



The kingdom of Nan Yue

*Nam Việt*

Litterally meaning "in the South of the Yue", the kingdom of Nanyue is at its origin the name of Vietnam. Between 2nd and 1st century B.C., it took up an area covering the present Guangdong ( Quảng Đông ), Guangxi ( Quảng Tây ) provinces, HaiNam island ( Hải Nam) and the kingdom of Au-Lac, the ancient country of the Việt. The latter whose king was An Dương Vương was annexed by general **Zhao Tuo ( Triệu Đà** or Triệu Vũ Vương in Vietnamese ), the future founder of the kingdom of Nanyue.

According to the Vietnamese, the loss of their country was closely linked to the legend of the **magic crossbow**. In fact it was due to the way Triệu Đà fought a war of lightning against An Dương Vương while making the latter think of territorial compromises. Once these provinces were reunited under his banner, Zhao Tuo set up his seat at Pan You (Phiên Ngưng ) not far from Guangzhou, presently Canton. He divided the kingdom of Au La.c into two commands, one known as Giao Chỉ which mainly took up the Bắc Việt region, and the other under the name of Giao Châu which gathered together all the other provinces of North and Central Vietnam ( Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, etc...).

At the fall of the Qin ( 207 B.C. ), he proclaimed himself King of Nanyue and took the title of Wu Wang, than Emperor in 187. He did not stop challenging the Han Empire by harassing it several times and only accepted to submit himself under the Han's bosom at the disappearance of the dowager empress Lữ Hậu. His fame was so great that in Chinese writings at that time, his name in particular his kingdom, was cited several times. He deceased in 137 B.C.. His descendants had to reign this kingdom at least for a century through five generations. His immediate successor was Zhao Mo, his grand son, better known as Emperor Wen of Nanyue. His grave dug on the side of the Xianggang hill, near Canton, was discovered in 1983 by a team of Cantonese archaeologists. Under the influence of his mother of Chinese origin, the last but one emperor of this dynasty decided to yield his kingdom to the Han empire. Knowing of this plan, his prime minister **Lữ Gia** decided to eliminate him as well as his mother and enthroned in his stead his half-brother known as Dương Vương.

Giving usurpation of power as a pretext, the Chinese invaded the kingdom and annexed it in 111 B.C. in spite of Lữ Gia's heroic attitude. Since then, the country of the Viet passed under Chinese domination. The spreading of Chinese culture did not take place in a peaceful manner during these thousand years and was marked by a series of the following bloody revolts:

- The revolt of the heroines **Trưng Trắc** and **Trưng Nhị** during the years 40-43 A.D.
- The revolt of the heroine **Triệu Ẩu** in year 248.
- The revolt of the hero **Lý Bôn** (or Lý Nam Đế ) during the years 544-602.
- The revolt led by **Mai Thúc Loan** (or Mai Hắc Đế ) in 722.
- The revolt of the hero **Phùng Hưng** (or **Bồ Cái Đại Vương**) in 791.

Hardened by the grip of conscience for a Vietnamese unity, the Viet continued to harass incessantly their Chinese invaders and succeeded in wrenching out independence from the latter by inflicting them with a stinging defeat on the Bạch Đằng river with the Vietnamese general **Ngô Quyền** in year 939

Being aware of political and geographical realities and the power of the Middle Empire, the Viet accepted to pay the Chinese a tribute every three years and to adhere to the Chinese foreign policies in exchange of their recognition of a independent and sovereign Viet state. This compromise has taken away for ever the Guangxi province ( Quảng Tây ) from the Viet. They however hoped to recuperate it by force with emperor **Quang Trung** if he had not deceased too young. That is why, in order to ward off the Viet ulterior motive, the Qing suggested to emperor **Gia Long** at his enthronement to take the name Viet-Nam instead of "Nam-Việt". From then on, the land of the Viet is known under the name "Việt- Nam". It is also with this name, people often like to refer to our war that has been known throughout the world during the last decades.

