

# What is the historical relationship between Vietnam and China?

Answer: it's complicated!



Vietnam and China  
today: East Asia versus  
Southeast Asia

Bronze Age  
Dong Son culture  
circa sixth century BCE-  
2nd century CE

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- Miniature drum with Four Frogs, Metropolitan Museum





# Vietnam's Bronze Age

## Objects from 500 BCE to 300 CE, Met Museum



Situla with Design of Boats

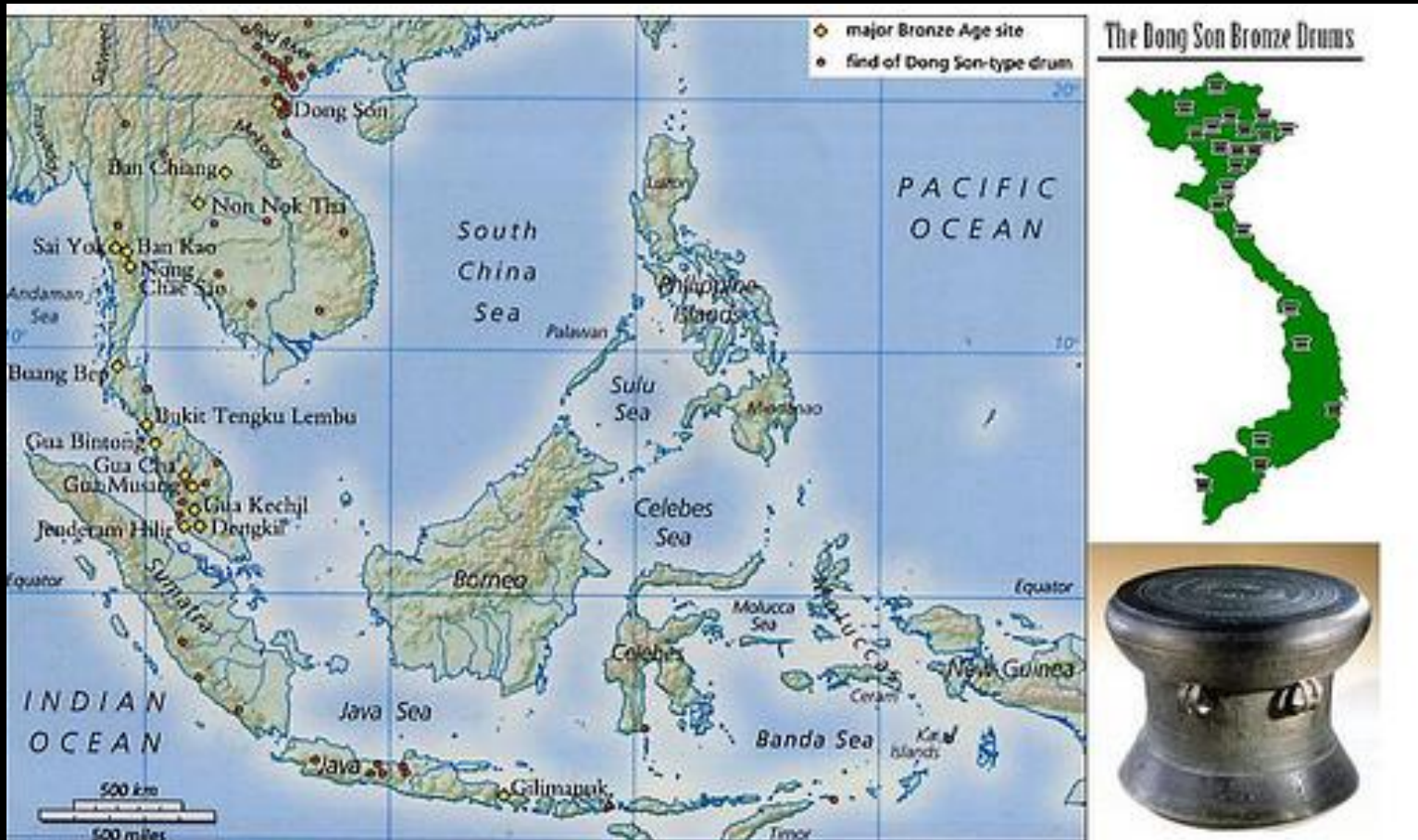


Seated Male Figure

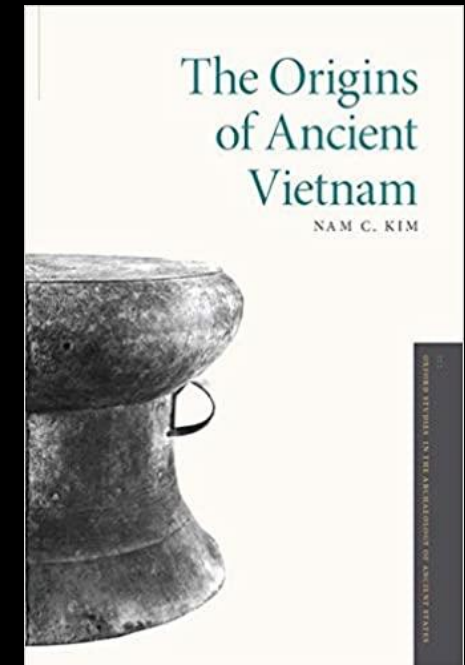


Dagger

# Geographical range of Dong Son drums



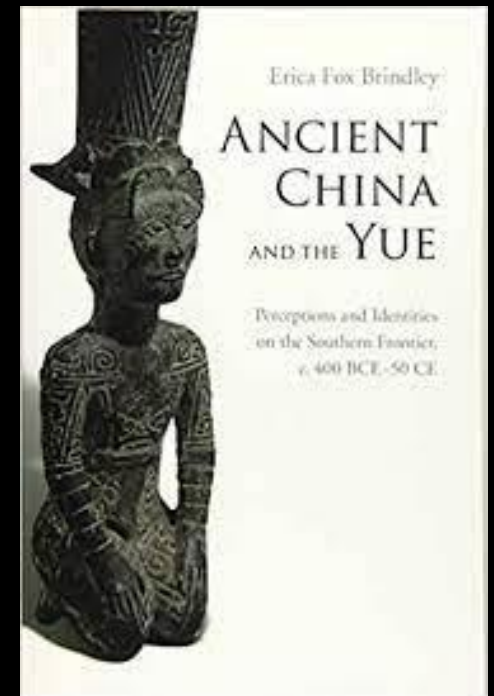
For more information, see:



# Vietnam enters the written record

- First written records about Vietnamese culture zone are from Chinese sources
- No Vietnamese writings from before the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE survive

For more information, see :





# Qin (or Ch'in) dynasty

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- A good reminder that early states in China and Vietnam are not equivalent to contemporary China and Vietnam



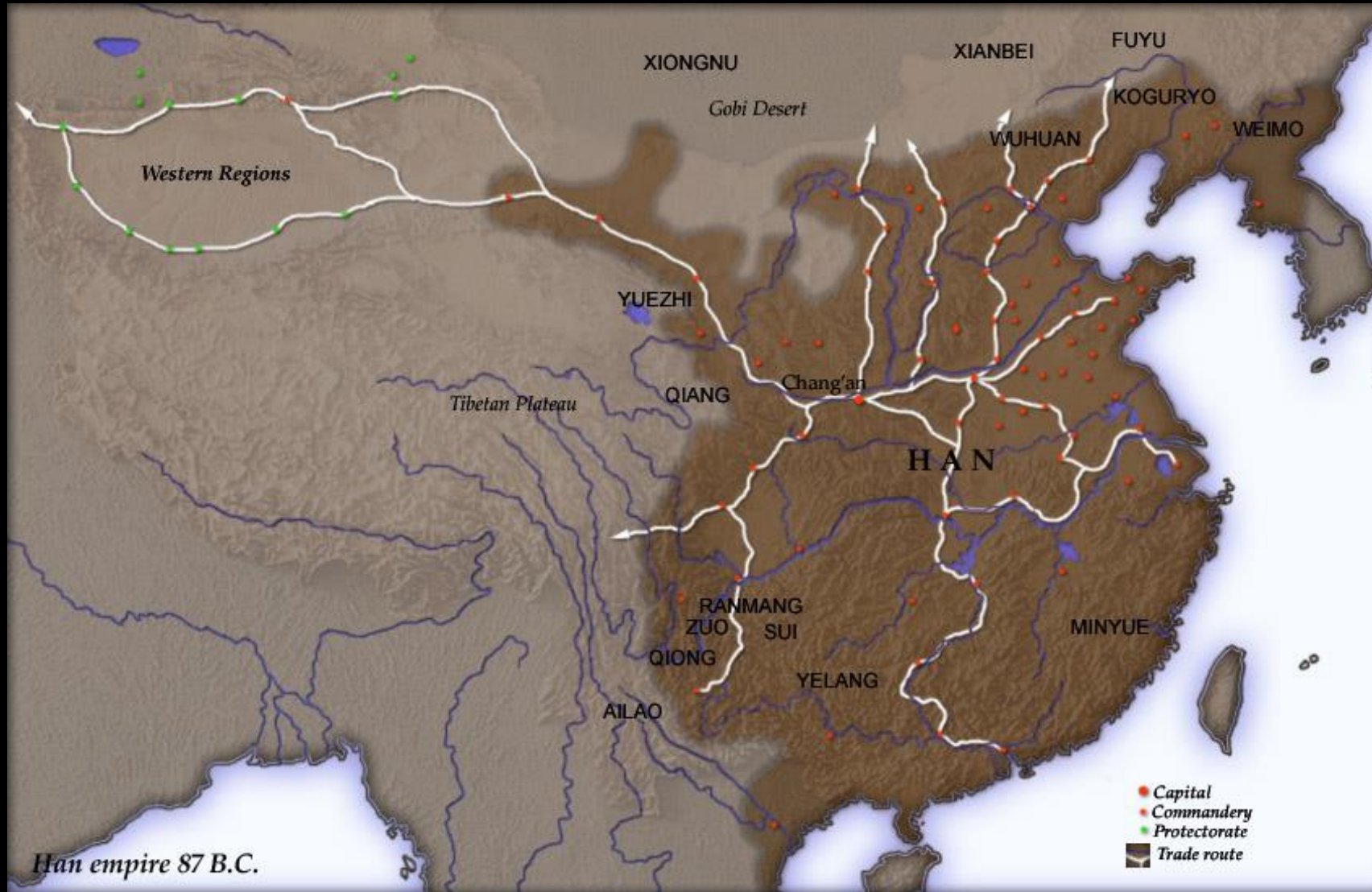
207 BCE: As Qin dynasty weakens and falls apart, Zhao Tuo founds Nan Yue/Nam Viet kingdom, spanning modern border of Vietnam and China



111 BCE: Han dynasty of China conquers Nan Yue, placing Red River delta and present-day northern Vietnam under northern control



# The Han dynasty (202 BC – 220 CE)



Why did northern states wish to control the Red River delta?



# Rebellion of the Trung sisters, 39-43 CE

Carving from Trung Sisters temple, Hanoi

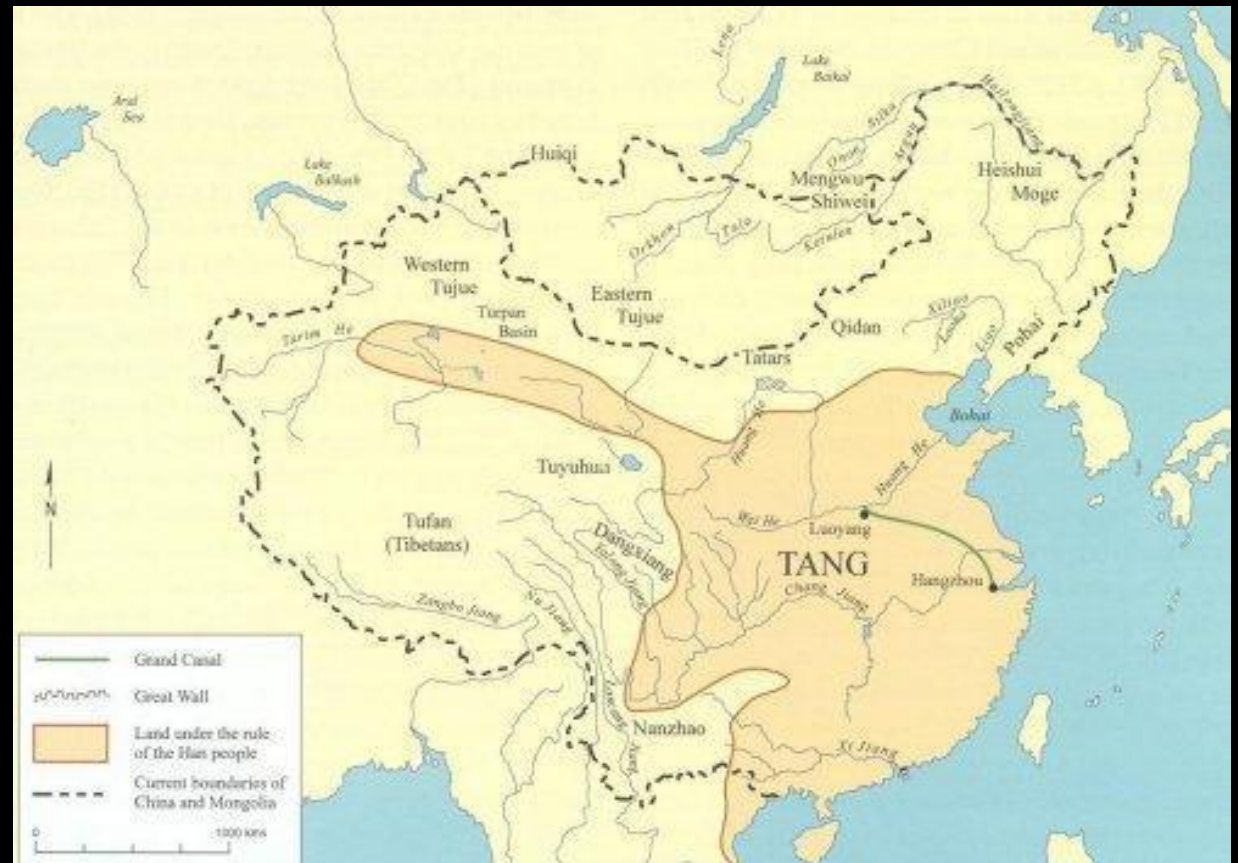




# From Colony to Kingdom

Fall of Tang dynasty ended a millennium of Chinese domination

936: State of Dai Viet declared by Ngo Quyen





# Timeline

China

Vietnam

206 BC – 220 CE Han dynasty

222-581 Six dynasties

589-618 Sui dynasty

618 – 907 Tang dynasty

907 -960 Five dynasties

960 – 1279 Song dynasty

1279 – 1368 Yuan dynasty

1368 – 1644 Ming dynasty

1644 – 1911 Qing dynasty

938: independence

1009 -1225 Ly dynasty

1225-1400 Tran dynasty

1400-1407 Ho dynasty

1428 – 1789 Le dynasty

1778 -1802 Tay Son

1802-1945 Nguyen dynasty

# Wait .... If China and Vietnam are separate, what are Sino-Viet relations like?

- Formal diplomacy was hierarchical. Vietnam sent envoys to Chinese capital, bearing local gifts. Chinese emperor confirmed Vietnamese emperor's legitimacy, granted him imperial robes, calendar, seal.
- China obligated to help Vietnam royal family in case of threats. Could ask Vietnam to help them with issues at the border.
- Dynastic transitions were periods of danger and uncertainty until normal diplomacy could resume.





- Yuan  
Dynasty  
(1271-1368)  
& Kubilai  
Khan  
(1215-1294)  
Mongols conquer  
Song dynasty China  
and establish the  
Yuan dynasty



# The Yuan campaigns in Dai Viet

- 1258, 1285, 1287: Yuan dynasty sends troops to Dai Viet during Tran dynasty
- Climate, disease, supply issues, empty cities
- Churn of people -- Song refugees, Vietnamese who go to China with the Mongols, etc.
- Military mastermind: Tran Hung Dao →



# 1288: Battle of Bach Dang River

- One of Vietnam's greatest military victories
- Iron tipped poles hidden in riverbed to prevent escape
- Mongol ships lured into a trap
- Dai Viet troops led by Tran Hung Dao attacked, burned boats, killed or captured fleeing Yuan troops





Another time of transition:  
Ming dynasty in China (1368 – 1644)  
Ho Dynasty in Vietnam (1400-1407)



Ho Dynasty citadel

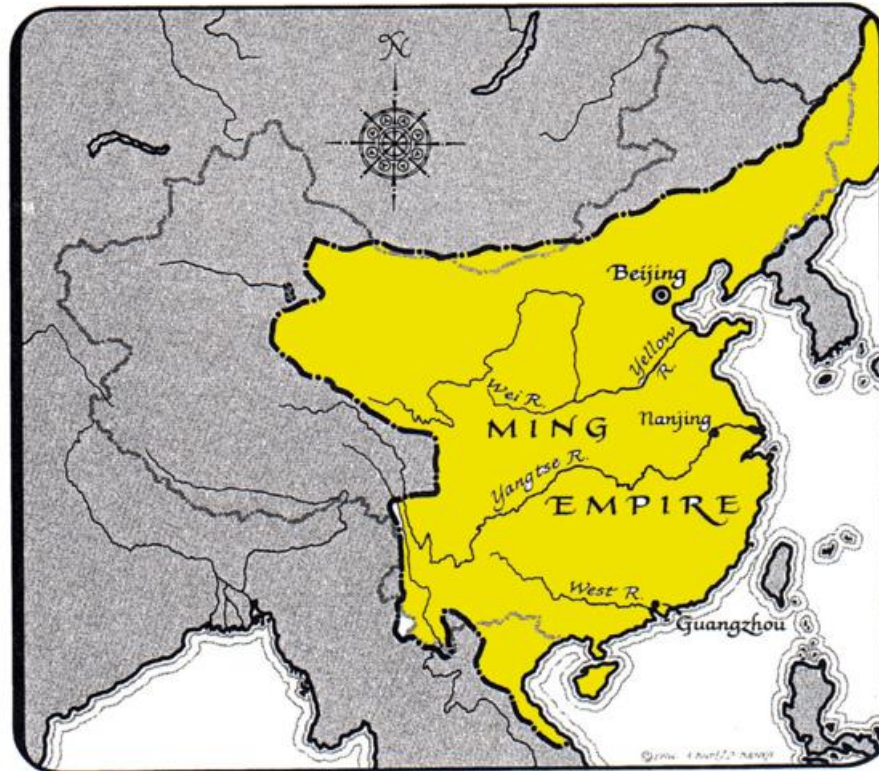


- China's Ming dynasty viewed the Ho as
- usurpers
- Ming army dispatched soldiers and quickly overthrew the Ho
- Established northern Vietnam as a province with at least some local support
- Burning of books
- Transfer of military technology/ Asian "gunpowder empires"



Ming occupation of  
Vietnam:  
1407-1427

Vietnamese  
resistance leader:  
Le Loi (1385-1433)



*Ming Dynasty Empire (1368-1644)*

# Dai Viet



- Le Loi defeated the Ming in 1427 with a magical sword given to him by a turtle. He returned it here at Returned Sword Lake in Hanoi (Ho Hoan Kiem)

# Dai Viet: Buddhism and Chinese Culture

Vietnam influenced by  
Chinese Mahayana  
Buddhism and Southeast  
Asian Theravada  
Buddhism

Chinese Buddhism came  
along with package of  
Chinese culture:  
language, government,  
Confucianism, art







# Temple of Literature, Hanoi

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# Le Dynasty 1427 – 1527 1533 - 1789

- Ming colonization inspired an invigorated application of Confucian statecraft – a centralizing state ruled by scholar-officials, a Chinese-style law code.
- Le used new military advantage to destroy and annex most of Champa in the 1470s







# Le dynasty Dai Viet, c. 1650

← Le, under Trinh control (Tonkin)

← Le, under Nguyen control (Cochinchina)

← remnant of Champa kingdom

# Cochinchina (southern Vietnam)



- “Japanese bridge” in Hoi An –connected Japanese quarters to Chinese quarters in Hoi An
- “A new way of being Vietnamese” in a frontier trading zone mix of cultures and peoples.



# Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia

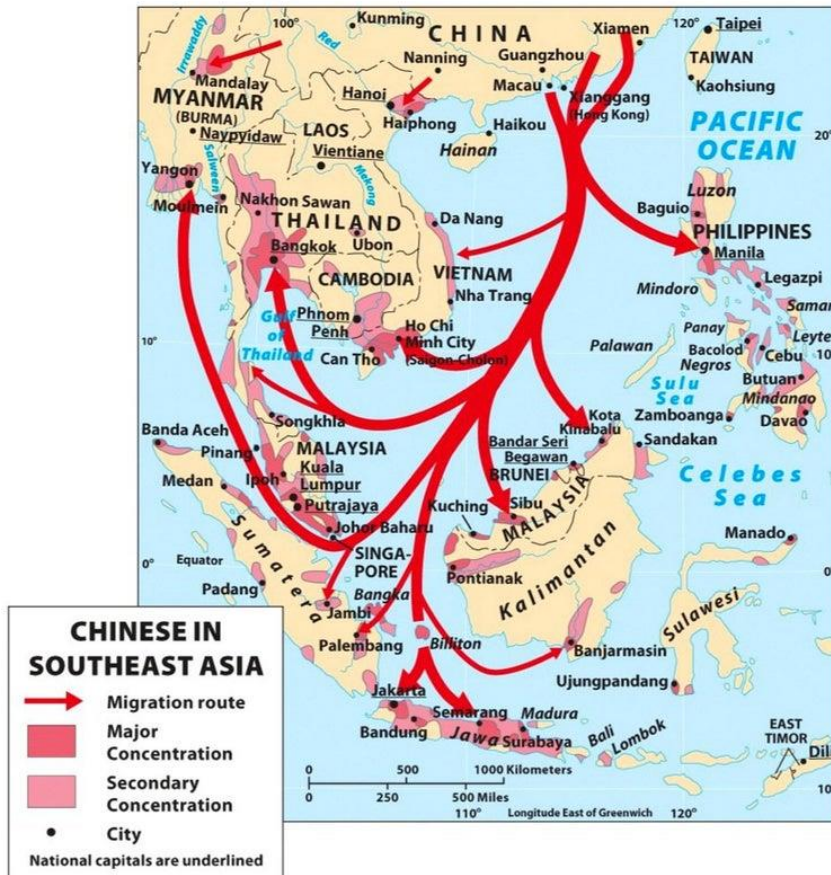


Figure 3.13  
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- Chinese from the southern coast of China moved across Southeast Asia
- Some were business owners with plantations, fleets, and many employees
- Others were laborers looking to earn money and return home
- "Sojourners" intended to return home, but many married locally or never returned
- "Merchants without empire" dominated trade without the official support of Chinese government
- Became part of local societies but also faced possibility of attacks or discrimination
- Chinese miners in the highlands

# Language: Chinese influence

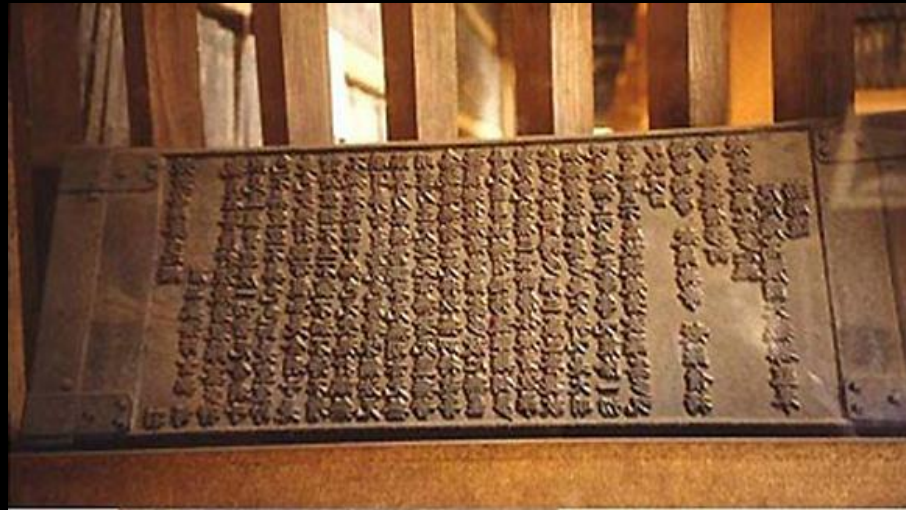
- A large proportion of Vietnamese words are borrowed from Chinese. Estimates range from 30% to 80%
- Most likely scenario is that a group of people in the Red River spoke a dialect of Chinese and were eventually absorbed into the dominant proto-Vietnamese language, bringing Chinese vocabulary into Vietnamese (Search research by John Phan for more information)
- Classical Chinese used as written language. Chinese rule pre-dated the development of writing in Vietnam. So Vietnam went from a pre-literate society to a classical Chinese society



# Chinese characters = Han



Woodblock printing: text carved on to block, inked, and then pressed on paper



# Nom

A script that represents spoken Vietnamese,  
based on Chinese characters



- *Tale of Kieu* By Nguyen Du
- 19th century poem
- Translation by Huynh Sanh Thong is very teachable
- Email me ([ktb3@psu.edu](mailto:ktb3@psu.edu)) for discussion questions





# Language and Script

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- Origin of Nom unclear, but probably dates to about 1100 CE
- From 1100 CE to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnically Vietnamese people had one spoken language (Vietnamese) and two scripts (Nom and Han)



For more, check out documentary *Art of Nom*. Can be purchased online from Antenna Film Distribution

# European Influence

- European missionaries create a Romanized/Latinized script to represent the sounds of Vietnamese. [Why?]
- Alexandre du Rhodes publishes Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary in 1651





# Education reform under the French

- Last civil service examination based on the Confucian classics (in classical Chinese) held in Vietnam in 1919.
- Quoc ngu = Romanized script (literally “national script”)
- Through early 20<sup>th</sup> century, French and Vietnamese written in quoc ngu increasingly used in schools and newspapers.
- What do you think some of the consequences of switching from classical Chinese education to French education are?

# Nguyen dynasty (1802 - 1945)

## Last imperial dynasty of Vietnam

### Capital city: Hue





# City gate and Thien Mu pagoda, 1965

(Photos by Bill Duiker)

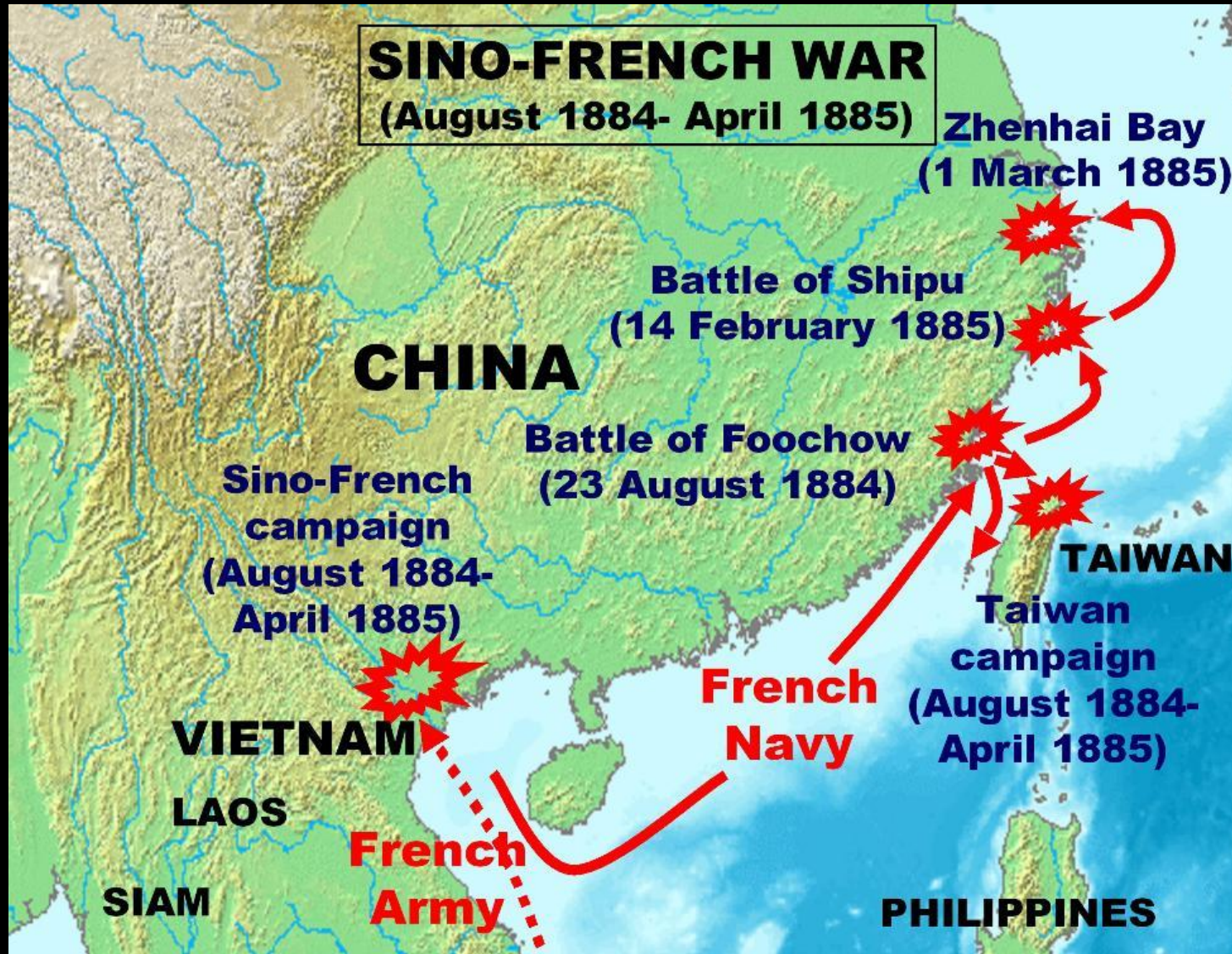






1862: French colonization of Cochinchina (lower third of Vietnam).  
Beginning of process of colonizing all of Indochina





--Vietnam seeks assistance against increasing French military action in Vietnam

--Vietnamese, Chinese, and Black Flag troops fight French

--Qing recognize French protectorate over Vietnam and withdraw troops. Why? French naval blockade causing food shortages in the north of China, pacifists in court don't want to waste money and lives in this struggle



Sino-French war pulls Vietnam out of Chinese orbit, places it under French protectorate



# The People's Republic of China, 1949

communist victory in China



- 1950: PRC becomes the first state to recognize Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Also provides support
- Chinese recognition forces rest of Communist world to follow suit

# Sino-Vietnamese War

- Brief border war between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China in 1979
- Conflict over China's support of Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Vietnamese expulsion of Chinese residents
- Sours relations
- Vietnamese soldiers on disabled Chinese tank -->







China  
Malaysia  
Vietnam  
Brunei  
Philippines  
Taiwan

# Dams on the Mekong River

- Affects waterflow, fish habitat, erosion, irrigation downstream
- Can cause devastating floods
- Regional tensions





# Conclusion

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- Now, as always, strong cultural, political, economic, and demographic ties
- Now, as always, tensions over territory and access resources

