Daily* has praised the photographic exhibition on the Xisha islands, an archipelago in the Southern Sea, organised on the occasion of the National Day celebrations. The exhibition comprises a hundred colour photos: historical documents establishing China's sovereignty over the Xisha islands since ancient times, views of the archipelago, and scenes from the fighting life of the soldiers and people who took part in the legitimate and deserved counter-attack, portraying our heroes and heroines in Xisha armed with Marxism-Leninism (sic!) and Mao Zedong Thought. This exhibition testifies to the unshakeable will of the indomitable Chinese people, who will not allow any foreign aggression against its territory. The exhibition also features photographs of archaeologists working alongside the defenders and population of Xisha, as well as some of the historical vestiges they discovered in the course of their excavations: these remains constitute irrefutable proof that our ancestors have left their mark throughout the archipelago, and that the Xisha islands, as well as Nansha, Dongsha and Zhongsha, have been an integral part of Chinese territory ever since antiquity. Several photographs dealing with the movement of criticism of Lin Biao and Confucius show that the young men and women of Xisha are participating in this movement with an enthusiasm as great as the bravery they displayed in the war against the aggressors".

The peremptory tone with which this passage expresses such laboured and inconsistent arguments allows one to venture a guess that its authors were somewhat lacking in conviction. Turning now to another commentary about a book this time, published in the *People's Daily* of August 24, 1974 and entitled "Why are our country's Xisha islands so beautiful?", we read that the book concerned a novel by Hao Ran called "Children of Xisha", is "lively and reflects reality" because its author claims that over five centuries ago, a large sea-going junk carried over 1,000 Chinese to Xisha; that one thousand years ago Chinese coins were introduced there from the Chinese continent; and that the present population of Xisha is Chinese. One may wonder, if this were all true, why a novelist was chosen rather than a historian?

In attempting to prove more than was provable, the Chinese propagandists enjoyed a field day in facile inventions. Yet truth needs neither verbiage nor verbal excesses to win through, and fabrications are all eventually exposed. Speaking of this vast deployment of efforts to legitimize the Chinese aggression against the Hoang Sa, a Vietnamese writer once remarked: "Territorial sovereignty cannot be produced like a film or a recording."

## Towards a Chinese mare nostrum in Southeast Asia ?

Given the geographical situation of their country, the Vietnamese call Bien Dong, or Eastern Sea, what the world maps refer to as the South China Sea. This popular name was officially adopted and registered with the World Meteorological Organization and various other relevant international organizations.

This sea, a relatively closed one, covers an area about 3,400,000 sq. km, approximately the same as the Mediterranean and the Black Sea taken together. It washes the coasts of part of Southern China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and connects with the Gulf of Thailand. With the Andaman Sea it forms a channel linking the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean, and is crossed by numerous international maritime routes which are essential for exchanges between the countries of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Southern Asia and Far Eastern countries. While Arab, Indian, Persian, Chinese, Malay, Indonesian and other navigators frequented it from early times, it was only after the 15th century that Westerners began to explore the area. First came the Portuguese, the Spanish, Dutch, English and French, then the Germans, and finally the Americans. In the Second World War, Japan's control of the Bien Dong created great difficulties for the Allies. This supremacy was subsequently transferred to the United States whose Air Force, based at Guam, Okinawa, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand, and whose Seventh Fleet caused so much damage to the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea during the Second Indochina War.

With all its attention fixed on expanding its continental empire the Middle Kingdom only later became interested in maritime possessions. The war of conquest waged against Java in the 13th century by the Yuan Court having been impaired by the latter's successive defeats in Vietnam, it was only two centuries later that China launched its first campaign of maritime expansion. From 1405 to 1433, Admiral Zheng He led seven expeditions to the Western Seas, mobilizing up to 30,000 men and hundreds of war junks. Chinese adventurers reached as far as Champa, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Persia, Arabia and East Africa, conducting a kind of armed trade, imposing their conditions, pillaging hostile regions and punishing those chiefs who refused to pay tribute to the Celestial Court. Zheng He meddled in the internal affairs of countless countries, going so far as deposing the king of Sri Lanka and capturing the king of Palembang. He was accompanied by scholars whose task it was to carefully record all things "seen and heard" for purposes one can imagine. Zheng He's first expedition coincided with the invasion of Vietnam by a powerful Chinese army which established a savage domination lasting twenty years. In 1427, Vietnamese insurrectional forces broke the Ming domination after defeating the enemy in battle. These military defeats combined with the innumerable difficulties then facing China compelled it to put a temporary end to its expansionist enterprise in the Southern and Western seas.

Five centuries later, Chinese leaders purporting to be communists, were to glorify Zheng He's expeditions, which had left such terrible memories in the minds of all the peoples of insular Asia. It thus came as no surprise to hear Mao Zedong himself openly declare, at a meeting at Wuhan in 1963 with a delegation from the Vietnam Workers' Party (now the Communist Party of Vietnam): "I shall preside over 500 million poor peasants sending their troops into South-east Asia". The annexation of a part of Burma in 1956 was the first stage in a carefully thought-out plan, inevitably leading to the occupation of islands in the Hoang Sa archipelago in 1956 and again in 1974, and the aggression against Vietnam in 1979. Thus appears the ideological link between Mao Zedong and Zheng He, the 15th-century buccaneer, namely Chinese hegemonism.

As soon as they secured the Hoang Sa islands, the Chinese Government took a whole series of measures aiming to transform them into a base for further expansion in Southeast Asia. The archipelago first needed a population, indeed, one supposed to have inhabited it from time immemorial. An accelerated and naturally secret settlement programme was thus introduced, and so far the Chinese press has reported the activities of Chinese fishermen on Xisha, as well as farmers and workers. Besides the regular airlift established shortly after the occupation, a maritime service has regularly operated since the end of 1978 between Hoang Sa and Qinglan, in the South of Hainan. A major military base is being built there with a large garrison, and naval and air installations. Indeed the *Guardian* revealed in March 1979 that the British Harrier jump jets which the Chinese army was thinking of buying could be used against Vietnam and to control the navigation routes between Tokyo and Singapore from the islands in the South China Sea.

Already the consequences of China's occupation of the Hoang Sa islands are being felt on the international scene. Acting unilaterally, and disregarding all juridical procedure, on July 23, 1979 the General Board of the Chinese Civil Aviation Authority, in the name of the government, made public a communiqué establishing four so-called "Danger Zones" southeast of Hainan. Permission must now be obtained from Beijing for regular flights to traverse them. These four danger zones cover Hoang Sa, without the Chinese authorities openly mentioning the fact, and cut across a busy international route. The Chinese authorities thus aim to force acceptance of their sovereignty over a territory they are illegally occupying. And not only Vietnam is harmed in this instance, but also the entire international community, especially the Southeast Asian countries.

However this is not the end of the matter. China is escalating its demands, its initial successes having whetted its appetite. Until Hoang Sa was occupied, China had only claimed it and Nansha, Dongsha and Zhongsha archipelagoes. In 1977, after conducting oceanographical studies in the Hoang Sa area, they also claimed that the Scarborough shoals—which they call Huangyang—were included in China's "sacred territory". Advancing theories both simplistic and

confused about the continental shelf and its territorial waters, China has finally come to extend its maritime borders to encompass the whole of the Bien Dong, including even those areas which it had recognised as international waters in its 1958 declaration. Naturally, it has never proclaimed this in an official statement, only implicitly, via the map war for instance, as shown by the map of China published in Beijing in January 1978.

One may wonder whether the Bien Dong is to become a Chinese *Mare Nostrum*, and Southeast Asia a part of China's "sacred territory". Naturally, not all dreams come true, especially as China ranks as a superpower mainly because of its huge population. But collusion with Washington and other reactionaries will no doubt encourage it in its megalomaniac ambitions. This tiger is no paper one, and should not be underestimated; neither should its capacity for lying in wait, nor the fifth column which it disposes of in every country of this troubled region.

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In his book "Chinese Techniques of Expansion" on the 1962 Chinese aggression against India, D.S. Gidwani, a writer from Bombay, refers to the technique of Wu-je, a locality claimed by Beijing as Chinese which, according to two diplomatic notes sent in mid-1954 by the Chinese Embassy to the Indian Government, had been violated by Indian troops. The Indian Government replied that none of its troops had crossed the border at the point mentioned.

In 1955, it was India which drew China's attention to the fact that Chinese soldiers, with five tents and twenty horses, were camping in Indian territory near Bara Hoti in the State of Uttar Pradesh. China denied this, claiming on the contrary that Indian troops had made incursions into Wu-je and were building fortifications there. India replied: our troops are at Bara Hoti. Yours are also at Bara Hoti, South of Tunjun La pass. We don't know where Wu-je is. Your embassy official says it is 12 km North of Tunjun La.

The same year, India condemned Chinese incursions as far as Damzan, again in Uttar Pradesh. The same exchange of notes and mutual accusations continued until June 1956, when the Chinese Foreign Ministry laid down its cards and notified the Indian Government that Wu-je had always belonged to Tibet and that there was no historical document to prove that Tunjun La pass was ever on the border between India and China.

For here was the rub: Wu-je was Bara Hoti, and Damzan as well. China had baptised these two Indian localities with a Chinese name, sent its troops there,



while accusing its neighbour of having violated its territory. Similar incidents began to occur with increasing frequency along India's Himalayan border, eventually forcing India to defend itself: thus provoked, it gave its aggressors the pretexts they sought. Eight years thus passed, from the time the first sparks were struck to full-scale conflagration.

Twelve years after invading the Indian Ladakh, Beijing launched its forces against the Hoang Sa archipelago, which it insists on calling Xisha. Furthermore the Truong Sa islands, rebaptised Nansha, are also claimed as Chinese, in what appears to be a faithful replay of the Wu-je tactic, a particularly devious political and military trick, beginning with a map war and ultimately serving China's expansionist ambitions.

## ARGUMENTATION OR SOPHISTRY?

QUANG LOI

Following several years of noisy and protracted propaganda in which all the media — press publications, radio, television, films, exhibitions, plays, etc., — were mobilized to prove Chinese sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, on 30 January 1980 the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a document entitled "The indisputable sovereignty of China over the Xisha and Nansha islands".

### Dubious documents

The Chinese Foreign Ministry asserts that Chinese navigators sailed the Bien Dong (Eastern Sea) as early as the reign of Wudi of the Han dynasty (2nd century B.C.) and discovered the Xisha and Nansha archipelagoes, which they successively named Jiurulezhou, Shitang, Qianlishitang, Wanlishitang, Changsha, Qianlichangsha, Wanlichangsha, etc. Then it gives a long list of references:

— *Nanzhou Yiwu Zhi* (Strange Things in Southern Lands) by Wan Zhen; and *Funan Zhuan* (Annals of Funan) by Kang Tai; both books written in the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 A.D.)

— *Mongliang Lu* (A Dreamer's Notes), written in the Song period;

— *Daoyi Zhilue* (Glimpses of Barbarian Island Countries) written in the Yuan period;

— *Dong Xi Yang Kao* (Studies on Eastern and Western Oceans) and *Shunfeng Xiangsong* (The Escort Sails before the Wind), written in Ming times;

— *Zhinan Zhengfa* (Navigation Guide) and *Haiguo Wenjian Lu* (Things Seen and Heard about Countries beyond the Seas), also in Ming times;

— *Genglu Bu* (Record of Itineraries), logbooks kept by fishermen of various periods, etc.

Even if one admits the existence of the above books, one may ask how can the Chinese side affirm that Jiurulezhou, Shitang, etc., are the archipelagoes it now calls Xisha and Nansha?

For J. V. Mills and J. J. Duyvendak, authors of *Ma Huan Reexamined* (1933), Shitang designates the Paracels reefs, Wanshengshitang the Paracels islands, and Shichengshitang the Macclesfield Bank (now called Zhongsha by China).

Groenveldt, the translator of the *Story of Shi Bi* which recounts the voyage of 5,000 people led by Shi Bi, who started from Xuanzhou in 1292 to sail to Giao Chi and Champa, holds that Qizhouyang designates the Paracels and Wanlishitang, the Macclesfield Bank. This opinion is shared by several other authors.

Even Chinese scholars disagree with the Chinese Foreign Ministry. For instance, in *Liangzhong Haidao Zhenjing* published by Zhonghua Shuju (Beijing) in 1961, there is this note: "Wanlishitang is very probably the southern part of the Xisha archipelago; Wanlichangsha, its northern part." Thus Wanlishitang designates neither Nansha (Truong Sa in Vietnamese), nor Zhongsha, but perhaps Xisha (Hoang Sa in Vietnamese).

The works quoted by Beijing may make up a long list but they have no scientific value. Most were written on the strength of information from foreign travellers. This is the case for *Dong Xi Yang Kao* by Zhang Ye. In an article published in *Guangming Ribao* of 7 June 1966, a Chinese author, Zhou Jie, admitted that "Long before the Tang and Song periods, emigrants from our country had crossed those islands, which were also mentioned in notes by private individuals. For unknown reasons the names given do not correspond with each other so that accurate interpretation is difficult." If this is the case for books written in Tang and Song times, what should be said about those which saw the light of day in the much remoter periods of the Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms? Such confusion proves that one cannot casually relate such and such territory to an ancient toponym.

Even supposing that the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes had been discovered by Chinese people, what would be the significance of such a fact?

For some time, the theory of the right of discovery was upheld: it was enough to have seen a territory to be entitled to claim sovereignty over it. Thus Great Britain claimed North America simply because Cabots had sailed along its shores from the 38th to the 56th parallels. Later, it was realized that this was an insufficient criterion for claiming sovereignty. Whereupon the theory of fictive occupation was contrived: discovery could be regarded as fictive occupation if it was accompanied by some concrete manifestation. For the Portuguese, such manifestation consisted in erecting a *padrao*, a kind of obelisk bearing the arms of Portugal. The Frenchman Cartier, for his part, would plant a big cross with the inscription: "*Vive le roy de France!*" But again, this was later deemed insufficient and effective occupation, i.e. the exercise of State functions on the territory concerned, was called for.

The mere discovery by nationals of any country cannot justify a claim of sovereignty by that country over any territory. All the more so since in the cases under review, the Bien Dong (Eastern Sea) was sailed by navigators from many countries, the earliest in time being Arab traders. The presence of Portuguese, Dutch and French sailors was reported as early as the 15th century. Some authors hold that from the beginnings of the Christian era to the 12th century, Arabs, Indians and Persians were the only people to ply this sea. Others have gone even further, maintaining that those navigators had a more thorough knowledge of China than the Chinese of those times.

The Chinese authorities also try to prove that Chinese nationals had exploited Xisha and Nansha since the remotest times. But the words they use are quite vague: "Already in the 2nd century B.C., in the reign of the emperor Wudi of the Han dynasty, Chinese navigators sailed in the South China Sea (...) Overcoming all kinds of difficulties, successive generations of Chinese developed the resources of those two archipelagoes by the sweat of their brows (...) At least as early as the days of the Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese people had lived and practised fishing and other productive activities on the islands of Xisha and Nansha."

By means of photographs and films they try to suggest that those "productive activities" included crop planting and livestock breeding. But it is said in the document produced by the Chinese Foreign Ministry itself (note no. 1):

"In the book *Nanzhou Yiwu Zhi*, Wan Zhen thus described sea navigation between the Malay peninsula and the Chinese mainland in Han times: 'Sailing northeastward, one arrives at Daqiton, then crosses the Changhai sea where the water is shallow and there are many magnetic rocks.' Changhai is at present called South China Sea; the 'magnetic rocks' are the sandbanks and reefs of Xisha and Nansha, in those days still under the surface of the water. For his part Kang Tai wrote in his *Funan Zhuan*: "In the Changhai sea, there are coral islands with a flat bedrock on which corals grow."

Now, one may ask, how could submerged reefs and coral islands have sustained crops and livestock? One may, at the most, admit that Chinese fishermen came to those islands, just as fishermen from other countries did. But to assert that they "developed the resources of those islands" is groundless.

In support of its claim that China exercised effective jurisdiction over Xisha and Nansha Beijing puts forward nine "facts" which in its eyes were most significant. Of these nine facts, seven relate to Xisha and only two to Nansha, evidence of the even flimsier base on which the Chinese claim of sovereignty over the latter rests.

One of the two facts relating to Nansha is the protest lodged by the Qing Court against the survey conducted by a German ship in the two archipelagoes. It must be pointed out right away that the German ship came only to Truong Sa, never to Hoang Sa. Then, one may rightly wonder why the Qing Court had kept mum when a year before, in 1892, the ships *Egeria* and *Penguin*, probably belonging to the British or American navy, had come to Hoang Sa for exactly the same purpose.

The second fact presupposes that Xisha and Nansha then bore the names of Qianlichangsha and Wanlishitang, which is far from proven. Besides, even supposing that they were the same, this is by no means a valid juridical argument in support of Beijing's claim of sovereignty.

As for the seven facts relating to Hoang Sa, they either presuppose that these islands bore the names of Jiurulezhou or Qizhouyang, or involve some action taken by the local administration of Guangdong.

There can be no better manifestation of a State's sovereignty over a territory than the establishment of local administration. Yet the Chinese occupation of Hoang Sa in 1956 and 1974 was only the military occupation of a territory which

had belonged to another State for many centuries, not a *res nullius* or *res derelicta*, and this can by no means confer territorial sovereignty. Indeed, before that occupation, China had never set up any administration on that archipelago. That the Chinese admiral Li Zhun had taken his gunboats to some of its islands in 1909 was only an illegal act, a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

In addition to those "facts", Beijing claims it possesses maps that support its pretensions; for instance the *Huang Qing Gezhi Sheng Fentu* (Map of provinces directly under the imperial authority of the Qing; 1755, reign of Qianlong); the *Da Qing Wannian Yitong Dili Quantu* (Map of the eternally unified great Qing empire; 1810; reign of Jiaqing); the *Da Qing Yitong Tianxia Quantu* (Map of the unified territory of the great Qing empire; 1817, reign of Jiaqing). But so far those maps have not been produced. Is it because there has been no time to doctor them?

### No Chinese right to those archipelagoes

After producing what it claims to be evidence of Chinese sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, the Chinese Foreign Ministry concludes:

"The many historical facts mentioned above fully prove that China was the first to discover, exploit, develop and administer the Xisha and Nansha islands. For more than a thousand years, successive Chinese governments have exercised jurisdiction over them."

On the subject of territorial sovereignty in international law, the time is gone when a pope, Alexander VI Borgia, could have an imaginary line traced which crossed the poles and a point 100 nautical miles west of the Cape Verde islands and then decree that all lands found and to be found, discovered and to be discovered east of that line would go to Portugal and west of that line to Spain. The time is also past when in order to justify one's claims on some territory it is enough to invoke the theory of the right of discovery. No country can now assume priority over some territory on the pretext that one of its navigators has seen it through his spyglass. The theory of "fictive occupation" which replaced the theory of discovery has also been criticized and the right it engenders is regarded as only a conditional and temporary one. From the 19th century onward, the theory of "effective occupation" has asserted itself in international law. Even after the abrogation of the Berlin Act of 1855 by the Saint Germain Convention of 10 September 1919, this theory has prevailed in international common law.

Occupation can only be exercised on unoccupied or abandoned territory. War-time occupation or military occupation in peace time are totally different problems and never lead to the establishment of the occupying State's territorial sovereignty.

The evidence produced by Beijing and its interpretation of the so-called discovery by Chinese navigators of the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes can in no way establish Chinese territorial sovereignty on them. Chinese activities on

those islands, as described by Beijing, did not go beyond fishing and the gathering of marine products by individual fishermen, and did not include any initiative by the State. And yet, the occupation of territories without a lawful owner can only be initiated by a State. How could activities by Chinese fishermen—who were what's more not the only ones to operate there—give rise to any right for the Chinese State?

It must be noted that the Chinese side never alludes to any occupation of Hoang Sa and Truong Sa, and this is doubtless not inadvertent. For a long time those archipelagoes have been under Vietnamese sovereignty. Not only were they discovered by Vietnamese but the Vietnamese State has exploited and developed their resources and set up an administration, which is proof of uninterrupted Vietnamese presence and exercise of sovereignty. Hoang Sa and Truong Sa are part of Vietnamese territory, not *res nullius* or *res derelicta*. As it is not easy for Beijing to demonstrate that China had occupied them, another notion has been put forward which implies that there had been "occupation": it is claimed that Chinese governments had exercised jurisdiction over those archipelagoes.

But then this question must be asked: *how could China have exercised jurisdiction upon a territory over which it could not claim sovereignty?* Li Zhun's landing on some of the Hoang Sa islands in 1909, or even the total occupation by violence of that archipelago by the present Beijing government, are illegal and constitute violation of Vietnam's sovereignty and territorial integrity. These actions cannot legitimize Chinese territorial pretensions.

The Chinese side claims that China had repeatedly struggled to defend its "sovereignty" on those archipelagoes, implying that it actually possessed that "sovereignty". The scanty arguments put forward in support of this claim fall under four categories:

1. It is claimed that some French officials declared in 1921 and 1929 that the Paracels (Xisha) must be considered Chinese. Such declarations related only to Hoang Sa. But how could any French officials, while continuing to hold that the Truong Sa islands are Vietnamese, have considered the Hoang Sa Chinese?

In fact, by the Tianqin Convention of 18 May 1884, China pledged to give up its nominal suzerainty over Vietnam — whose territory included Hoang Sa and Truong Sa — and to recognize and respect all accords signed between France and Vietnam. The Beijing Treaty of 1898 stipulated that the *status quo ante* was to be maintained on islands in the South China Sea. Long before that, Vietnamese sovereignty had been exercised over Hoang Sa and Truong Sa. Declarations by French officials, whoever they were and whatever their number, could in no way alter formal agreements signed between the French government and the Chinese Qing Court.

Indeed, facts provide an answer to the question of whether or not French, which represented Vietnam in foreign affairs, was disposed to withdraw from Hoang Sa and Truong Sa in the 1920's. In 1925, the *S/S De Lanessan* was sent to Hoang Sa to conduct survey operations. The same ship sailed to Truong Sa in 1927 to do the same. In 1930, the *S/S Malicieuse* and several other ships were

successively sent to Hoang Sa. Before that, in 1925, Than Trong Hue, the War Minister of the Court of Hue, had declared that Hoang Sa had always been Vietnamese.

2. It is claimed that following Japan's surrender in 1945 the two archipelagoes "were again placed under the administration of the Chinese government".

This deliberately vague assertion is a distortion of the truth:

The men who then represented Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) in Vietnam were acting in the name of the Allies, not in the name of China. Their mission was to disarm the Japanese troops, not to take in hand the administration of the country. Besides, their sphere of activity stopped at the 16th parallel. Thus when Chiang Kai-shek troops landed on Ba Binh (Itu Aba) island south of that parallel, they overstepped their mission and violated Vietnam's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Nothing at all leads to the conclusion that Hoang Sa and Truong Sa "were again placed under the administration of the Chinese government".

Not a single provision of the Peace Treaty signed in San Francisco on 8 September 1951 handed those islands over to China or any other country. Article 2 (f) of this Treaty only stipulated that "Japan renounces all rights, titles and claims on the Spratley and Paracels islands." As a matter of course, those archipelagoes, which had belonged to Vietnam before the Japanese occupation, must by right come back to Vietnam.

3. The Chinese side invokes such unilateral actions by the Chinese authorities as the protests they lodged on some occasions or the Chinese names they have given to islands in Bien Dong (Eastern Sea). This argument is wide of the mark. China has absolutely no right or title to those archipelagoes which are Vietnamese territory.

As for the Chinese maps of Bien Dong, it serves no purpose for Beijing to invoke the Chiang Kai-shek maps of 1934-35. It is enough to examine the maps published in 1973 by the People's Republic of China or those printed in the *Historical Sketch of Contemporary China*, where China's southern frontier extends as far south as the Zengmu shoal close to the Malaysian coast to get an idea of Chinese expansionist designs.

4. It is claimed that in some maps published abroad those archipelagoes are marked as Chinese. This is quite possible. Every one knows that the history of those islands is a complicated one. Besides, if some maps consider them Chinese, others clearly indicate that they are Vietnamese, e.g. the map "East Indies and the Further India" published in Philips' Pocket Atlas of the World (London, 1969).

### **Whose coat was turned ?**

The Chinese side thinks it is producing a clincher when it says that Vietnam has previously recognized that Hoang Sa and Truong Sa are Chinese and now tries to turn its coat.

But the Chinese document dated 30 January 1980 contains no proof whatsoever that the Vietnamese Government has given up its rights to those islands. The

only reference it makes is to a note of 14 September 1958 sent by the Vietnamese Prime Minister to his Chinese counterpart. This note, being a very short one, can be reproduced here in full. It was an answer to a declaration of 4 September 1958 of the government of the Chinese People's Republic which fixed a 12-mile limit to Chinese territorial waters, and merely expressed Vietnamese agreement:

*We have the honour to inform you that*

*The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam takes note and approves of the declaration of 4 September 1958 of the Government of the Chinese People's Republic concerning its territorial waters.*

*The Government of the DRV respects this decision and will give all State organs concerned directives aimed at ensuring strict respect of Chinese territorial waters fixed at 12 nautical miles in all relations with China at sea.*

*Respectfully yours,*

This note made no reference to the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes. It did not make the vaguest allusion to the territorial problem, and certainly contained no renunciation by Vietnam to those islands and no recognition of Chinese "sovereignty" over them. What is obvious is that it merely expresses the Vietnamese Government's goodwill toward a fraternal country with regard to a decision it had taken concerning its territorial waters, and its pledge to respect this decision.

But Beijing wishes to turn this gesture of friendship into a declaration "recognizing Chinese sovereignty over Hoang Sa and Truong Sa" and claims that Vietnam has turned its coat.

Beijing also claims that some Vietnamese geographical maps and school textbooks indicated that Xisha and Nansha were Chinese. In the context of the Vietnamese people's war of resistance to American aggression, some errors may have been committed but they should not be attributed to the Vietnamese government. The undeniable facts are that those archipelagoes were then under the jurisdiction of the former government in Saigon and were defended by its troops. What better proof can there be of Vietnamese sovereignty over those islands?

Before the Chinese armed invasion of Vietnam on 17 February 1979, there could perhaps still have been some misunderstanding of the true nature of the Beijing expansionists, but since that date, all people of conscience throughout the world have clearly seen which side has betrayed the other.

There is no need to go back a long way. During our resistance to American aggression, China always played a double game. While beating the big propaganda drums in support of the Vietnamese resistance so as to pose as intransigent anti-imperialist revolutionaries, those in Beijing secretly manoeuvred to prolong the war in order to wear out and weaken both the aggressor and his victim, drive the Americans into a blind alley, and compel them to hold out their hand to China.

That double game, even before the Chinese seizure of Hoang Sa, was quite visible: After the fall of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, Beijing gave the green light to American bombing raids on the North and troop landings in the South.



And when Vietnam, on the point of winning victory, wanted to sit at the negotiating table so as to wage the struggle on three fronts: military, political and diplomatic, they did not hesitate to enter into collusion with the Nixon administration in the hope of bartering Vietnamese blood for the position of third world superpower and a solution to the Taiwan problem. Later, South Vietnam having been liberated and our country reunified, they used all available weapons — political, economic, military, diplomatic — to try and weaken Vietnam and bring it to its knees, eventually even launching armed aggression, through the agency of the Pol Pot — Ieng Sary forces in the Southwest, and with Chinese forces themselves in the North.

The Hoang Sa affair must be examined in the context of the deceptive policy practised by Beijing. This archipelago was occupied by China through a lightning armed assault on 19 January 1974. Washington's approval had been given when Richard Nixon visited China in 1972. At that time of the attack, public opinion took note of the silence observed by the White House towards a military action undertaken in a zone which has always been considered closely bound to the strategic interests of the USA. This attitude was explained by Tran Kim Phuong, the Saigon ambassador in Washington, in a message to Vuong Van Bac, the Saigon foreign minister, on 2 February 1974 :

“From my conversations with Assistant Secretary of State Arthur Hummel and members of the National Security Council at the White House it appears that the Secretary of State, Henri Kissinger, looks upon the conflict on the subject of the Hoang Sa (Paracels) islands as a marginal problem, even an inconvenience, within the framework of the joint efforts with Communist China to contain North Vietnam. Thus the Secretary of State wishes to minimize it, not to get involved in it, in order to concentrate on the sole problem of stepping up military aid to Vietnam. (...)

“They (i.e. Kissinger, Senator Fulbright and Congressman Morgan, the last two respectively Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee — Ed.) recommend that we abstain from alluding to war with Communist China. A spirit of compromise with Communist China prevails at present in both assemblies. They are ready to give us military assistance against North Vietnam but not Communist China.”

This message was found in 1975 in the archives of the Saigon Foreign Ministry. It sheds light on Washington's attitude in face of the Chinese military occupation of Hoang Sa. It also shows that Beijing and Washington are thick as thieves : while the former betrayed Vietnam by seizing the Hoang Sa islands, the latter betrayed Nguyen Van Thieu by preventing him from seizing them back.

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By producing dubious or doctored evidence, Beijing strives to justify its claim of sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, which they stubbornly call Xisha and Nansha. But in spite of the verbal efforts they have deployed after having presented Vietnam with a *fait accompli* in Hoang Sa, the truth remains: Hoang Sa and Truong Sa are an integral part of Vietnamese territory and come under the sovereignty of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The sophistries and falsifications resorted to by Beijing at present are but a rehash of those it has repeatedly used following occupation or attempted occupation of territories belonging to its neighbours: Burma, India, Mongolia, the Soviet Union...

## CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF EXPANSIONISM

VAN TRONG

After the occupation, with tacit approval from Washington, of the Hoang Sa islands, Beijing's propaganda machine swung into action both at home and abroad in a desperate attempt to prove China's sovereignty over this and the Truong Sa archipelagoes. Besides their usual propaganda weapons, the Chinese leadership sought the services of archaeology in order to dazzle their audiences, who would be overwhelmed by the prestige of this science and incapable of controlling the results of the excavations.

Since their territorial conflict with the Soviet Union, the Chinese side had used archaeological evidence to support their claims. Thus in early 1972, some years after the defeat of their troops at the hands of the Soviet army, the results of archaeological excavations around the Damanski islands on the Oussouri river were published in an attempt to demonstrate that these territories had belonged to China since time immemorial. Their pseudo-scientific conclusions were easily refuted by the Soviet Union.

Beijing is now repeating that very tactic. In early 1974, Chinese troops occupied the Hoang Sa archipelago; later that same year, the journal *Wen Wu* published some results of archaeological researches undertaken on the islands. Two 20-page papers on that same topic were then published in the September 1976 issue of *Wen Wu*. Meanwhile, in November 1975, *Guangming Ribao* and the *People's Daily* published an article about the excavations, signed Shi Dizu. Radio Beijing, for its part, has repeatedly broadcast communiqués on this matter. The *China Pictorial* has also published an article about the islands' formation throughout the various geological epochs. The Chinese journal *Geology* has mentioned signs of there being oil deposits under the more recent reefs in the archipelago. And the journal *China Reconstructs* reviews the islands' biological and other resources. One should also mention the numerous exhibitions of photographs and displays brought back from archaeological expeditions, and shown in Beijing and various other places in China.

Drawing on the finds of these expeditions, which for the time being cannot be checked, the Chinese propaganda machine has concocted a whole series of arguments aimed at demonstrating China's sovereignty over the archipelago.

Thus for instance the Chinese side claims that the ancient objects discovered on Hoang Sa were made in China. The article "Preliminary Report of the Second Archaeological Expedition to the Xisha Islands in Guangdong Province" published in the September 1976 issue of the journal *Wen Wu* states the following:

"The four above-mentioned types of objects (double handled container; containers with braided rims; cusped vases; lids) are archaeological remains dating back to the Tang and Wu Dai dynasties. They are in the same style: made from a rough, grey coloured earth, fired at low temperatures and covered in green enamel. (...)

"These items were made in kilns in Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Hunan, Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi (...) There is also a smaller lid, with a blue motif of lotus petals from the Yuan period, made in Zingdozhen (Jiangxi) (...)

"These remains are spread over an area 10 metres in radius on a submerged reef, covered in bronze sapekes (Chinese coins) of various kinds and other bronze objects (...) 1,995 sapekes were found with decipherable characters including: 1 "banliang" sapeke from the Qin period; 45 sapekes of three *Kaiyuan Tongbao* types from the Tang period; 571 sapekes of 30 *Taiping Tongbao* types from the Northern Song period, etc (...)

"On the Xisha islands shrines built to the memory of wandering souls in the times of Ming and Qing are still standing. The book *Shuilu Bu*, considered to be the classical work of reference for maritime navigation, was copied by fishermen who handed it down from generation to generation (...). The objects (retrieved from wrecks) were made in our country (...). All this testifies to numerous comings and goings of our junks throughout the ages to and from the Xisha islands."

The authors are thus led to draw the conclusion, both simplistic and peremptory, that China has since long been the true master of Xisha.

The same article then goes on to say: "Since the Tang and Song period, at least our people have continued to develop the resources of the Xisha islands and the other islands of the South Sea.

"In the course of two expeditions, our archaeologists have surveyed practically all the islands, submerged reefs and shoals of the Xisha archipelago, and practically everywhere they came across ancient objects and historical remains from our country: the large quantity of finds constitutes irrefutable proof of the fact that Xisha has been part and parcel of the sacred territory of our country from antiquity, and that our people are its rightful masters."

Beijing's often Machiavellian propaganda tends to make one doubt the veracity of the above-mentioned excavations and finds. However let us assume that the excavations were indeed carried out, that the published finds, do indeed exist, and that their analysis does indeed carry all the guarantees of scientific methods, especially concerning their dating and origin. What other conclusion can we then reach, but that these objects were transported to Xisha in Chinese junks, which were shipwrecked and buried just like ships from many other countries, or at best that Chinese came and lived for a while on these islands at some point. But in no way does the presence of Chinese objects on Hoang Sa in itself show that "since the Tang and Song period" the Chinese have been the "rightful masters" of the islands, or that the latter are part of China's sovereign territory.

The argument that any place where ancient objects from a given country are found automatically belongs to the latter has no basis in archaeology. National sovereignty is a judicial problem, strictly defined in international law. To use archaeological research in support of a territorial claim is both to flaunt international law, and one's own naïvete.

Determining the origin of an archaeological find has no connection whatsoever with determining the sovereignty of a State over a given territory: these are two separate questions, each with its own scope and aim. The study of ancient objects, dwelling places and burial chambers enable archaeologists to explore the past and reconstitute the way of life, the modes of production, the techniques and, to some extent, the spiritual life, the beliefs and the art of communities which existed thousands of years ago. The study of bone fragments discovered in old tombs also makes it possible to discover the age, sex and race of the dead person. But, once again, none of this has any bearing upon the issue of national sovereignty over the site.

That archaeological excavations in one country reveal objects coming from another is a common occurrence. Ancient sapekes, gilded silver containers and cloth from the ancient Kingdom of Persia were discovered in China by Chinese archaeologists. Large numbers of bronze swords and spearheads from China and introduced into Japan towards the end of the neolithic era, were discovered by Japanese archaeologists. Roman coins bearing the effigy of Antoninus Pius or Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperors of the 2nd century A.D., were discovered at Oc Eo in southern Vietnam, having been brought there in the first centuries of our era. Malaysian archaeologists have published the results of their research on the Dong Son bronze drums discovered on the West and East coasts of their country, one of the wooden supports of which was carbon-dated to the period between 6th — 4th centuries B.C. Indeed B.V. Peacock was referring to this discovery when he remarked that this discovery at Kuala Trengganu is the first proof of the influence of the Dong Son culture on the Eastern coast of Malaysia (cf. B. V. Peacock in *Malaysia in History*, Vol. 2 — 1967).

In Vietnam, archaeologists have discovered a number of ancient objects made in China or in Chinese style and left there by merchants, administrators, or soldiers of the ancient Chinese dynasties. Thus recent excavations of 16 tombs of the "Western Han" type at Thieu Duong (Thanh Hoa province) brought to light several bronze objects including 13 mirrors bearing Chinese characters. At Van Don (Quang Ninh province), an ancient and much frequented Vietnamese port, large quantities of Chinese sapekes were discovered, dating back to the times of the Tang, Song and Qing dynasties.

If one were to accept the principle that any place where ancient objects from a given country are found belongs to that country, then Iran could claim Chinese territory, China could claim Japanese territory, Italy could claim Vietnamese territory and Vietnam could claim Malaysian territory, and the planet would thus be held in sway by the "world chaos" the Maoists seem to dream of.

To explain the above facts one does not need to specialize in historical science. Exchanges between the various parts of the world have taken place right from the dawn of history, and have continued to develop since then. Thus today,

there is nothing special about discovering in one country products of another. The Silk Route, as the Chinese will proudly tell you, enabled Persian goods and even artisans to reach as far as Xi'an, and according to Chinese archaeologists, objects in the Persian style but made in China by Chinese artisans have been discovered. Similarly, the discovery in Vietnam of Han bone fragments, and of objects made by the Han or in Han style, is not surprising given the relations Vietnam has had with China over the centuries.

But to return to the Hoang Sa archipelago: having dreamt up spurious archaeological evidence on which to base their gratuitous affirmations, the Beijing pseudo-scientists claim to have reconstituted a picture of life on these islands. Thus in his article "Since antiquity the islands of the Southern Sea are part of our country's territory" published in *Guangming Ribao* on 24 November 1975 and in the *People's Daily* on the following day, Shi Dizu wrote:

"Since the times of the Song our people have been settling on the islands of the Southern Sea, and engaging in productive activities there. Furthermore, the archaeological finds from these islands or the seabed are evidence that they began to settle on several islands in the Xisha archipelago very long ago indeed, and in particular without interruption ever since the Tang—Song period until the present day."

The Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China goes even further, not hesitating to reproduce these fallacious arguments in its official texts, such as the 30 January 1980 document entitled "China's incontestable sovereignty over the Xisha and Nansha islands":

"Already under the Northern Song (960-1127), the Chinese Navy sent patrols as far as the Xisha islands. The *Wujing Zongyao* (General Blueprint for Military Affairs), of which Emperor Renzong (1023—1063) of the Northern Song himself wrote the preface, stated the following: "the Court of the Northern Song ordered the Imperial Forces to conduct patrols, to install a garrison in Guangnan (now Guangdong) as a base for patrols at sea, and to build keeled warships.

"A sailing boat on a South-Westerly course takes seven days from Tumenshan to Jiurulezhou—Jiurulezhou, today called Xisha. This shows that the Northern Song already exercised its jurisdiction over the Xisha islands."

The argument that Chinese settlers arrived on Hoang Sa in the Tang—Song period is not just fallacious on judicial and historical grounds; it is simply nonsensical, as human life on these islands is well-nigh impossible.

First there is the climate. The Hoang Sa archipelago lies in one of the world's five areas from which typhoons originate; the sea to the East of the Philippines is where most of the area's typhoons form. Statistics collected over 55 years from 1911 to 1965 show that an annual average of 9.6 typhoons occur in the Bien Dong. Half-way through the season they move towards the coastal areas stretching from South China to North Vietnam, before moving due West after October, towards the Central Vietnamese coastline.

The Hoang Sa archipelago is thus very much prone to typhoons. Whenever they come from the direction of Luzon the glass falls, the air becomes sultry, the sky fills with ominous black clouds which break into heavy rain driven by

gale force winds. Huge waves from the open sea come crashing against the islands, occasionally sweeping right over them. On these islands, which barely emerge from the sea, everything, metal sheeting, tiles, etc. is eventually ripped off and blown away like bits of straw by the raging winds. The Saigon administration had to build low fat-roofed dwellings of reinforced concrete to resist the elements.

Such extreme climatic conditions, together with the distance of the islands from the coast and of one island from the next, explain why they could not be inhabited for any length of time. Fishermen occasionally went there, depending on the season, to stay there for short spells before returning to the mainland, occasionally leaving their equipment in some well protected niche.

Human settlements on these islands are all the more unthinkable in that drinking water is almost completely lacking for both people and animals. Wells have indeed been sunk there, but in the dry season each one provides little more than thirty litres of brackish water per day. Some kind of agriculture is possible in the rainy season but as soon as the rains stop irrigation becomes impossible. According to statistics gathered in 1939-43 and 1948-62 and published by the Saigon Administration in 1964, the average rainfall over Hoang Sa is 1,173mm as compared with 3,000mm at Hue, with a maximum of 200mm in September - October and a minimum of 17-21mm in January - March. The Saigon soldiers garrisoned on the archipelago were regularly supplied with fresh water and food, especially vegetables.

These difficult conditions also explain why Vietnam's feudal administration had to set up special brigades to exploit and defend Hoang Sa. Although they were strictly organised, they were not permanently based on the archipelago. China's "documentary" on Hoang Sa, showing a herd of quietly browsing cows with the comment that "the cattle brought by Admiral Li Zhun in 1909 under the Qing dynasty have since multiplied to become a herd of 200 head" just cannot be taken seriously. Their claim is preposterous: given the lack of fresh water, the pedological composition of the soil and the vegetal cover of these islands, most of which barely extends over one square kilometre, one wonders how these animals could possibly have bred.

Accounts by Western sailors who were shipwrecked in the vicinity in the 17-19th centuries never mentioned the existence of Chinese settlements on the archipelago, or ever having been assisted by Chinese. They only survived because they met Vietnamese fishermen.

Furthermore, credibility is stretched a bit too far when the Chinese claim that they established themselves on the islands as far back as the Tang and Song period, over a thousand years ago. Hoang Sa is a coral formation; polyparies of the coelenterate family, corals develop in a marine environment under certain conditions. Thus, for instance, the rays of the sun must penetrate to a certain depth, the water must be limpid, of a certain temperature and salinity, etc. Research on the origins and formation of atolls, coral reefs, and lagoons was undertaken right from the last century. Having noticed that coral reefs emerge further from the water as time passes, scientists paid particular attention to studying the growth

of such reefs and of ramified and solid corals. It has been calculated that their growth rate is 25mm/year in the Solomon Islands, 26mm/year in the Maldive, but only 2 to 3mm/year for Funafuti Islands, namely 25m, 26m, and 2-3m respectively over one thousand years.

Accurate figures do not exist for the Hoang Sa archipelago. However, a piece of research by E. Saurin published in 1955 on this topic throws some light on the matter :

"An interesting discovery has made it possible to calculate the growth rate of Hoang Sa corals. By dynamiting living coral below and off a rocky point barely emerging from the water on an as yet unidentified island of the archipelago, fishermen have exposed a quantity of Chinese sapekes hidden under the rock. The most recent coins, which show no traces of rust, date back to the Yonglo period of the Ming (1403-1424). This treasure, probably from a wrecked ship, is 1.50m below the highest living coral which, even at low tide, are still some 3-5m deep. On this basis their growth rate can be estimated at 1.50m in 500 years, thus 3mm a year. Since this particular reef is constantly battered by waves, one can assume that this growth rate does not apply everywhere in the Paracels. It is lower than that indicated for various other regions such as 25mm in the Salomon Islands, 26mm in the Maldives, and is equivalent to the quoted figure for Funafute : 2 to 3mm"<sup>1</sup>.

During the Tang and Song period, one thousand years ago. the Hoang Sa islands must therefore have been some 3m lower than they are today according to Saurin's evaluation of their growth rate, or 25 - 26m lower if their growth rate equals that of the Solomon Islands and the Maldive.

The average height of the islands today is some 4 - 6m above sea level. Future research will determine whether, a thousand years ago, they were some 2 - 3m above sea level or several dozen metres below. In any case, to claim that ever since the Tang and Song period Chinese settlers have been living and working there indicates nothing more than a fertile imagination.

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Ever since it achieved the status of a science, archaeology has never played any role whatsoever in determining a State's sovereignty over a given territory. This is common knowledge. How then can one explain the unscrupulous attitudes of the Chinese leadership and their pseudo-archaeologists? In his contribution to the

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1. E. Saurin : "Notes sur l'archipel Hoang Sa" in *Dossier géologique du Vietnam*. Vol. 3, 1955 pp. 3-39. Document kept in the Lenin Library, Moscow. Translated from the French.



## SUMMARY CHRONOLOGY

— 17th century: In his *Toan Tap Thien Nam Tu Chi Lo Do Thu* (Complete Atlas of the Southern Country — Vol. I) Do Ba, a Vietnamese geographer, mentioned the Hoang Sa which he designated Bai Cat Vang (Yellow Sand Bank). He noted that the Nguyen Lords sent 18 junks each year there.

— 1701: A Western missionary who travelled from France to China on board the *Amphitrite*, mentioned in a letter that the Hoang Sa belonged to the Kingdom of An Nam (now Vietnam).

— 1776: Le Quy Don, a Vietnamese encyclopedist, related in his *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (Miscellaneous Records on the Government of the Frontiers) that the Nguyen Lords organised the Hoang Sa and Bac Hai workgangs to exploit the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes and other islands.

— 1816: Emperor Gia Long sent naval units and the Hoang Sa workgang to measure the roads on Hoang Sa islands.

— 1820: Jean Baptiste Chaigneau, a French adviser to the Gia Long Court, wrote in his "Memoirs of Cochinchina" that Emperor Gia Long took possession of the Hoang Sa archipelago in 1816.

— 1833: Emperor Minh Mang ordered the Ministry of Public Works to prepare vessels to be sent in the following year to the Hoang Sa archipelago to build a temple and a stele and to plant trees on the islands.

— 1835: Pham Van Nguyen, an officer in the Navy, carried materials to Hoang Sa to build a temple and a stele there.

— 1836: Pham Huu Nhat, a captain in the Navy, inspected the archipelago and planted a land mark there.

— 1838: Jean Louis Taberd, apostolic vicar of Cochinchina, published his Vietnamese-Latin dictionary. On his "Map of the Annam Empire" included in the dictionary, there is part of the Hoang Sa archipelago with its Vietnamese name of Cat Vang (Yellow Sand) and its international calling of Paracels.

— 1849: In his study "*Geography of the Cochinchinese Empire*", Gutzlaff related that the government of Annam kept its patrol boats at the Hoang Sa, levied taxes on foreign fishermen and protected local fishermen.

— 1899: Paul Doumer, governor general of Indochina, proposed that the French government build a lighthouse on the Hoang Sa island (Pattle) to assist navigation in the neighbourhood.

— 1910: The *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi* (Monograph of Unified Dai Nam), an official geographical book compiled from 1865 to 1910, said that the Hoang Sa islands are part of Vietnamese territory.

— 1925: Rejecting Chinese claims, Than Trong Hue, War Minister of the Hue Court, issued a declaration affirming Vietnamese sovereignty on the Hoang Sa archipelago.

— 1927: A. Krempf, Director of the Indochina Oceanographic Institute, made public his report on his investigation mission conducted on the Hoang Sa archipelago.

— 1933: In a communiqué published in the Official Journal of the French Republic, the French foreign minister announced the occupation of the Truong Sa archipelago (July 1933). Krautheimer, governor of Cochinchina, by his decree of December 21, 1933 integrated the Truong Sa islands into the province of Ba Ria. He ordered the setting up on the Ba Binh (Itu Aba) island of a meteorological station and a radio station. (The station in the Cochinchinese group bore the international index of 48919 — Itu Aba. Coordinates: 10°23' latitude North and 114°21' longitude East).

— 1938: By his ordinance of March 30, 1938, Emperor Bao Dai detached the Hoang Sa archipelago from the province of Nam Ngai and integrated it into the province of Thua Thien. By his decree of June 15, 1938, Jules Brévié, governor general of Indochina, made Hoang Sa archipelago an administrative unit belonging to Thua Thien province. A stele formalising Vietnamese sovereignty, a lighthouse, a radio station and a meteorological station were built on the Hoang Sa island (Pattle). The meteorological station bore the international index of 48860. (Coordinates: 16°33' latitude North and 111°37' longitude East)

— 1939: By his decree of May 5, 1939 governor general Jules Brévié divided the Hoang Sa archipelago into two administrative units.

— 1946: The French sent their ship Savorgnan de Brazza to reoccupy Hoang Sa archipelago. (The Japanese had seized the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes during World War II).

— 1951: At the San Francisco Conference, Tran Van Huu, prime minister of the Bao Dai government, made a declaration affirming Vietnamese sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes without protest from any of the representatives of the participating countries.

— 1956: The Saigon administration sent a company of marines to occupy the Hoang Sa archipelago, relieving the French forces which were withdrawing from Indochina. Later it formed a mission charged with carrying out surveys on the archipelago and making meteorological observations. During the same year, it sent war vessels to patrol the Hoang Sa archipelago and integrated the Truong Sa archipelago into the province of Phuoc Tuy.

— 1961: By virtue of a decision of the Saigon administration (July 13, 1961) the Hoang Sa archipelago which had now become Dinh Hai commune, was integrated into the district of Hoa Vang, Quang Nam province. A stele was erected on the Truong Sa archipelago to mark Vietnamese sovereignty.

— 1973: By a decision of the Saigon administration (September 6, 1973) the Truong Sa archipelago became part of Phuoc Hai commune, Dat Do district, Phuoc Tuy province.

— 1974: On January 12, 1974 the spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of the Saigon administration protested against a declaration of the government of the People's Republic of China which claimed that the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes are part of the Chinese territory.

+ January 19, 1974: Chinese troops occupied Hoang Sa archipelago.

+ January 20, 1974: In a cable to the President of the UN Security Council, the foreign minister of the Saigon administration demanded the convening of an urgent meeting of the Council to discuss this act of aggression. For a number of reasons this meeting did not take place.

+ January 20, 1974: the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam expounded its view on this question as follows:

- Sovereignty and territorial integrity are sacred questions for any nation.
- Often there exist between neighbouring countries differences left by history, concerning the national frontiers and territory. These differences are sometimes quite complex and require profound study.

- The concerned countries should examine these questions in the spirit of equality, mutual respect, friendship and good neighbourhood and resolve them through negotiations.

— 1975:

+ May: the armed forces of the Republic of South Vietnam liberated Truong Sa Islands.

+ On September 24, 1975, during a talk with a Vietnamese party and government delegation on a visit to China, Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping recognized that outstanding problems remained between the two countries concerning the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes, and declared that the two parties should hold talks to resolve the problem.

— 1978: In a declaration made public on December 30, 1978 the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam rejected the allegations made in the declaration of December 29, 1978 of his Chinese counterpart concerning the Truong Sa archipelago. He reaffirmed Vietnamese sovereignty over the two archipelagoes.

— 1979:

+ August 7, 1979: The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam issued a statement rejecting the tendentious allegations of the Chinese side concerning some documents published by the Vietnamese side with regard to the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes.

It also published a White Book reaffirming Vietnamese sovereignty over these two archipelagoes.

+ September 28, 1979: In a note to the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of the Philippines, the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry reaffirms Vietnamese sovereignty over the entirety of the islands in the Truong Sa archipelago. Protesting

against Decree No. 1596 of the Filipino government which claimed sovereignty over the major part of the Truong Sa islands which it calls the "Kalayaan group of islands", the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry declared that Vietnam was prepared to resolve all outstanding questions through peaceful means and in the spirit of conciliation.

— 1980 :

+ In a statement issued on February 5, 1980 the Foreign Ministry of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam rejected the document published by its Chinese counterpart and entitled: "The indisputable sovereignty of China on Xisha and Nansha Islands" which it described as tendentious and without foundation.

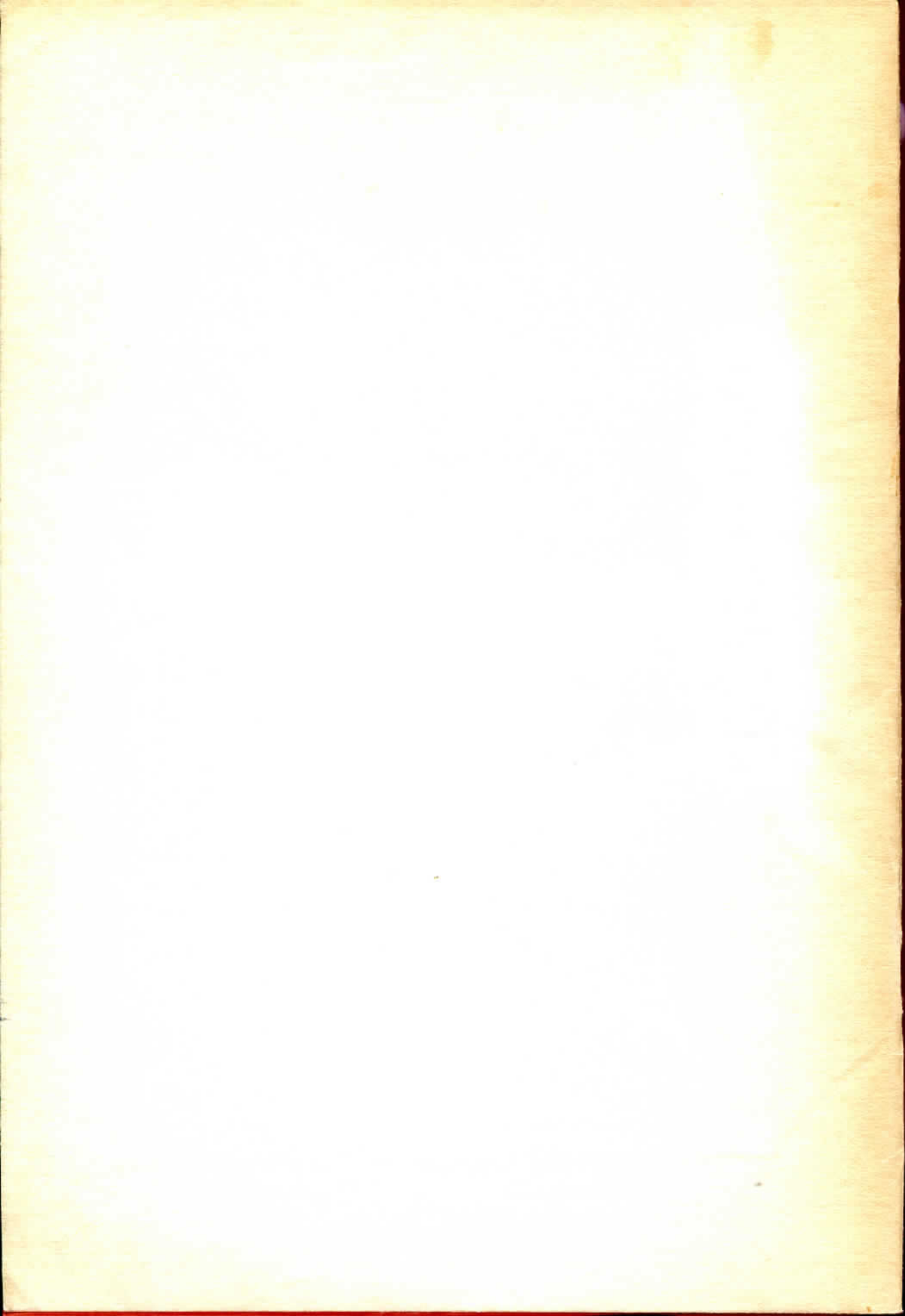
After reaffirming Vietnamese sovereignty on the two archipelagoes, it declared that the Vietnamese government and people are determined to defend their sacred territorial sovereignty.

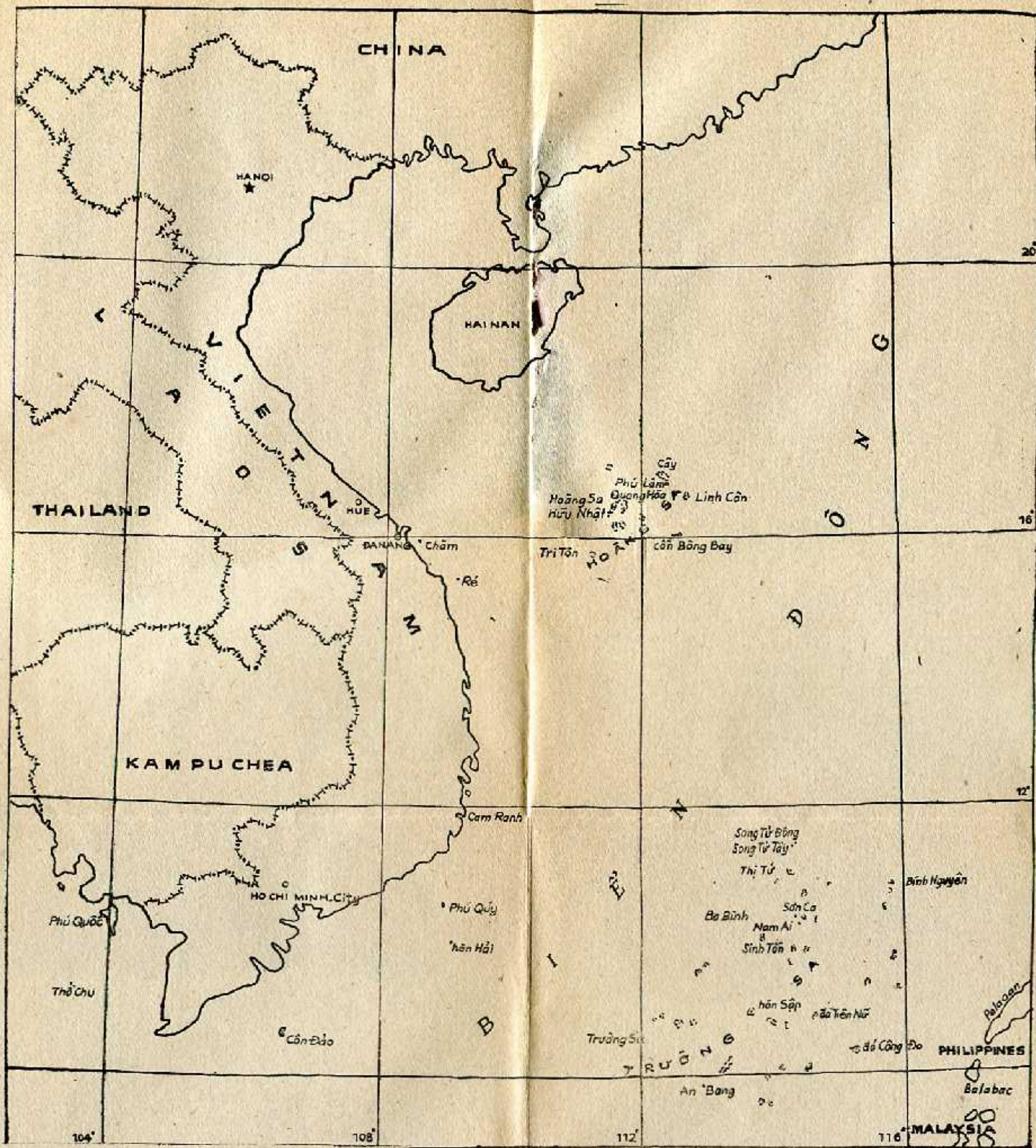
+ In a note on March 10, 1980 to the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Malaysia, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister affirmed Vietnam's sovereignty over the Truong Sa archipelago and protested against the publication of a map which includes part of this archipelago in the Malaysian territory.

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BIỂN ĐÔNG	MER ORIENTALE	EASTERN SEA
HOANG SA	(Mer de Chine meridionale)	(South China Sea)
Cây	PARACELS	PARACELS
Phù Lâm	Ile à l'Arbre	Tree Island
Quang Hòa	Ile Boisée	Woody Island
Linh Côn	Ile Duncan	Duncan Island
Hoàng Sa	Ile Lincoln	Lincoln Island
Hữu Nhật	Ile Pattle	Pattle Island
Tri Tôn	Ile Robert	Triton Island
Côn Bông Bay	Ile Triton	Bombay Reef
	Récif Bombay	
TRƯỜNG SA	SPRATLY	SPRATLY
Trường Sa	Ile Spratly	Spratly Island
An Bang	Caye d'Amboine	Amboyna Cay
Sông Tử Đông	Caye Nord-Est	North-East Cay
Sông Tử Tây	Caye Sud-Ouest	South-West Cay
Thị Tứ	Ile Thi Tu	Thi Tu Island
Bà Bình	Ile Iu Aba	Iu Aba Island
Sơn Ca	Caye Sand	Sanh Cay
Nam Ai	Ile Nam Yit	Namyit Island
Sinh Tôn	Ile Sincowe	Sincowe Island
Hòn Sập	Récif Pearson	Pearson Reef
Đá Tiên Nữ	Récif Tennent	Tennent Reef
Đá Công Đo	Récif Commodore	Commodore Reef
Bình Nguyên	Ile Flat	Flat Island