

EAST SEA (BIEN DONG) VIETNAM: CONCEPTION AND DENOMINATING PROCESS

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Vietnam is located on the eastern margin of the Indochinese Peninsula, with a terrain of leaning against the mountains, facing the sea, and a coastline of 3,260 kilometres. Vietnam sea is called the East Sea (Bien Dong), with a quite simple meaning that the sea encompasses the entire east of the country. The East Sea is a linking span of bridge and a door opening out to the world of Vietnam throughout its historical process.

The history of Vietnam was begun with the birth of the three first ancient kingdoms i.e. Van Lang - Au Lac in the North, Lam Ap - Champa in the Central and Phu Nam in the South. These kingdoms share a strip of the East Sea, and acknowledge their respective origin of the sea and in practice, the sea played an extremely important role in the economic, social and political life, even determined the prosperity or the wane of each of these kingdoms. The history of Vietnam was integrated from at least such three descents, though these regions remained preserved their own traditions, it is also early to shape a uniform tendency of a mainstream flow i.e. from Van Lang - Au Lac spreading over 1000 years of Chinese domination to Dai Viet - Dai Nam and finally Vietnam. The history of Vietnam, therefore, has again a private motion law, in which capacity of declaring and occupying island territory waters becomes a measure of power and position of a royal dynasty or an era.

We have not condition to make a full presentation but just introduce as a first step the conception process and through there the process of denominating the East Sea region, mainly following the mainstream flow of the history of Vietnam. During the research, we mainly rely on ancient bibliography source and ancient Vietnamese map, further we refer to other

documentation sources at home and compare with the related ancient bibliography and ancient map of China and the West.

The writing focuses on clarifying some contents as follow:

- The East Sea in the traditional conception of Vietnamese ancient population communities.
- The Southward march and the united process of East Sea name.
- Yellow Sandbank (Bai Cat Vang - Hoang Sa), Long Sandbank (Bai Cat Dai - Truong Sa) and the role of Vietnam on the East Sea.

The East Sea (Bien Dong - Dong Hai) is common name of territory waters on the east of the territory of each country and therefore the origin of each name to call the East Sea shall be the name of country or territory area located on the west of it. For instance, East Sea (Dong Hai) in South of Korea is the territory waters on the east of the coastline of South of Korea; East Sea in China (Hoa Dong Hai) is the territory waters on the east of the coastline of the centre of China and similarly East Sea (Dong Hai) in Vietnam is on the east of the coastline of Vietnam. East Sea in Vietnam in the ancient period, if calculated along the main stream of the history of Vietnam, it is only equivalent to the eastern territory waters of the coastline of Van Lang - Au Lac i.e. Giao Chi region or Giao Chau of Chinese domination, so also called Giao Chi sea (Giao Chi Duong), from border area of Quang Binh to Gulf of Tonkin, equivalent to the present East Sea northern region. The following it is territory waters of Chiem Thanh (Champa), where Dai Viet called Nam Hai (South Sea) to distinguish from East Sea on the north. Coming to the period of Dai Viet country in Ly, Tran, Ho and Le dynasties, the territory of Dai Viet continued to be expanded toward the south, thus the conception of East Sea was also expanded thereof, this caused Chiem Thanh sea to be narrowed gradually on the north.

In 1471 Le Thanh Tong (1460-1497) expanded the territory as far as Cu Mong pass and in 1490 he had Hong Duc atlas completed, integrating the whole mainland area and island territory waters into the territory of Dai Viet

and had Bai Cat Vang (Hoang Sa - Paracels) map drawn, expressing the will of enlarging the range of ruling as far as the middle area of East Sea.

Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen (1613-1635) developed Hoi An commercial port, promoting international trade, expanding the territory down to South-eastern region, setting up Hoang Sa team which exploits and manages Paracels area and a part of Spratlys (Truong Sa) on the south. In 1711, Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu (1691-1725) commanded Mac Cuu, the division commander of Ha Tien to organize a survey of Bai Cat Dai (Trường Sa - Spratlys). Though this waters is on the south of East Sea, it is inclined on the northeast of the top of Ha Tien south pole land, so it is called Bac Hai (North Sea) by Ha Tien people. Lord Nguyen had also been setting up Bac Hai team (managed by Hoang Sa team) to exploit and protect Bac Hai, Con Lon island and islands in Ha Tien. Hoang Sa and Bac Hai teams sustained their operations until the beginning of 20th decade of XIXth century they were merged into Naval Force of Minh Menh's court, operating on the whole island and sea line of united Vietnam-Dai Nam country.

Conceiving on a East Sea area like present, in practice was consented and claimed from the beginning of XIXth century with the birth of Nguyen royal dynasty (1802-1945) which ruled an area of territory and territory waters that originated from the three first ancient countries and be re-established and stabilized from 1757 to today.