



Tay Son Uprising, 1771-1802: Reassessing Viet Nam's relations with the Malay Archipelago

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Abstract

This article aims to elucidate the history of interactions between Viet Nam and the Malay Archipelago's kingdoms during the Tay Son brothers' insurrection, with a particular emphasis on how foreign relations were linked. The study also discusses the reasons for Viet Nam's selection of the Malay Archipelago, despite the fact that Viet Nam maintained a closed-door policy with the outside world in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This study is significant because it demonstrates the contact and connectivity between Viet Nam and the Archipelago in the early 17th century. This is because the Vietnamese have always regarded the Malay realm as a region rich in natural riches and jewels. The study employs a quantitative method to undertake a content analysis of texts, particularly original sources such as Nguyen Dynasty (Vietnam) and Qing Dynasty (China) palace documents gathered from Vietnamese and Chinese archives. The study indicated that the Malay Archipelago became the sole destination specifically mentioned by the Vietnamese people as a place of sanctuary and a place to seek assistance during their country's economic collapse and political degradation.

Keywords: Early Nguyen, Johor, Malay Archipelago, Malacca, Nguyen Phuc Anh, Tay Son uprising

Introduction

Since the 15th century, states in the Indochina Peninsula, including Viet Nam, have been involved in the economic environment of Malacca due to its geographical position. Even after Malacca was conquered by the Portuguese, and then by the Dutch, economic relations between the Indochina and the Malay Archipelago were almost entirely directed to Malacca as well as some smaller trading cities that were bound to Malacca, such as Johor, Patani, and Terengganu (Lafont, 1995). However, during the early relationship between Viet Nam and the Malay Archipelago, Viet Nam's response to the Malay Archipelago was vague and ambiguous. As

argued by Nguyen The Anh (1996), Wong (2001), and Ku (2016) this was due to the people of Viet Nam still being unable to clearly distinguish the differences among the Malays from the Malay Archipelago because they had only recorded the ethnicity of the Malay Archipelago as 'Javanese'. As such, terms such as 'Cha-va', 'Tra-Oa' or 'Do-ba', which were adapted from the Chinese 'Chawa', 'Shepo' and 'Dupu' designations of Javanese, are often encountered in writings and early records of Viet Nam history. However, the relationship that existed late acted as an important link between Viet Nam and the Malay Archipelago.

In the late 16th century, however, the political corruption in Viet Nam slowed the commercial activities of the Early Nguyen (1558–1776) with the Malay Archipelago. Several rebellions erupted one after another in an attempt to stand up against the authority of Early Nguyen. Li Tana (1998) noted that the increase in rental tax imposed by the Early Nguyen in 1723, 1725, 1728, 1740, and 1760 sparked public protests against their rule. From 1715 to 1769, rebellions erupted in Son Tay, Lai Chau, Son Nam, Mo Trach, Cao Bang, and Thanh Hoa (Chapuis, 1995). Political impairment caused all forms of trade and diplomatic relations with the outside world, including the Malay Archipelago, to be temporarily suspended when the Early Nguyen family started practising *Be Mon Tao Cang* (closing the door and locking the port) to confront the people's awakening and uprising in the country. By 1660, Dai Viet (Viet Nam), which was separated by two *chuas*, was successfully overthrown by an uprising led by the Tay Son brothers.

The Tay Son Brothers' Uprising (1771–1802) was seen as an important episode in the transition of modern Viet Nam, as it managed to end the controversy between the two disputing *chuas*. (Kiernan, 2019). The impact of the uprising transcended the boundaries of Viet Nam in that during the Tay Son Uprising, Viet Nam's relations with the Malay Archipelago were restored. Nguyen Phuc Anh, the heir of the Early Nguyen family in Dang Troang, had sent his officers to Ma-la-kha (Malacca), Tan Lang Du (Penang), and Nhu-Hat (Johor) to seek military assistance and procure war equipment to oppose the Tay Son brothers. Thus, the focus of this study is to trace the history of Viet Nam's relations with the states of the Malay Archipelago, by reviewing the shape and external relation factors that existed during the Tay Son Brothers' Uprising in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Literature review

Numerous works of literature in the form of scholarly articles and conference papers have examined the Malay Archipelago's relationship with Indochina in general. However, most writings have concentrated on a restricted number of themes or facets of the Malay Archipelago's relationship with Indochina in general and lack comprehensive study, particularly of the Tay Son insurrection. Thus, detailed scholarly research and writing on the interaction between the Malay Archipelago and Vietnam in the late 18th and early 19th centuries are necessary to fill in the gaps and add to the field's wealth of knowledge. There are some instances of studies on the Malay Archipelago's links with Vietnam. Manguin (1993) argued that the changing political landscape in the Malay Archipelago did not immediately impinge on Viet Nam. This is because Viet Nam not only continued to establish relations with Guangzhou but also expanded its trade with Brunei, Johor, and Malacca (during the Portuguese invasion of Malacca). Scholars like Nguyen The Anh (1995, 1996), Salmon (2013) and Wong (2001, 2003) claim that historical ties between Viet Nam and the Malay Archipelago have long been

intertwined since prehistoric times. Artifacts, such as pots and burial tools, jewellery, ceramics, glass, and metal objects, have been found in Hoi-an (Fai-fo). These findings not only confirm the origin of the Sa Huynh civilisation with Austronesian culture but will also prove the continuity of ocean networks within the Malay Archipelago (Glover & Bellwood, 2004).

Nguyen The Anh (1995, 1996) argued that the development of international trade and the growth of early maritime networks connected the Malay Archipelago, the Gulf of Siam, the Java Sea, the Sulu Archipelago, and the coast of Viet Nam with the outside world. If the pattern of regional economic integration that existed between Guangdong province and the Red River Valley had long been a trade route, Viet Nam's relationship with China would have acted as a commercial route for its ships to exit the Malay Archipelago in the south. Consequently, to ensure that Viet Nam remained relevant, its link with the Malay Archipelago was maintained as the source of exotic items sought by Viet Nam. Exotic items sought included pearls, gemstones, parrots, and wood. The terms 'Bao-vat' and 'U-vat' are used in sources from Viet Nam when referring to exotic items (*Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (The Complete Annals of the Great Viet)).

Further, Salmon (2013) concluded that Vietnam gained a greater understanding of the Malay Archipelago following visits by the envoys of Vietnam's Emperor. One of the first, if not the first, was Ly Van Phuc (1785–1849), a descendant of Ming refugees. Ly Van Phuc was dismissed in 1829 and dispatched to Calcutta in early 1830 via Singapore, Malacca, and Penang. Then come Ha Tong Quyen (1797–1839) and Phan Thanh Gian (1793–1867), also of Chinese origin, who were sent to Singapore and Batavia in early 1832 on the same ship and composed nostalgic poems on their humiliating journeys. They were followed in the same year by Phan Huy Chú (1782–1840), who composed a long report of his sea journey, providing detailed information about the environment of the Indonesian Archipelago and its various populations. Cao Ba Quat (1809–1854), who accomplished a mission to Singapore and Batavia in 1844, was apparently the last demoted civil servant sent to the *Hạ châu* (Southern Countries). According to Salmon (2013), and Yu (2012), because of the visit of this envoy, Vietnam knew the Malay Archipelago better from its geographical setting. Among other things, Salmon (2003) concluded that Ly Van Phuc reached the same conclusion when he wrote that he gave his account the title of '*Tay hanh kien van ky luoc*' (Brief Account of All what has been Heard and Seen during a Journey to the West), so that it may contribute to the geographical investigation.

Finally, Wong's research (2001, 2002, 2003, 2018) detailed the early relationship between Vietnam and the Malay Archipelago, highlighting insights based on the work of Li Van Phuc and Phan Chu Huy, who visited the Straits Settlements. Nonetheless, they were confined by outdated chronicles and gazettes, since the Malay Archipelago was not given priority in these documents because both authors' actual voyages were to India and Java in 1830 and 1833, respectively. As a result, careful use of a mix of Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese materials may be valuable in an attempt to reconstruct a thorough understanding of Vietnam's historical ties to the Malay world.

Furthermore, this study is significant in tracing back the relationships that existed between Viet Nam and the Malay Archipelago, as previous studies on the subject are exceptionally scarce and seem to cease in the 1990s and early 2000s through the work of Lafont (1995), Nguyen The Anh (1995, 1996), Wong (2001, 2002, 2003, and 2018), and Salmon (2013). Therefore, there is a significant gap in the research on the relationship between Viet Nam and the Malay world. As the two regions kept secrets, they continued to have a relationship not only in terms of trade but also in the business of supplying weapons and the military.

Method and study area

This research is qualitative in nature and cross-disciplinary in scope. The qualitative methods were used because the study's objective was to gain a better knowledge of society, and the perspectives of scholars who study the Malay Archipelago's ties with Vietnam are an important source for this work. However, this study is multidisciplinary in nature; that is, it draws on the sciences of history and geography. The historical approach serves as the foundation for the writing, allowing for the identification of historical changes and cultural struggles in the Malay Archipelago and Vietnam interactions over a given period. Geographical techniques are used to define certain concepts of research on the location, process, and impact of relationships to examine the dynamics of the relationships' varied strengths. The contact between the Malay world and Vietnam is framed by the spatial component of space, which is sometimes referred to as the "two eyes of history", as it describes the past and the present of the relationship between the two countries (Ku, 2014). The writers favoured the library method for obtaining the necessary information. To assemble primary sources of 18th-century Viet Nam's history, official royal records were studied. Additionally, references to various scholars' books, journals, and scholarly papers are prioritised.

Relation with the Malay Archipelago during Tay Son Uprising

By 1776, the Tay Son brothers had conquered all of Quang Nam, including Gia Dinh. Meanwhile, Charles Chapman, the British commander-in-chief in India, stated that approximately 40 persons from Cochinchia (a reference to Dang Trong) arrived in Terengganu in 1778. This group asserted that they were willing to serve as slaves to the 'Rajah' (king) in exchange for a better life in their war-torn realm (Quang Nam) (Lamb, 1970). It is thought that the refugees were a group of Chinese in Dang Trong. They attempted to flee on the eve of the 1782 massacre led by Nguyen Nhac of the Tay Son brothers following the assassination of his beloved general Pham Ngan by Tran Cong Cuong of the Early Nguyen family. The assassination of Pham Ngan caused consternation among the Tay Son brothers, until Nguyen Nhac, who was too depressed, agreed to embark on a two-month 'war strike' (Dai Nam Tuc Luc Tien Bien, 1844). Nguyen Nhac was enraged with Tran Cong Cuong, whom he believed to be a *trung nhan* (Chinese) who had migrated to Viet Nam yet managed to assassinate Pham Ngan, a Tay Son brothers' henchman (Xiao, 1972). As a response, Nguyen Nhac began a massacre in Gia Dinh against the Chinese. Between ten and eleven thousand Chinese are claimed to have been slain by the Tay Son brothers (Dai Nam Thuc Luc, 1884). This is because the slaughter was directed not just at Chinese troops such as Tran Cong Cuong, who joined the Hoa Nghia organisation to fight it, but also at the entire Chinese community in Dang Trong. In characterising the atrocity of the killing, it was stated that 'while the full moon has passed, no one has the heart to consume fish or drink water' (Nguyen Thi Tay Son Ki, 11a: A3138). This is because corpses were discovered in the waters of the Phuc Loc River; Dang Trong's city and port operations were also suspended. For instance, My Son is a 'live' metropolitan city surrounded by stone houses and places of worship that were also destroyed during the riot. Prior to the Tay Son brothers' insurrection, the bustle of My Son port, with its anchored ships and merchants from all over the world coming to trade, as compared to the never-ending task of weaving (Gia Dinh Thanh Thong Chi, Vol. 5. Hereafter, GDTT).

However, the situation changed during the battle between the Tay Son brothers and the Early Nguyen family. All the buildings, shops, and residential houses were burnt to the ground, and the port became a wasteland. Although the city was restored in 1788 and many of My son's inhabitants returned, the total population was less than half compared to that of its glory days, as indicated by Andre Ton, French Jesuit priest and missionary (Dutton, 2006). This is because many merchants, especially Chinese ones, had to flee during the attack of the Tay Son brothers in My Son. Some Chinese migrated all the way to Terengganu. As told by the Lin (Lim) family, whose ancestor was originally from Annam (Viet Nam) and had fled when the riots (Tay Son brothers' uprising) took place in 1773:

“They fled using a canoe and finally arrived in Terengganu. All members of his group were males except for three females. They brought food and valuables. Two of the women hid the jewellery on their thighs by covering them neatly using cotton fabrics. This action was taken as a precaution because they were worried that they might collide with pirates while sailing later.” (Huang, 2003:12).

According to Tan (2002), the Annam (Viet Nam) people came to do business in Kuala Terengganu by selling rice (known as *lam jiam bi*) and bringing back *lauji* (betel nut or areca nut) and *kambit* (gambir). After that, the control of Gia Dinh changed hands. In 1783, the Tay Son brothers successfully paralysed the Early Nguyen forces at Gia Dinh. This caused fifteen-year-old Early Nguyen's heir, Nguyen Phuc Anh, to flee to Ha Tien and then to Phu Quoc (Long Island) with the help of a French priest (Bishop of Adran), Bishop Pigneau de Behaine (1741–1799). From there, Nguyen Phuc Anh tried to seek the help of King Chakri of Siam (Thailand), but the aid mission was successfully thwarted by the Tay Son brothers (Taylor, 1998, 2013). Then, he had to seek help from the states of the Malay Archipelago. The Chinese source, *Hai-la chu* (a record of the Sea), recorded that Xie Qing Gao (Hsieh Ching-kao) (1782–1795), a merchant from Chiayi, Guangdong who travelled in the Malay Archipelago between 1782 and 1795, as confirmed in the records of Hamilton (1744) and Charles Chapman (1788), noted that Annam had established relationships with rulers in the Malay Archipelago (Terengganu) when the latter paid annual tributes to Annam (Cushman & Milner, 1979).

In 1788, Nguyen Phuc Anh, the grandchild of Lord Nguyen Phuc Khoat, one of the last lords of the Nguyen family in Dang Trong, ordered Trinh Tien Tai and Chau Van Quan, his courtiers, to immediately go to *Ha Chau* and buy weapons and ammunition as well as sulphur for military needs to face the Tay Son brothers. *Ha Chau* is the general term for Viet Nam when referring to the Malay Archipelago. The term is also used to denote the states under the southern part of Viet Nam. *Ha* carries the meaning 'below' or 'less' and 'lower', which clearly refers to the island, whereas *chau* refers to the southern part in the geographical context of Viet Nam because of the location of Hue, its capital, is in the north (Kelley, 2013). Nguyen Phuc Anh finally managed to gain support from Antonio Vicente Rosa, a trader Portuguese in Malacca. Antonia had acquired a ship equipped with 800 rifles, 100 barrels of explosive powder, 12 cannons (bombard), and 2000 cannonballs for Nguyen Phuc Anh. With this support, Nguyen Phuc Anh managed to recapture Binh Thuan, Dien Khanh, and Gia Dinh. This was further enhanced by the support of generals Do Thanh Nhon, Tong Phuoc Luong, and Le Van Cau (Wynn, 2006).

Overall, a total of eight missions were sent by Nguyen Phuc Anh to *Ha Chau* during the period of the Tay Son Uprising, as recorded in *Dai Nam Thuc Luc Tien Bien* (Veritable Records of Imperial Viet Nam). From the royal source, some researchers, namely Nguyen The Anh

(1995, 1996), Wong (2001, 2002, 2003), Ku (2014, 2016) find that the conception of Viet Nam's geography on the location of *Ha Cau* continued to mature as states of the Malay Archipelago were identified more accurately, which before were only known as 'Cha-va', 'Trao-Oa' or even 'Da-ba'. However, these missions were merely to seek military assistance as well as to supply weapons and ammunition to oppose the Tay Son brothers and were not related to trade. Indeed, Nguyen Phuc Anh had taken an important step by establishing relations with *Ha Chau* as a strategic calculation and economic planning in the face of the Tay Son brothers.

Table 1. Nguyen Phuc Anh Messengers to the Malay Archipelago, 1788–1801.

Date	Officers' Name	Position	Mission	Place
August 1788	- Trinh Tien Tai - Chau Van Quan	- Envoy officer 1st ranking - Envoy officer 2nd ranking	Purchase of weapons, ammunition, and sulphur for military purposes	Tan-gia-ba [Singapore]
December 1791	- Tran Vu Khach	- Envoy officer	Purchase of weapons and ammunition	Giang-luu-ba [Jakarta]
November 1793	- Godefroy de Forcanz - Jean Labartette	- Regiment Commander - Captain	Purchase of weapons and ammunition. Godefroy and Labartette had obtained it from Goa, on the Malabar coast before being sent to Malacca	Ma-la-kha [Malacca]
October 1796	- Barisy	- Head of the regiment	Purchase of weapons and ammunition	Tan-Lang Du [Penang]
February 1797	- Quang Tang Lu	- Envoy officer	Purchase of weapons and ammunition	Nhu-Phat [Johor]
December 1789	- Ca Trac Bang	- Envoy officer	Messengers from Johor delivering local products, under the government of Sultan Mahmud Shah III (1761–1812)	Nhu-Phat [Johor]
January & February 1799	- Kham Sai Thuc	- Palace guards	Purchase of weapons and ammunition.	Tan-gia-ba [Singapore]
July 1801	- Barisy	- Head of the regiment	Purchase of weapons and ammunition.	Tan-gia-ba [Singapore]

Source: *Dai Nam Thuc Luc*, various volumes

Nguyen Phuc Anh had to seek support from outside, given his limited abilities and resources after all the members of the Early Nguyen family were removed by the Tay Son

brothers. According to Nguyen The Anh (1995, 1996) and Wong (2001, 2002, 2003, 2018), Nguyen Phuc Anh had to switch to seeking support from outside parties due to these constraints. However, he did not turn to the Portuguese in Macau, as was the practice of his ancestors, given that Nguyen Nhac had initially sent a letter to the king of Macau requesting that he not interfere in affairs in Viet Nam (Manguin, 1993). Instead, the British and Dutch, who already had a foothold in the Malay Archipelago, were the targets of Nguyen Phuc Anh quest for support. Indeed, the transition from the Portuguese to seeking the support of the British and the Dutch was inevitable for him, as the rise of the British and Dutch had begun to gain a foothold in the Malay Archipelago. Undoubtedly, Bishop Pigneau de Behaine's support and assistance also influenced Nguyen Phuc Anh to hire many Western advisers in his administration, such as Jean Baptise Chaigneau, Philippe Vannier Chester, Jean Marie Dayot, and Oliver du Puymanel, who were each assigned to lead the navy and the army (Gundry, 1893). However, the approach taken by China as the governing state over Viet Nam in addressing the issue of the Tay Son Uprising needs to be evaluated and discussed objectively the relationship between Vietnam and the Malay Archipelago.

China factor in Viet Nam's relations with the Malay Archipelago

The political situation in Vietnam and China is one of the elements influencing ties between the two countries and the Malay Archipelago. In the early days of the Tay Son brothers' uprising, China received reports of the chaotic situation in Viet Nam from Viet Nam traders trading in China. However, in China's view, the unrest was just another series of peasant uprisings that were commonly triggered by provocation on the part of rebels dissatisfied with the government in Viet Nam (Ku, 2016; Liu, 2008). In addition, China was also informed that the unrest stemmed from fights among landlords to seize areas of power (Qing Gaozong Shilu, Vol. 982). This was further exacerbated at that time because the Tay Son brothers still had not established any diplomatic relations with China. In 1774, Governor-General Liangguang (Guangdong and Guangxi), Li Shiyao (? – 1788) in his report presented to Emperor Qianlong wrote:

“Reportedly in the state of Annam (Viet Nam), there was a civil war. The war broke out in Tay Son (Binh Dinh). All corners of the country [Viet Nam] are on the battlefield. The sound of cannons going off day and night is without stopping.” (Qing Gaozong Shilu, Vol. 959)

However, the report did not receive immediate follow-up from the Chinese, especially from Emperor Qianlong himself. This is because he was still vague about the chaotic situation in Viet Nam. Moreover, in the 18th century, especially between 1740 and 1770, turmoil and uprisings caused by the peasantry were common occurrences in the political landscape of Viet Nam (Kham Dinh Viet Su Thong Giam Cuong Muc, Vol. 43). The emperor was confused by the Tay Son brothers, who managed to manipulate their surname to “Nguyen”. The Tay Son brothers were originally from the Ho tribe, believed to be descended from Ho Quy Ly, but switched to the “Nguyen” clan to justify themselves as having family ties with the heirs of the Viet Nam king. Attempts to justify the use of the surname “Nguyen” were important to the Tay Son brothers because the reign of Ho Quy Ly associated with his lineage was still considered a black episode in the eyes of Viet Nam. The official history book of the Nguyen Dynasty, *Kham Dinh Viet Su Thong Giam Cuong Muc* (The Imperially Ordered Mirror and Commentary on the History of Viet), for example, notes that the Ho Quy Ly government was just as illegitimate as Emperor of

Yongle (1402–1424) from the Ming Dynasty in China for allegedly usurping power from his nephew, Zhu Yunwen (1399–1402). This was proven when Nguyen Phuc Anh insisted that the rebellion was reasonable for Nguyen's heirs to recapture Viet Nam (Ku, 2016). This is because according to him, the original Viet Nam was the property of Nguyen's heirs but was later confiscated by Later Le's heirs (1009–1225). Therefore, according to Li (1989), China's ignorance of the current situation in Viet Nam caused Emperor Qianlong to take precautionary measures before sending his troops to Viet Nam to support the heirs of the Late Le Dynasty. The Chinese also argued that the internal affairs of the auspicious state could not be interfered with, as it was asserted by Emperor Yongzheng (1723–1736) that Viet Nam was a foreign state (*waifan*) of the Chinese colony. Therefore, the policy taken by the Chinese towards the *waifan* state was that China would not interfere in any unrest that occurred in the country. The Chinese only asked patronage countries, including Viet Nam, to present tributary items to them as prescribed (Ku, 2019).

This is further enhanced by the fact that, according to Dent (1989), the reason for China's lack of attention to Viet Nam was because China itself, under constant pressure from Western powers, especially the British, was in or was approaching the weakest situation in its history. According to Zhou (2009), China-Viet Nam relations have always been in turmoil. This is because when China was prosperous, Viet Nam would try to maintain good relations with China. China, therefore, as a sovereign state, would never without a good reason to fight against Viet Nam. Moreover, China was then experiencing political instability in its country. Hence, China was not capable of interfering in the political affairs of Viet Nam nor of initiating any military movement despite knowing that Viet Nam was plagued by unrest. Thus, in his reaction to the report, Emperor Qianlong recorded in the royal decree that he was aware of the unrest in Viet Nam (read: Annam) due to the civil war. Consequently, Emperor Qianlong simply instructed officials at the state border, especially in Liangguang Province (Guangdong and Guangxi), to investigate in detail and report all the developments that took place to the palace in Beijing; however, he never interfered in the internal affairs of Viet Nam as noted in a report received by Li Shiyao, Governor-General Lianguang from *Junjichu* on 8 July 1788. (*Qing Gaozong Shilu*, Vol. 959).

Meanwhile, in 1795, China also experienced a transfer of power from Emperor Qianlong to Emperor Jiaqing (1796–1820). A year later, China experienced a revolt of the White Lotus Society (1796–1804). The effect was significant in that China had no power to care about the political affairs of the surrounding areas, including Viet Nam (Wang, 2008). This is because, according to Feuerwerker (1975), between 1796 and 1804, the Chinese border areas of Hupei, Sichuan, and Shensi recorded around 3,000,000 uprisings against China. Thus, when the Chinese palace received a report from Governor-General Liangguang, Ji Qing (1796–1802), that the Nguyen Phuc Anh group had succeeded in capturing Phu Xuan in 1801, while Quang Toan, the son of Nguyen Nhat who had been recognised as a legitimate ruler in Viet Nam, fled north, Emperor Jiaqing argued that:

“Border security is paramount. It must be strictly controlled. As for the foreign states (referring to Viet Nam) that are in dispute, it is not related to us (China). Do not interfere. However, if Nguyen Quang Toan applies for help or the Nguyen group wins the war, please report to me immediately.” (*Qing Renzong Shilu*, Vol. 101, pp. 355–356).

Therefore, China had taken a less active approach to the internal political affairs of Viet Nam. Additionally, China also began to face Western infiltration of its country's political

landscape when in 1792–1793, the British sent their representative, Lord Macartney, to establish trade relations with China (Macartney, 1962). Apart from that, China was still unsure of Nguyen Phuc Anh's real intention in revolting against the Tay Son brothers as well as the internal political problems he faced. Therefore, Nguyen Anh had to deviate from China in the north and seek the support of the Malay Archipelago in the south to fight against the Tay Son brothers.

Conclusion

Viet Nam's relations with the Malay Archipelago have a long history. However, political factors, such as the civil war that broke out in Viet Nam, caused Viet Nam to close its ports, thus restricting trade (*be mon toa-cang*). In the meantime, this situation of uncertainty sometimes opened up opportunities for those who were determined to establish relations with the outside world. The Tay Son Brothers' Uprising of 1771–1802, for example, connected Viet Nam with the Malay Archipelago more often. The form of contact was to seek military assistance instead of seeking *bao-dat* (precious goods) and *u-vat* (exotic goods), which were available in the Malay Archipelago. Desperate to find support and financial resources to oppose the Tay Son brothers, Nguyen Phuc Anh sent his missions to *Ha Chau*. Palace officials were sent as early as 1788 as envoys to Ma-la-kha (Malacca), Tan Lang Du (Penang), Nhu-Hat (Johor) and Tan-gia-ba (Singapore) merely to obtain weapons from the British, who had established themselves in those areas. In the meantime, the Malay Archipelago became the focus of his choice, as Nguyen Phuc Anh believed that China was incapable of maintaining the political independence of Viet Nam in that the biggest chaos in the history of modern Viet Nam was viewed flippantly as only a farmers' revolt. In addition, Emperor Qianlong's stand in 1789 in support of Nguyen Nhat of the Tay Son brothers as the legitimate ruler of Viet Nam also discouraged Nguyen Phuc Anh's from seeking help from China.

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