

SELECTIONS FROM LÊ QUÝ ĐÔN'S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SOUTH IN THE 1770s

Introduction

Through the sixteenth century, while the Mạc ran the government of Đại Việt in the lowlands, they were unable to control the highlands to the southwest, the original home of the Lê and its supporters. Two of these aristocratic families, the Nguyễn and the Trịnh, maintained a Lê ruler and launched a sixty-year campaign against the lowland Mạc.

Since early in the 1590s, the Trịnh and the Nguyễn placed the Lê back on the throne in Thăng-long before having a falling out. The Trịnh lords controlled the government of Đại Việt and the Lê in the north, while the Nguyễn took refuge on the southern border in what had been Champa (now central Vietnam).

In the north, through the seventeenth century, the Trịnh attempted to penetrate the defensive walls of the Nguyễn, but failed repeatedly. This failure led the Trịnh to reinstitute the literati bureaucratic model and the examinations. Their realm continued to be based on wet rice agriculture.

In the south, the Nguyễn built a new regime based on an economic partnership with overseas Chinese and international trade, while seeking legitimacy in East Asian Buddhism.

The two regimes co-existed through the eighteenth century until the great Tây Sơn rebellion exploded in the 1770s. At one point, events allowed the Trịnh finally to seize the Nguyễn capital of Phú-xuân (Huế). There a famed scholar-official Lê Quý Đôn (1726-1784) surveyed the southern domain for his colleagues in the north.

Document Selections with Questions (Longer selection follows this section)

From *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyễn: Documents on the Economic History of Cochinchina (Đàng Trong), 1607-1777*, edited by Li Tana and Anthony Reid (Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 100-117. Reproduced here with the kind permission of the publisher.

Selections from Lê Quý Đôn's Descriptions of the South in the 1770s

Lowland-Highland Relations

[Vol. 4, pp. 9b-10a]

The Nguyễn ruler sent Marquis Minh Duc, whose family name was Lê, to be the official of [the territory of] *Con-suat*¹ and control the *man* people [barbarians] there. He organized the villagers into a force to defend themselves from the attacks of the evil *man* [barbarians who did not obey the Nguyễn ruler]. Another responsibility of the official was to collect taxes.

Any person who lived downstream and wanted to trade upstream had to apply to his or her village head, stating when he or she would return, and [also] had to pay the taxes. [Traders]

¹ Meaning of this term is not identified in original source.

were not allowed to exceed the [stated] time limit as a prophylactic measure against possible future trouble.

People who went upstream had to pay 30 cash for the boat, whereas people who went downstream had to pay with two bundles of the goods which they had traded. Seven *mạch* had to be paid for ten trees of *kien-kien*, two *mạch* for ten ordinary trees.

There was a furnace for forging knives on the way to the mountains. Traders who bought 100 large knives paid 1.2 *quan* [of tax], and 6 *mạch* for 100 small knives. The boats which carried 200 *can* [120 kilograms] of charcoal paid 7 *mạch*.

The Duty on Overseas Trade

[Vol 4, pp. 31a-32a]

Thuận Hóa is connected with Quảng Nam both by land and by sea. Going south from Quảng Nam led to some other countries, and the trip by sea from Fujian and Canton took only three to four days. It was therefore a place in which ships have gathered from ancient times. Ever since the Nguyễn occupied the area, they have gained much from the taxes on the shipping trade. According to an official who used to impose the duties on the ships, the arrival and departure taxes for the various ships were as follows:

	Tax on arrival (in <i>quan</i>)	Tax on departure (in <i>quan</i>)
Shanghai	3,000	[not mentioned]
Canton	3,000	300
Fujian	2,000	200
Hainan Island	500	50
Europe	8,000	800
Macao	4,000	400
Japan	4,000	400
Siam	2,000	500
Philippines	2,000	200
Palembang	500	50
Ha Tien	300	30
Som Do (Red River delta)	300	30

In 1771, sixteen ships arrived at Hội An and 38,000 *quan* of taxes were collected in duties. In 1772, twelve ships came to Hội An and 14,300 *quan* were collected in duties. In 1773, six ships came to Hội An and 3,200 *quan* were collected in duties.

Trade at Hội An
[Vol. 4, pp 34b-35b]

The following statement was made by a Cantonese trader whose name is Chen.

It is only six days and nights from Guangzhou to Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam on the sea, [then proceeding] either from the seaport of Han along the Phú Xuân River [Huong Giang] to Phõ Thanh Hà, or to Hội An via its seaport of Đại Chiêm. It takes only four days and nights and one *canh* [about two hours] to Son Nam, but no goods other than rice can be obtained. Furthermore, only pepper is available from Thuận Hóa, whereas such an abundance of goods can be carried from Quảng Nam that seemingly nothing cannot be obtained there; it is superior to all other ports of Southeast Asia. The goods come from Thuận Hóa, Điện Bàn, Quy Nhơn, Quảng Ngãi, Bình Khang and Nha Trang, carried by ships, boats and horse, by land and by sea, and assembled in Hội An. That is why the Chinese like to come and buy goods to carry back. The goods are so abundant here that even a hundred large ships could not carry them all away from here.

As to the prices, he said that in Quảng Nam people would call 100 *can* [60 kilograms] as equal to one *ta*. The costs per *ta* were as follows:

betel nut	3	<i>quan</i>
pepper	20	<i>quan</i>
round cardamon	5	<i>quan</i>
sappanwood	6	<i>quan</i>
<i>ammonmum xanthiodes</i> nuts (related to cardamom plant)	12	<i>quan</i>
ebony wood	6	<i>mạch</i>
lacquer wood	1	<i>quan</i>
cyprus wood	1.2	<i>quan</i>
rhinoceros horn	500	<i>quan</i>
edible bird's nest	200	<i>quan</i>
deers' antlers	15	<i>quan</i>
shark's fin	14	<i>quan</i>
dried shrimps	6	<i>quan</i>
snails' heads	12	<i>quan</i>
hawksbill turtle	180	<i>quan</i>
elephants' tusks	40	<i>quan</i>
<i>be lua ma</i> [not identified]	12	<i>quan</i>
crystal sugar	4	<i>quan</i>
white sugar	2	<i>quan</i>
1 <i>can</i> of calambac	120	<i>quan</i>
1 <i>thoi</i> [bar] of gold	180	<i>quan</i>
1 bolt of thin silk	3.5	<i>quan</i>

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Here the best were the Chinese cassia trees, agalloch from the eaglewood, and pearls. Red sandalwood was also produced here, but the quality was not as good as in Siam

When asked how well the goods brought from China sold here, the man said that the goods sold out very quickly, [and soon] nothing was left.

Coloured gauze, satin, brocade and cloth; all kinds of medicinal herbs; paper whether golden, silver or coloured; slender sticks of incense; threads whether golden, silver or coloured; pigments; clothes, shoes and socks; *do lo* flannelette [possibly *patola*, from Java]; glass mirrors, writing brushes and ink sticks; needles and knobs; all kinds of tables and chairs; metals; porcelains and stonewares; and all kinds of food. [All] were bought and sold here, and everyone got what he or she wanted.

Questions:

1. What kinds of relations existed between lowlanders and highlanders?
2. How did the state try to manage this relationship? Why?
3. What role did rivers play in the relationship?

Longer Selection

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Selections from Lê Quý Đôn's Descriptions of the South in the 1770s

Description of the Cham Country

[Vol. 2, pp. 85b-87b]

The Nguyễn ruler took over the land of the Cham, when he saw that the descendants of the king of Champa were weak. He divided the land into prefectures and counties, renamed the kingdom 'Thuận Thanh Tran,' and conferred on Chinh-thon-ba-hu the title Marquis Trung [*trung* means loyal].

In August of that year, the Nguyễn ruler declared Marquis Trung to be king of Thuận Thang Tran, with one of his subjects as *cao co'*, and four sons of the king whose names were Mon-lay-phu, Xac-lay-phu, Tao-thuyet-tuc and Xac-thuyet-phu, as *cai doi* [army officers]. The Nguyễn ruler then sent one official to be the *cai an*, in charge of the law in Thuận Thanh Tran.

According to the record of 1769, the gifts that Thuận Thanh Tran made to the Nguyễn were as follows: two male elephants (one was delivered at Binh Khang Dinh, and the other was replaced by 150 *quan* in money); 20 oxen (60 *quan* of money could be paid instead of one ox); six elephants' tusks; ten rhinoceros horns; 50 *can* [30 kilograms] of yellow wax; 500 white cotton

scarves; 200 skins of fish; 400 buckets of oil; 500 *la buong*,² 200 *bat* [100 litres] of black rice;³ one ship as long as 7 *tam* [22.4 metres].

In listing the gifts the king of Thuận Thanh Tran had to begin with: 'The subject of Thuận Thanh Tran, Ching-thon-ba-hu, falls on his knees to presents these gifts.'

The following concerns the King of Water and the King of Fire who lived in Nam Ban region.⁴

This country had about 50 villages. There is a very high mountain called B [cut-off] Nam, like a fortress for the area. The King of Water was to the east of the mountain, and the King of fire to the west. Each of them had several hundred people who lived in huts, cultivating in the slash-and-burn style. They planted their rice in January [lunar year] and harvested in May. They did not bring the rice home, instead they built a circular structure in the field to hold the rice.

Those people did not know the calendar; as soon as the people built the circular structure the king began to collect taxes. He rode on the elephant's back, followed by about ten subjects. Whenever they arrived at one village, they struck the gong three times. Then the people came out to build a hut for the king to live in because according to the custom there, if the king entered a common person's house he might bring misfortune to the family. The tax was not fixed and people could pay whatever they liked: a copper pot, a piece of white cotton cloth, a piece of sugarcane, or a bunch of bananas. Then the king went on to the other villages.

Both the kings were black and ugly, but all of their wives and concubines were beautiful and dressed in colourful Cham dresses.

A Visit to the Mekong Delta
[Vol. 2, pp. 90a-90b]

A trader named Dong Tram, who came from Chinh Hoa village in Nam Ban. Chinh, described his trip to the Gia Định [Saigon] area as follows.

He had gone to the Gia Định area more than ten times. Usually he went there in September or October [lunar year], and left in April or May. Gia Định could be reached within ten days and nights by sailing with the help of the wind.

He said that every time he had to pass through the Nhat Le seaport to see the official of the garrison, and then through the Eo seaport to see the transportation official to get a certification, and then out to sea. On the way to the Gia Định area, a place with some residents, called Vung Tau, would be reached first. Here you could ask people which place had good harvests. From here, going to the right, would reach the Seagate of Can Gio, going to the middle

² A kind of leaf used for weaving conical hats.

³ A type of sticky rice.

⁴ In 1471 Le Thanh Ton divided Champa into three regions: Nam Ban, Hoa Anh, and Chien Thanh.

would reach Gia Định, and going to the left would reach the Cua Dai and Cua Tieu [channels]. It was a forest of masts everywhere.

After the price was discussed and set, the traders would ask their servants to carry the rice to the ship. 1 *mạch* (60 cash) could buy 16 *dau* [16 litres, i.e. 3.75 cash per litre of rice]. Nowhere else can people buy rice as cheaply as here.

Rice Fields in Thuận Hoa

[Vol. 3, pp. 103b-105b]

When the army of the king [the Le army from the north] occupied Thuận Hoa in 1774, they waived the land tax there for two years. In April 1776 [the *tran phu nha mon*, an office acting both as a garrison and mediator] asked county officials to report the amount of government land, private land, land belonging to temples, land along the river banks, land of the *quan dien trang* and *quan don dien* categories, land belonging to patriarchal clans, and wasteland. The officials were only required to make a broad estimate rather than measure the land carefully. The procedure was finished within two months, and resulted in a total estimate of 153,181 *mau* [15,145 hectares] of cultivated land in Thuận Hoa, detailed as follows:

...

Abundance of Rice before the Tây Sơn

[Vol. 3, pp. 105b-106a]

The Nguyễn ruler managed the area of Thuận Hoa for more than 200 years, so that the villages and residents here were many. According to the records of 1773, there were nine counties in Thuận Hoa, and 126,857 people lived in 862 villages, hamlets and isolated settlements. The taxes of 153,000 *quan* which they paid instead of corvée seemed like a fortune. Yet the cultivated land was only 153,181 *mau* [551.5 sq km].

In the old days the traders in Đông Nai [in the south] used to transport rice and sell it in Phú Xuân. The price was only 3 *mạch* for 10 *thang* [23 litres] which equals one *hoc*, enough for one person's food for one month. That was why people here did not work hard on the land.

Now, as a result of the rebellion of Quy Nhơn [the Tây Sơn uprising], the people in the Gia Định area could not go to Phú Xuân, and everybody was worried about food. Therefore, when the army of the [Trịnh] king came, not only was the price of rice high, but the price of land was high too. The people in Huong Tra, Quảng Dien and Phu Vang disputed with each other about the land all the time; they did not hesitate in spending their money to fight for a piece of land.

The Taxation System
[Vol. 3, 122a-123b]

As the head of the village, the Nguyễn official called *tuong* than could collect the taxes from the people. Before 1665 the Nguyễn set a rule of presentations. Anyone who wanted to be a *tuong* than could be one if he had paid 35 *quan* to the Nguyễn ruler, seven *quan* to the government, and five *quan* for the officials' certification salary. Therefore everyone tried to be the first to pay the money and to become an official. Even at present you can find 16 or 17 *tuong* and more than 20 heads [*xa truong*] in a village. Every one of them works as an official, but the chief head has the word *tri* [to know] or *ap* [to escort] at the beginning of his title.

Every official had several dependent peasant households. These peasants were free from all government corvée, and their commissions were given to the official as his salary.

The Nguyễn ruler also asked the officials to *pay tien le hau phu* [money from the servants] and *gao le haut rung* [rice as a gift] to the Nguyễn ruler. They had to hire ships to carry them to Phú Xuân. The records for the 1769 read as follows:

...

Trade Taxes
[Vol. 4. pp. 2a-3a]

Taxes for local trade:

The taxes in 1744 on mountains, ponds, passes and markets in Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam amounted to 76,467.240 *quan*, of which the taxes from Quảng Nam amounted to six tenths. The taxes from Thuận Hóa were 11,222.254 *quan* [sic]. It was said that the taxes from Quảng Nam were levied as from the period of Truong Phuc Loan, but not by any former Nguyễn ruler.

Thuận Hóa had paid only tribute during the Hồng Đức period [1470-1497]; no tax had been paid before the reign of the Nguyễn. According to the official record of the Nguyễn in 1774, the rice [levied as] land tax and *cong thue* [official tax] amounted to 3,533,360 *thang* [8,130 kilolitres]; Quảng Nam was established after Lê Thánh Tôn fought with the Chams in 1471, and it had only three prefectures [*phu*]; after the Nguyễn attacked Champa and acquired most of its lands, its people became registered households, so that two more prefectures were established in Quảng Nam and many taxes were collected.

The people who lived in the two countries of Sa Boi and Thuận Bình were all barbarians. These counties were upstream from the districts [Nguyễn] of Cam Lộ in Dang Xuong county and Sai Nguyễn in Hai Lang county. [The people had] paid tribute during the Hồng Đức period, but the Nguyễn ruler now appointed some officials to collect taxes. There were two kinds of taxes: one was an official tax, paid to the government; the other was a personal tax, paid to the county magistrate as his salary.

There was an official in charge of collecting taxes from the two villages [*muong*] of Cha Bon and Thuong Ke in Sa Boi. The official tax for these two villages included: one male elephant at least 5.5 *thuoc* [2 metres tall]; two cotton curtains; 20 bolts of white cloth; 100 baskets of polished glutinous rice, each basket supposed to hold 30 *thang* [15 litres]; four pairs of rhinoceros horns; 20 big knives; two small baskets of flints [stone strike-a-lights], each basket supposed to hold 50 *thang* [25 litres]. If the official bought things, he paid three *mạch* for each basket; if he bought an ox he paid five *quan*; and the price of five *can* [3 kilograms] of yellow wax was 5.5 *quan*.

The two villages [*muong*] of Tram Bon and Xuong Kham in Thuam Binh county also had an official in charge of collecting taxes [which were approximately the same as the taxes paid by the two villages mentioned above]. If these four villages paid all the taxes specified, the officials would give them three ancient *quan* coins, one bolt of red satin and two bolts of thin silk, one *quan* coin for the elephants' care, one pig (equal to three *quan* coins), three jars of *nuoc mam* [fish sauce], three jars of wine, two sacks of rice and two baskets of salt. But they could not have these things if they did not pay enough taxes.

Trade in the Highlands

[Vol. 4, pp. 4a-6b]

Cam Lộ village of Dang Xuong county was upstream of Dieu [Ao] Giang [today's Cam Lộ River], which leads to Cua Viet [Viet Harbour] downstream and upstream to Ai Lao [Laos], so all the barbarians went upstream to the kingdoms of Lac Hon [Savannakhet] and Van Tuong [Vientiane], and to the prefectures of Tran Ninh [on the Laotian border of modern Nghe An province] and Quy Hop [Nghe An province]. From [Cam Lộ] village, people could arrive at the phurong [hamlet of] Khang Yen in a single day. Here was a tollgate named don Ba Trang, also called don Hieu Giang. By decree of the Nguyễn ruler, the traders who wanted to trade upstream should go to this tollgate to get a certificate before they intended to trade in upstream areas. The tax for trading in this area was 100 *quan* per person a year.

In two days one could travel from this tollgate [don Ba Trang], and arrive at the border of Laos which was on the edge of Dai Gian [Se Pone, or Xe Pon in Vietnamese]. Here the Nguyễn ruler set up the quarters for six *thuyen* named dinh Ai Lao [battalion at Laos].

On the right bank of the river at Cam Lộ village there was a tollgate called don Cay Lua. The regulation there was the same as at don Hieu Gaing [don Ba Trang], the traders paid taxes and received certificates to go to Bang Hieng and Van Tuong [Vientiane].

To the left of don Hieu Giang stood the don tuan Nguu Cuoc [Nguu Cuoc tollgate], where the tax payable was 120 *quan* per year.

Upstream from Hieu Giang on the left bank there were some barbarian villages which grew numerous plants and raised abundant livestock. Traders from other places often came with salt, fish sauce, dried fish, iron wares, copper pots, silver hairpins and bracelets in exchange for millet, chickens, ox, hemp, wax, rattan, mulberry bark [to produce paper],

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barbarian cloth, and curtains from the barbarian peoples. When the trading was finished, the traders hired elephants to carry the goods back to Cam Lộ.

The barbarians also carried goods to sell in Cam Lộ. One elephant could carry 60 buckets of rice, with each pair of buckets containing 20 bowls of rice [i.e. 600 bowls of rice in all]. There was also a barbarian market. They drove 300 oxen to sell in the market and the price of an ox was 10 *quan* at the most, while an elephant was worth two *thoi* [756 grams] of silver.

If the government imposed less tax on trading and stopped collecting the tax for elephants, then the people could bring more rice from Laos to feed the people at the border and extract large profits from the trade.

According to the old regulations decreed by the Nguyễn rulers, there were two kinds of taxes; tolls, and the tax on *tho nghi* [local collection] from the people who went back and forth up and downstream (e.g. to obtain rattan). The toll was as follows:

Traded item:	Tax:
1 elephant	2 <i>quan</i> of tax, 1 <i>quan</i> in <i>cong phac</i> [commission]
1 slave	As above
1 <i>tael</i> of gold	5 <i>mạch</i> of tax, 5 <i>mạch</i> in commission
1 <i>thoi</i> [bar] of silver	8 <i>mạch</i> in tax, 4 <i>mạch</i> in commission
1 <i>quan</i> of ancient coins	24 cash in tax, 12 cash in commission
1 <i>can</i> [600 grams] of beeswax	1 <i>quan</i> of tax
1 <i>can</i> [600 grams] of crushed copper	1 <i>quan</i> of tax
1 <i>can</i> [600 grams] of silkworms	1 <i>quan</i> of tax
1 copper pot	1 <i>quan</i> of tax
1 basket of cotton	1 <i>quan</i> of tax
2 buckets of rattan bark, betel, gunny, hempseed, rice, beans or millet	1 <i>quan</i> of tax
2 buckets of rattan	3,000 cash in tax
1 pig	40 cash in tax, 12 cash in commission
1 ox	2 <i>mạch</i> in tax
1 inferior quality, wooden raft	3 <i>mạch</i> in tax, 3 <i>mạch</i> in commission
1 boat	30 cash in tax and commission
1 elephant or 1 boat for carrying goods across the river	30 cash in tax and commission

Cotton, silkworms, wax and *quan* of money were not to be carried by elephant. People who were specialist traders should pay the *tho nghi* tax:

1 elephant	3 oxen, or 3 pigs or more
1 <i>quan</i> of money	

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1.4 *quan* of *tho nghi* tax
24 cash of *tho nghi* tax

8 *mạch* of *tho nghi* tax (alternatively 2
oxen or 1 pig respectively)

Nevertheless, the people who produced perfume in Mai Dan village, who carried timber in Phuroc Giang and My Cuong villages and who traded sundry goods in Huong Can were exempted from paying taxes.

Upstream from Sai Nguyễn in Hai Lang county there were 12 hamlets (*phuong*), all of whose people lived along small rivers.

Personal Taxes

[Vol. 4, p. 7a]

As regards the personal tax collected by the official in Sai Nguyễn: he bought 20 baskets of glutinous rice with 30 *thang* [15 litres] in each basket, and paid 3 *mạch* for each basket; he bought 1 can [600 grams] of wax which should cost 5 *quan* but he paid only 5 *mạch*.

The personal tax collected for the salary of the official of Sai Nguyễn was: 20,000 *tau la co*, eight rolls of long (dragon) rattan, eight rolls of iron rattan, 10,000 cash worth of rice, one basket of dried meat, 1 basket of mixed perfume, 1 pair of rattan mats, 15 baskets of glutinous rice each holding 15 *thang* [7.5 litres], and two baskets of grain holding 30 *thang* [15 litres].

The Tax on Highlanders

[Vol. 4, pp. 8a-9a]

The three Nguyễn [districts] of Yen Dai, Yen Neo and Cam Ly were located upriver of Khang Loc county. The people there were barbarians. According to the tax record for 1744, the tax collected from here was very substantial indeed. The tax collected in Yen Dai district was as followsL

First grade:

Vu Phan Trien (and his wife and children): 15 *quan* new year's money, 45 *quan* of tax;

Vu Phan Da (as above): 17 *quan* new year's money, 53 *quan* tax.

Vu Phan Manh (and his wife): 15 *quan* new year's money, 37 *quan* tax;

Phan Tinh (and his wife): 15 *quan* new year's money, 38 *quan* tax.

Third Grade:

Vu Phan Xung (and his wife): 10 *quan* new year's money, 35 *quan* tax;

Vu Phan Dinh (and his wife): 10 *quan* new year's money, 34 *quan* tax;

Phan Tinh (and his wife): 8 *quan* new year's money, 24 *quan* tax;

A-y-Vu: 7 *quan* new year's money, 13 *quan* tax;

Phan Duc: 5 *quan* new year's money, 10 *quan* tax.

There were some transmigrants gathered into two small villages under the control of Yen Dai district. [The village of] Tong Vung paid 35 *quan* tax, while Chau Bau paid 33.6 *quan*.

There were only four Siamese *dinh* [tax-payers] in each village; their taxes and new year's money were 15 *quan*. Barbarian people such as the Y Ta man and Dao Hội *man* paid 12 *quan* tax.

The taxes and new year's money collected in the three districts of Yen Dai, Yen Neo and Cam Ly amounted to 994.63 *quan*. Of this amount 612 *quan* were for taxes. The new year's money was used for the rites open the mountains (*mo nui*) and pray for good resulting from harvests (*cau hóa*), for feasts (*an mung va hat xuong*), and for some of the expenses resulting from liaison between the village heads spreading announcements among the people.

Lowland-Highland Relations

[Vol. 4, pp. 9b-10a]

The Nguyễn ruler sent Marquis Minh Duc, whose family name was Lê, to be the official of [the territory of] *Con-suat*⁵ and control the *man* people [barbarians] there. He organized the villagers into a force to defend themselves from the attacks of the evil *man* [barbarians who did not obey the Nguyễn ruler]. Another responsibility of the official was to collect taxes.

Any person who lived downstream and wanted to trade upstream had to apply to his or her village head, stating when he or she would return, and [also] had to pay the taxes. [Traders] were not allowed to exceed the [stated] time limit as a prophylactic measure against possible future trouble.

People who went upstream had to pay 30 cash for the boat, whereas people who went downstream had to pay with two bundles of the goods which they had traded. Seven *mạch* had to be paid for ten trees of *kien-kien*, two *mạch* for ten ordinary trees.

There was a furnace for forging knives on the way to the mountains. Traders who bought 100 large knives paid 1.2 *quan* [of tax], and 6 *mạch* for 100 small knives. The boats which carried 200 *can* [120 kilograms] of charcoal paid 7 *mạch*.

Coinage

[Vol. 4, pp. 21a-22a]

Thuận Hóa and Quan Nam did not produce copper. Each year when the Japanese ships came with red copper, the court ordered its officials to buy it immediately at its cost of 45 *quan* in ancient money. If the ships from Fujian and Canton carried red copper, they had to declare it and sell it at the price mentioned above. The traders could only buy what was left.

⁵ Meaning of this term is not identified in original source.

The coins produced before Kai Yuan of the Tang dynasty, and before Chun Hua and Xiang Fu of the Song dynasty, were excellent. They could not be damaged even if buried underground. These coins were numerous before 1743 and 1744 in the north, but for unknown reasons they were rarely seen after that. It was not until 1774 when the army of Lê went into Thuận Hóa that they saw more than 300,000 *quan* in excellent coins in the storehouse of the Nguyễn ruler, without any bad coins among them, not even one. Only then did the people realize that it was because the ships had carried these good coins from the north to Thuận Hóa.

Coins cast by the Mạc with the characters 'Thai Binh An Phap' were also carried to Thuận Hóa. At first the Nguyễn rulers also copied this kind of coin with the characters of 'Thai Binh.' They could occasionally be seen in the market but they carried a value only one third of today's coins.

The Nguyễn rulers also used coins [minted by] Kang Xi [1662-1722] of the Qing dynasty, but people tended to melt them down to make copper wares, so the coins became scarcer. Some coins were cast during the period of Dinh Quoc Cong [Nguyễn Phúc Chu, 1691-1725], but this was very costly.

Hieu Quoc Cong [Nguyễn Phúc Khóat, r. 1738-1765] accepted the suggestion of a Chinese man called Huang to buy tin from the Dutch and cast tin coins in Xa Luong Quan. The cost of [producing] 100 *can* [60 kilograms] was eight *quan*.

The lead coin was copied from the Song dynasty Xiang Fu coins. It was initially of very good quality, thick and hard; it could be melted down but not broken. On top of that, the Nguyễn ruler removed the ban against private individuals casting coins, although people rarely availed themselves of the right. Initially the lead coinage was very convenient both to officials and to the common people.

Therefore the court began to store copper coins and not to issue them to the common people. Because the copper coins became more and more expensive, the people vied with each other in casting lead coins, and more than one hundred foundries were established. One kind of lead coin called "Thien Minh Thong Bao" had black lead mixed in and was very thin and small. People refused to accept it because it was ugly. Thus lead coin dropped dreadfully in value, but at the end three lead coins equaled one copper coin. Even so, people would rather pick out the copper coins and leave the lead coins. The ships from overseas refused to accept lead coins, rather they preferred to exchange rice and salt for gold, silver and sundry goods, and then leave.

Coins cast by the victorious Le in Thuận Hóa

[Vol. 4 pp 23a-23b]

In 1776, after the army of Lê came in to Thuận Hóa, the Lê officials collected the damaged copper guns they had pillaged during the war, and some heavy copper wares, to cast coins bearing the characters for Canh Hung Thuận Bao with each coin weighing 0.1 *lang* [4 grams].

The casting began on the 20th February and finished on the 30th June [by lunar calendar]. 790 *ta* [47,000 kilograms] of copper were used. To every *ta* [100 *can* or 60 kilograms] of copper, people added 15.6 *can* [9.4 kilograms] of tin and 43.4 *can* [26 kilograms] of lead; from this combined weight of 159 *kan* [95.4 kilograms], 38 *quan* could be cast.

Finally 30,362 of *quan* were cast, but the salary for the craftsmen (seven *quan* for every 100 *can*, and 5,593 *quan* all together) had to be taken out. In addition, the cost of buying the charcoal and olive oil [sic] was 779 *quan* [approximately one *quan* for 100 *can* of copper], leaving 23,990 *quan* [net].

The Duty on Overseas Trade
 [Vol 4, pp. 31a-32a]

Thuận Hóa is connected with Quảng Nam both by land and by sea. Going south from Quảng Nam led to some other countries, and the trip by sea from Fujian and Canton took only three to four days. It was therefore a place in which ships have gathered from ancient times. Ever since the Nguyễn occupied the area, they have gained much from the taxes on the shipping trade. According to an official who used to impose the duties on the ships, the arrival and departure taxes for the various ships were as follows:

	Tax on arrival (in <i>quan</i>)	Tax on departure (in <i>quan</i>)
Shanghai	3,000	[not mentioned]
Canton	3,000	300
Fujian	2,000	200
Hainan Island	500	50
Europe	8,000	800
Macao	4,000	400
Japan	4,000	400
Siam	2,000	500
Philippines	2,000	200
Palembang	500	50
Ha Tien	300	30
Som Do (Red River delta)	300	30

In 1771, sixteen ships arrived at Hội An and 38,000 *quan* of taxes were collected in duties. In 1772, twelve ships came to Hội An and 14,300 *quan* were collected in duties. In 1773, six ships came to Hội An and 3,200 *quan* were collected in duties.

Trade at Hội An

[Vol. 4, pp 34b-35b]

The following statement was made by a Cantonese trader whose name is Chen.

It is only six days and nights from Guangzhou to Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam on the sea, [then proceeding] either from the seaport of Han along the Phú Xuân River [Huong Giang] to Phõ Thanh Hà, or to Hội An via its seaport of Đại Chiêm. It takes only four days and nights and one *canh* [about two hours] to Son Nam, but no goods other than rice can be obtained. Furthermore, only pepper is available from Thuận Hóa, whereas such an abundance of goods can be carried from Quảng Nam that seemingly nothing cannot be obtained there; it is superior to all other ports of Southeast Asia. The goods come from Thuận Hóa, Điện Bàn, Quy Nhơn, Quảng Ngãi, Bình Khang and Nha Trang, carried by ships, boats and horse, by land and by sea, and assembled in Hội An. That is why the Chinese like to come and buy goods to carry back. The goods are so abundant here that even a hundred large ships could not carry them all away from here.

As to the prices, he said that in Quảng Nam people would call 100 *can* [60 kilograms] as equal to one *ta*. The costs per *ta* were as follows:

betel nut	3	<i>quan</i>
pepper	20	<i>quan</i>
round cardamon	5	<i>quan</i>
sappanwood	6	<i>quan</i>
<i>ammonmum xanthiodes</i> nuts (related to cardamom plant)	12	<i>quan</i>
ebony wood	6	<i>mạch</i>
lacquer wood	1	<i>quan</i>
cyprus wood	1.2	<i>quan</i>
rhinoceros horn	500	<i>quan</i>
edible bird's nest	200	<i>quan</i>
deers' antlers	15	<i>quan</i>
shark's fin	14	<i>quan</i>
dried shrimps	6	<i>quan</i>
snails' heads	12	<i>quan</i>
hawksbill turtle	180	<i>quan</i>
elephants' tusks	40	<i>quan</i>
<i>be lua ma</i> [not identified]	12	<i>quan</i>
crystal sugar	4	<i>quan</i>
white sugar	2	<i>quan</i>
1 <i>can</i> of calambac	120	<i>quan</i>
1 <i>thoi</i> [bar] of gold	180	<i>quan</i>
1 bolt of thin silk	3.5	<i>quan</i>

**Primary Source Document with Questions (DBQs) on
SELECTIONS FROM LÊ QUÝ ĐÔN'S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SOUTH IN THE 1770s**

Here the best were the Chinese cassia trees, agalloch from the eaglewood, and pearls. Red sandalwood was also produced here, but the quality was not as good as in Siam

When asked how well the goods brought from China sold here, the man said that the goods sold out very quickly, [and soon] nothing was left.

Coloured gauze, satin, brocade and cloth; all kinds of medicinal herbs; paper whether golden, silver or coloured; slender sticks of incense; threads whether golden, silver or coloured; pigments; clothes, shoes and socks; *do lo* flannelette [possibly *patola*, from Java]; glass mirrors, writing brushes and ink sticks; needles and knobs; all kinds of tables and chairs; metals; porcelains and stonewares; and all kinds of food. [All] were bought and sold here, and everyone got what he or she wanted.

Questions:

1. How did this Northern scholar-official portray a South that he had never before seen?
2. What different ethnic groups existed in the South of the eighteenth century?
3. Describe the economic situation in the South, both internal and external.