

NEW DATA ON MEDIEVAL VIETNAM THROUGH THE SONG SOURCES AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE VIETNAMESE OFFICIAL ANNALS

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This paper deals with “*Lingvai daida*” (Viet. “*Linh ngoai dai dap*”) written in 1178 by Zhou Gui-fei, who served as a military official (“*tunpan*”) in the southern and southwestern parts of Guangxi, the boundary province in the South of the Song empire, and new data on the Viets inside Guangxi and outside it – in Jiaozhi (Dai Viet). Translations and study of such historical and geographical description of the southern countries and peoples were initiated by Russian scholars at the Moscow Centre for Vietnamese Studies as a part of the project “Chinese Sources on Traditional Vietnam”.

The gradual translation and study of the whole file of Chinese sources on early medieval Vietnam is a new direction of Vietnamese studies in Russia. The most interesting is, that they contain a view from outside Vietnam, which cannot be substituted by the other sources. Like the annals of any other country, Vietnamese chronicles do not give us too much obvious information. Besides, they contain a great amount of special information, especially concerning some categories of sources. This report will be devoted mainly to such sources.

Our experience in analysing Chinese texts, which contain information on the South, is rather significant, but only the well-known texts of dynastic historical records or special descriptions of the South or special descriptions of the South were usually under observation. Other sources mostly remained out of the scholars’ attention. At best, in these texts the more or less large fragments with the direct evidence on Vietnam were searched, but, as a rule, any small mentions of it in connection with other items of Vietnamese and not strictly Vietnamese life were not investigated.

The goal of research, carried out by Russian Vietnamologists in this sphere, is analysis of *all sorts of information* on Vietnam, available in *all Vietnamese and Chinese sources*. We should take into consideration all the various categories of texts, where these messages can be found. It seems to be of great importance, because a category of the text, the purpose of the author, and the genre

determine the character of their information. Different sources contain different information. Besides, the different authors' attitudes to the information are specific, whether it is the information of a personal order or specialized descriptions, or biographies – all of them are devoted to certain aspects, and their descriptions considerably differ from the official texts.

Let us notice, that the research is facilitated by computing methods. When the text is already brought into a computer, the mechanism of computer search considerably improves a historian's research. The principle of this method consists, at first, in searching all direct mentions of Vietnam or the Viets; secondly – in searching for all the mentions of those words, terms, persons, etc., which are located close to the direct mentions; thirdly – in searching certain groups of mentions, which could be found together with the data, obtained through the previous procedure.

For example, previous scholars did not pay attention to the mentions of the provinces Qin and Yong, the rivers Zuo and You, or the nationality Dan, but were only eager to search for the direct mentions of Giao and Annam. Now we already know, that descriptions of these territories and realities contain certain information, which does not occur in the passages on other provinces, other rivers and other nationalities of the Southern China. So, there is a certain mechanism of searching.

The same could be stated about the sources. Nowadays we are taking into consideration some new sources on Vietnamese history, but it is rather difficult to guess, either there are any data on Vietnam, or no, only on the basis of their titles. All this allows us to substantially expand the information base on Vietnamese history for the period of the 11th – 12 centuries.

This paper deals with one of three basic Song sources, which describe the South of China and Vietnam as well. It is «*Lingvai daida*» (1178) (Viet. «*Linh ngoai dai dap*»), translated into Russian by Dr. M.Yu. Ulyanov.

First of all, it is necessary to notice, that the second half of the 12th century in China was the period of the increased interest to the South. At that time a lot of books appeared written by competent authors, who had much information and treated the inhabitants of distant areas with sympathy. Descriptions like this could not appear earlier, because the mass migration of the Chinese to these areas of the South did not take place before that, and, naturally, there was not such a lively interest in such out-of-the-way places as the provinces of Qin and Yong on the Vietnamese border or even more western areas in Guangsi. Generally, our assumptions, that this source could contain important evidence on Vietnamese history were completely justified.

«*Lingvai daida*» was written by Zhou Guifei (Viet. Chu Khu Phi), a highly educated military official («*tunpan*»), who knew the South thoroughly, especially the areas in the southern and southwestern parts of Guangsi. In many respects, he used his personal supervisions and acquaintances to the described subjects. All the mentions, concerning the middle of the third quarter of the 12th century, are of great interest to us. It was the period, when he served as a military official in the South. At the same time, he also compiled the informa-

tion, which had been absorbed earlier by the Song higher administration of the South.

In this short paper we will try to designate the main items of information, contained in «Lingvai daida». There are so many new and very important materials for Vietnamese history, that in the nearest future, I hope, a number of articles and, moreover, a monograph, devoted to this problem, will be published.

The first part of the paper includes an analysis of some new historical data, contained in the description of Jiaozhi (Dai Viet); the second part – the descriptions of the image of Vietnamese state; and the third one – the passages with a maximum of new indirect information, that is all mentions of Dai Viet in connection with any other events and facts.

This source is well-known to world and Vietnamese scholars. But till now there has been no systematic research and analysis to see, what evidence was included and what were omitted by the author of «Lingvai daida» in his work. In my opinion, this kind of research should be a preliminary stage of any quoting of a historical source text, because it gives a context, determining our attitude to this or that citation.

PART ONE

Though «Lingvai daida»'s general description of the country is quite similar to the other Song sources, it contains a lot of unique and interesting facts. The author particularly describes the administrative division of Dai Viet in the Song period, with mention of a number of administrative units, not mentioned in Vietnamese sources. He also indicates the overland and sea routes, the key points and distances in days between them; information unavailable in Vietnamese sources. The Vietnamese state history starts with the Dinh dynasty. It is worthy of attention, because Vietnamese medieval historiography aspired to connect the first national state with the Ngo dynasty.

The differences in dates between the Vietnamese chronicles and «Lingvai daida», are essential. It is, on one hand, the result of Chinese officials' insufficient knowledge, and, on the other hand, on the contrary, – a consequence of their better knowledge of certain facts, especially on the period of the 12th century. Dinh Bo Linh's diplomatic missions to China are described in more detail than in the Vietnamese annals, and there is a list of king's court grades, which are lacking in Vietnamese sources. Certain honourable titles are also specified (Vietnamese annals point only at some of them), as well as the events in connection with diplomatic activities. We may assume, that the Chinese knew more about them, because this information was stored more carefully in China than in Vietnam. Le Hoan's usurpation is also marked. The wars against him were described very briefly, because they were unsuccessful for China.

The conterminous dates appear in the chronicle from the beginning of the Late Lie period, since 1010. Further dates coincide with increasing frequency. The consolidation of the Late Lie dynasty is described briefly, and the correspondent passages are less detailed, than in Vietnamese annals. But the diplo-

matic relations with the Song are described in more detail. It is interesting, that the personal names may be absolutely different, and may be partially conterminous. It is a theme of a special research, as the Chinese had no reason to fabricate them.

The country's name was changed when the third monarch of the Late Ly dynasty was at the throne. The mentions of king's title names appear with him. It partially coincides with the data of Vietnamese annals, but it is placed in another historical context.

The new data on Ly Thuong Kiet, especially on the early stages of his biography is very interesting. The facts, written by the Chinese author in this connection are rather strange, and later also should be an object of special research. The military conflict between Vietnam and China in the 11-th century is mentioned briefly, but the source admits the Song's defeat. The omission of the events between 1110 and 1120 is also very interesting. The evidence on the first kings of the Second Late Ly period (1128–1225), first of all, on the Emperor Ly Than Tong (1128–1138) is also interesting. The mysterious episodes: the immediate departure to Champa of the pregnant Emperor's wife or concubine and her returning back to Dai Viet with a son, happened just in the same year. That is, both in Vietnamese annals, and in a Chinese source the events of the year 1120 in many respects are rather confusing and not clear. It is extremely important, and allows us to approve the assumption, that the transition from the First Late Ly period to the Second Late Ly period took place in an atmosphere of a serious struggle within the king's court. «Lingvai daida» writes very clearly about the dynastic crisis.

In this part of the text the names do not completely coincide. It should be outlined, that, though Zhou Guifei at that time was not yet an official in Guangsi, this information was known to his older colleagues and later could be delivered to him verbally or in written form.

When Zhou Guifei served in Guangsi, Ly Cao Tong (1176–1210) made an attempt to deceive the Chinese Emperor. For some time he was signing and sending letters on behalf of his father, The Emperor Ly Anh Tong (1138–1175). It also testifies to the existence of some conflicts at the Vietnamese court, and that the Vietnamese authorities did not intend to give much information about their internal affairs to the Chinese. At that time Zhou Guifei could personally take part in the consideration of this strategic information, but practically many facts until the actual death of the Emperor Ly Nhan Tong (1072–1127) were not clear for him either. It is extremely interesting, that, staying not far from Dai Viet, the Chinese were so eager to know more details about the situation there, but sometimes they could not obtain the required information.

PART TWO

Let us consider the general estimation of Vietnamese state by «Lingvai daida». The author describes in detail the attempts of Vietnam to be equal to the

Chinese Empire. It concerns the status of the country (as a state), monarchs' posthumous names, slogans of their reigns, honourable ranks and the general name of the country, translated as «The Great Viet» (Dai Viet). The Viets rulers' desire to consider their country as an Empire, equal to the Song, was perfectly realized in China, but, nevertheless, the Chinese authorities reasonably did not break off relations with Dai Viet.

Addressing the particular data on the country, we can see, that practically in all cases, «*Lingvai daida*» puts at our disposal the more detailed (in comparison with Vietnamese sources) information on various spheres of the state and society activities. It also concerns the titles of the monarchs' relatives and ranks of the senior civil and military officials. There is also a final remark in a passage, that all higher officials in Vietnam are obliged to perform the military function. These are the basic social characteristics, which always distinguish the Vietnamese, but it is very interesting to see it in the Chinese author's integrated estimation. The ways of officials' promotion are very precisely described, which allows us to systematize the appropriate data on Vietnam. The passage on Guards also has more details, than we can find in Vietnamese annals. The author repeats, that, from the Chinese point of view, all these social realities contradict the proper status.

The description of the middle officials' strata is of great importance, first of all, such details as the ways of their promotion, remuneration, etc. Vietnamese annals usually provide very fragmentary data on these items, therefore, as a rule, we were compelled to use the information from later periods, transferring the appropriate conclusions to earlier times. There is a lot of new data on military organization, allowances of the soldiers, judicial procedures etc., and all this information does not contradict the evidence of more general character (or of later origin), but essentially supplements them.

In order to see the specific characters of the source, let us take, for instance, a large fragment on the Viet's diplomatic mission to China in 1173, which brought a numerous batch of elephants. In this case we get facts on Vietnam from one of the least significant for the history of a society points of view, but the description is very circumstantial, and it allows us to make a lot of conclusions about the things outside the theme of diplomatic missions. The reader can see the Vietnamese mission in all aspects of its activity, according to the author's notion. Here we see the Vietnamese officials in operation and in contact with the Chinese state – as a “photo”, instead of a list of the author's conclusions.

The Viets' appearance, as described by Zhou Guifei, is not like the Chinese at all; the male and female holiday and everyday clothes and ornaments are similar to the well-known images of the late Middle Ages and modern time. The author's attention was attracted, for example, by a small, but very impressive detail – the appearance of an educated person in Vietnam. Certainly, all these data are not available in Vietnamese sources, as their authors considered all these details to be obvious and, consequently, they did not mention them.

PART THREE

We systematized all facts on the Viets, scattered in different passages of «Lingvai daida». It is extremely important, that we have found the description of a people, which was directly called in the text as the descendants of «lac viets» (in the province of Qin). The place names, encountered in the text, are sometimes very ancient and linked with the Viets («the Jiao sea», for example). In the 12th century various ethnic groups in Guangdong and Fujian provinces were not still recognized by the Chinese as Hua, but as Viets. The descriptions of coastal people, who lived in the South of the Song Empire, as well as at the coast of Dai Viet are very valuable. We should interpret also the sacred number «18», classify some new toponyms with the southern elements «au» and «lac» in them and which cannot be found in other post-Han sources.

While writing about the economy, the author often points out, that the economic realities in Guangxi province are similar to those in Jiao. The same notes can be found in the numerous descriptions of herbs and animals in Southern China, which do not refer directly to Vietnam, but it is underlined, that they are widespread there too.

The citation of a 9th century decree, inscribed on a stone, and which Zhou Guifei had read himself, is a subject for a special investigation.

There is only fragmentary information on the forming of the Vietnamese-Chinese border at that time, but it is extremely essential for us. We can find in «Lingvai daida» certain facts on the actions of the Chinese Empire, undertaken from the ancient period, to develop the Viets' territories to the East from the modern border between Vietnam and China. I mean two small provinces Qin (Viet. Kham) and Lian (Viet. Liem), and district Hepu (Viet. Hop Pho), which, especially Qin province, were part of the territory of Vietnam for a long time, and where some groups of Viet population (accentuated by the author) still remained up to Zhou Guifei's period. In a broader scale this remark is true in reference to all Jiao and Guang regions. The data in this group of mentions do not coincide with the corresponding facts of the dynastic chronicles, and it is also an interesting field for future research.

The text contains a good deal of new evidence on Viets navigators, their sea routes and methods of navigation, Dai Viet's ships, rafts and post stations, as well as on transport routes inside Vietnam, directed not only to the North, but also to the South and to the West. The description of trade is much more detailed than in Vietnamese sources. The author of «Lingvai daida» enumerates export and import goods, explains trading procedures and peculiarities, dwells on markets, the character of Viet merchants, their dodges and cunning. There is a perfect comparison between rich merchants and small dealers.

In connection with the analysis of the detailed messages we should notice, that, for example, the evidences on the ambassadors' life can be found in the part of the text, where the fabrics are described (the case in question is a very picturesque informal meeting between Vietnamese ambassadors and Chinese local administrators). Descriptions of products contain invaluable mentions of

Vietnamese woven technologies and other crafts. Quite a few mentions about Vietnamese hieroglyphic characters, quite distinct from the Chinese are extremely important in spite of their small number. The author considers the fact of national script's applying at that time as something very obvious, and, probably, it was spread much wider than we supposed.

The classification and analysis of these desultory items from the third part of the text has begun, and the results are very promising. In Fan Chengda's work «Guihai yuheng zhi» (1175), to a lesser extent, in Zhao Rugua's «Zhu fan zhi» (1225) and in the other Song texts we do not find brand-new descriptions of Vietnam, but a large number of indications on various spheres of its life, contained in the description of plants, animals, etc., encountered in Guangsi. The work on collecting and putting in order such data helps to supplement fragmentary information. In future this work promise many more results, than analysing those obvious and partly explored facts from the Chinese dynastic annals and some other official sources.

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In the end of my short paper I would like to note, that the study of «Lingvai daida» is based on the translations into Russian of the three proper Song sources of this sort, for the most part, already completed by Ulyanov M. Yu. The first is Zhou Guifei's «Lingvai daida», the second is the work of his teacher and chief Fan Chengda's «Guihai yuheng zhi», and the third – Zhao Rugua's «Zhu fan zhi», written a little bit later.

The author of «Zhu fan zhi» describes overseas countries according to another questionnaire and from other positions. The comparison of the well-known work of Sao Rug with the other two sources convinces us, that Chinese sources on the South of the Chinese Empire are very informative. They supplement, but do not replace each other. We hope to publish all three texts of translations, but already now the work on them is not limited by this paper, they have become accessible not only to Russian Vietnamology, but to Russian Oriental Studies too.

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