

Perspectives on the 1540 Mac Surrender to the Ming

On November 30, 1540, Mac Dang Dung 莫登庸, the founder and former emperor of the Mac 莫 dynasty of Dai Viet 大越 (Annam 安南), crossed the border into China and surrendered to the Ming dynasty. Ming civil and military officials stood waiting in pavilions specially built for the occasion as Mac Dang Dung entered the Zhennan 鎮南 border gate near Pingxiang 憑祥 with a retinue of more than forty officials, elders, and royal family members. By most accounts, the surrender of the Mac was a lavish event, and replete with tokens of Mac submission and Ming superiority.¹ According to the *Vietnamese Chronicle* (*Dai Viet su ky toan thu* 大越史記全書):

Mac Dang Dung, his nephew, [nine ministers], and others went through Zhennan Pass [into China]. Each was bound with ropes around their necks. They went towards the pavilion of the Ming and prostrated themselves barefoot. They kneeled with bare heads to present their petition of surrender, gave a full account of the country's land, soldiers, people, and officials, and then awaited punishment. They gave the Ming several border villages, because they were willing to belong [to the Ming] and again be subordinate to Qinzhou 欽州 [a Ming administrative seat]. Mac Dang Dung even asked to receive the calendar and a seal, and carefully held

FOR THEIR helpful comments, I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for *Asia Major*, the participants at the conference Maritime Frontiers of Asia, Pennsylvania State University (2013), and Christopher Moore.

¹ See, e.g., Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, *Ming shi* 明史 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996; hereafter cited as *MS*) 321, p. 8309; Zhao Tang 趙堂, *Junzheng beili* 軍政備例 (Beijing: Zhonghua quanguo tushuguan wenxian, 1999), pp. 573–75. Essentially the same account is recorded in Le Quy Don 黎貴惇, *Dai Viet thong su* 大越通俗 (Saigon: Bo van hoa giao duc va thanh nien, 1973; hereafter cited as *DVTS*), p. 20. Also Jiang Meizhong 江美中, *Annan laiwei jilue* 安南來威輯略 (Beijing: Xianzhuang Press, 2006; hereafter cited as *ALJ*), p. 59; Gu Yingtai 谷應泰, *Mingshi jishi benmo* 明史紀事本末 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997) j. 22. For a slightly different and more concise account, see Wang Shizhen 王世貞, *Annan zhuan* 安南傳 (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1969) 1, pp. 52–53. For a more recent description, see John Dardess, *Ming China (1368–1644): A Concise History of a Resilient Empire* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), p. 5.

on to them until they could be updated. They also sent Mac Dang Dung's nephew [and others] to present the petition of surrender in Yanjing 燕京.²

The ropes twined around their necks symbolized Mac willingness to receive whatever punishment Zhu Houcong 朱厚燾, the Jiajing 嘉靖 emperor of the Ming (r. 1521–1567) wished to dispense.

Four years previously, in 1536, the Ming Inner Court had finally brought up for discussion the violent usurpation of the Le 黎 dynasty (1428–1527) by Mac Dang Dung and his subsequent assumption of the throne of Dai Viet. As a tributary state of the Ming, the Le state was due Ming support in the face of external threats. Zhu Houcong's decision, though late, came with ardor. At the urging of his minister of rites and later grand secretary Xia Yan 夏言, he supported drastic action to punish the usurpation. His resolve was strengthened on March 13, 1537, by the arrival in Beijing of Trinh Duy Lieu 鄭惟憭, an envoy from the exile Le court. Trinh Duy Lieu had braved a long and harrowing journey to lay his plaint before the Ming emperor. He claimed that Mac Dang Dung had pushed the Le royal family members into exile, killed the remaining Le ruler, usurped the throne, and blocked Le communications with the Ming. He urged Zhu Houcong to use force to reinstate the Le, with the exiled prince Le Ninh 黎寧 as ruler.³ Rejecting several memorials advising against war, Zhu Houcong, Xia Yan and their allies in the Ministry of War charged Mac Dang Dung with ten crimes, declared war on his state, and began the process of mobilizing troops.⁴

According to officially-sponsored histories, including *Mingshi jishi benmo* 明史紀事本末, the *Ming Veritable Records* 明實錄, and the eighteenth-century *History of the Ming*, or *Mingshi* 明史, Mac Dang Dung's

² Chen Jinghe 陳荆和, ed., *Daietsu shiki zensho* 大越史記全書 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Toyo bunka kenkyujo fuzoku Toyogaku bunken senta, 1984; hereafter cited as *TT*), p. 847. Yanjing refers to Beijing.

³ *MS* 321, p. 8331; *TT*, p. 845; *DVTS*, p. 19a; Chiu Ling-yeong, Chan Hok-lam, Chan Cheung, and Lo Wem, eds., *Ming shilu zhong zhi dongnan ya shiliao* 明實錄中之東南亞史料 (Hong Kong: Hsueh-tsin Press, 1976; hereafter cited as *MSL*), p. 498; Li Wenfeng 李文鳳, *Yue jiao shu* 越嶠書 (1540; Tainan: Siku quanshu cunmu congshu, 1996; hereafter cited as *YJS*), p. 36; Yan Congjian 嚴從簡, *Shuyu zhousi lu* 殊域周咨錄 (1574; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993; hereafter cited as *SZL*), pp. 209–15. For two excellent and thorough overviews of Ming–Mac tensions and their resolution, see Cheng Wing-sheong 鄭永常, *Zhengzhan yu qishou: Ming dai Zhong Yue guanxi yanjiu* 征戰與棄守, 明代中越關係研究] (Tainan: Guoli chengong daxue chubanzu, 1998), esp. p. 160; and Nam Nguyen, “Writing as Response and as Translation: Jiandeng Xinhua and the Evolution of the Chuanqi Genre, Particularly in Vietnam,” Ph.D. diss. (Harvard University, 2005), pp. 262–91.

⁴ *MS* 321, p. 8332.

decision to surrender was motivated by his terror of the Ming army. As these sources tell it, in a campaign to overawe Mac, the Ming amassed nearly 120,000 troops at the border, put a bounty of 20,000 pieces of gold on the heads of Mac and his son, and offered to reward and retain Mac-dynasty officials willing to betray their ruler.⁵ In the face of such overwhelming pressure, the story goes, Mac Dang Dung had no choice but to submit.

Vietnamese histories like *Dai Viet su ky toan thu* and *Dai Viet thong su* 大越通史 (*General History of Dai Viet*) converge with Chinese official histories to tell a story of Mac submission. This similarity is not surprising; *Dai Viet thong su* and the relevant sections of the *Vietnamese Chronicle* were written after the Mac had lost control of Thang Long 昇龍 (present-day Hanoi) in 1592 under the restored Le, and treat the Mac period as an illegitimate interregnum. Mac records were destroyed or absorbed into Le-sponsored texts.⁶ While officially-sponsored Chinese sources emphasize Mac Dang Dung's fear and total submission, the Vietnamese sources imply that the Mac liberally bribed Ming officials and border guards to bring about the rapprochement. The Vietnamese perspective confirms the Ming portrait of Mac Dang Dung as corrupt and cowardly, and also reveals the moral turpitude of the Ming.⁷

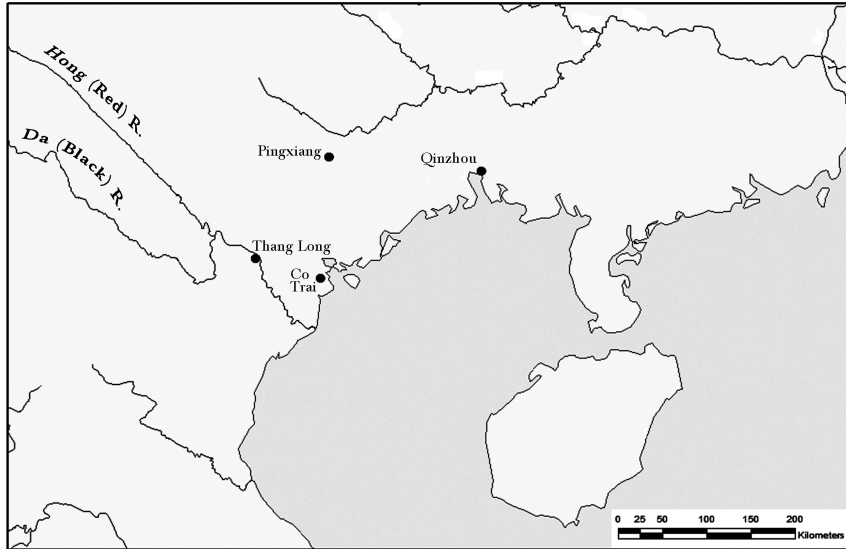
As a result of the 1540 surrender, the Ming court later ceremonially revoked Vietnam's status as an independent kingdom (*guo* 國) and reclassified it as a *dutongshisi* 都統使司, a category only slightly better than a native chieftaincy, under the control of a pacification commander rather than a king.⁸ Although the Mac continued to rule northern Vietnam from their capital Thang Long for another five decades, they were later eliminated from the succession of legitimate dynasties and denigrated in Vietnamese histories. Due in large part to the 1540

⁵ Gu, *Mingshi jishi benmo*, j. 22. These numbers are likely exaggerated. It is also unclear whether or not troops were already in place. In this article, I use "Mac" to refer to both the family members themselves and their dynasty (as in, "the Mac").

⁶ For more about the history and authorship of these texts, see John K. Whitmore, "Chung-hsing and Cheng-t'ung in Texts of and on Sixteenth Century Viet Nam," in Keith W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore, eds., *Essays onto Vietnamese Past* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Publications, Cornell University, 1995); Chingho A. Chen [陳荆和], *On the Various Editions of the Dai-Viet Su-ky Toan-Thu*, Occasional Papers 1 (Hong Kong: Center for East Asian Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976). *DVTS* was written in the 18th c. and most likely revised in the 19th.

⁷ *TT*, pp. 837, 838, 909; *DVTS*, p. 17b.

⁸ Wang Gungwu renders it "a superior form of pacification commission" in "Ming Foreign Relations: Southeast Asia," in Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 330. Accordingly, Mac Dang Dung would be styled "pacification commissioner" or "pacification commander."



Map. Sino-Viet Borderlands

surrender, when the Mac have been remembered at all, whether in Vietnamese, Chinese, or Western histories, it is often as weak-willed capitulators or as a pro-Ming state.⁹

The 1540 surrender, however, is not quite what it appears to be. For one thing, contrary to the implication of most accounts, Mac Dang Dung was no longer the Mac emperor, having overseen the accession of his grandson, Mac Phuc Hai 莫福海, to the throne earlier that year.¹⁰ When Mac Dang Dung crossed the border, the reigning emperor of the Mac dynasty was thus safely ensconced in Thang Long. For another, the common image of the surrender suggests the cessation of a war between the Mac and the Ming. Yet the Mac never engaged in any battles with the Ming. They had in fact consistently attempted to establish friendly relations. They were at war only with their rivals to the throne of Dai Viet, the Le. What explains a surrender without a war?

In fact, a few Ming officials and their Mac counterparts designed the surrender precisely to preempt war. The ceremony, a piece of political theater, was the culmination of months of cross-border negotiations and planning. When the Ming court began debating the crisis occur-

⁹ Dinh Khắc Thuan describes this state of affairs, and seeks to rectify it, in *Lịch Sử Triều Mạc: Qua thu tịch và văn bia* (*History of the Mac Dynasty: Through Books and Inscriptions*) (Hanoi: Nhà xuất Bản khoa học xã hội, 2001), pp. 33–39.

¹⁰ *TT*, p. 847.

ring in Vietnam, the stated goal was to put Le Ninh on the throne as the king of a restored Le dynasty. But key Ming officials with power at the border did not want to deploy troops for this goal. As time passed and difficulties mounted, Zhu Houcong's interest in war wavered. The surrender ceremony was diplomatic sleight of hand that created an exit strategy. Thanks to the behind-the-scenes work of those officials opposed to interceding in a regional war in Dai Viet, the Ming state instead recognized and legitimated the Mac. Far from opening a space for Le ascendancy, the Le were cast aside. The elaborate surrender ceremony distracted attention from this drastic change in policy direction and made compromise look like victory.

The 1540 surrender serves as a window into the internal workings of the Ming state, revealing rifts between the emperor and his officials over the extent to which China should intervene in the affairs of neighboring states. The surrender reveals stark differences between the initially pro-war emperor and his influential grand secretary, on the one hand, and pragmatic border officials on the other. These border officials engaged directly with their Vietnamese counterparts to find a way to recognize the Mac without harming Ming prestige and influence in the borderlands. Seen in its full context, the surrender marked not a moment of Chinese imperial expansion, but of retrenchment and an acceptance of a more limited role for the Ming in the south.¹¹

The drama of the surrender is vividly and prominently described in official records, while the process of diplomatic negotiation and intricate stage management that preceded and enabled the event is revealed in private histories and accounts. Alternative narratives of the surrender contained in the collected works of scholar-officials involved in the surrender, including one unusual illustrated record, permit a more nuanced account of the process of give-and-take and mutual compromise that pulled the two countries back from the brink of war. At the same time, the subtext of each of these accounts is to cast particular men as heroes of the moment and preserve their triumph for posterity.¹²

¹¹ Prior to this, the Ming had been aggressively expansionist in the south and southwest, as can be seen, e.g., in the conquest of Yunnan, the 20-year occupation of Dai Viet from 1407 to 1427, and suppression of native uprisings in Guizhou. See, e.g., John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly and the Ming* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1985); John Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); and Sun Laichen, "Assessing the Ming Role in China's Southern Expansion," in Sun Laichen and Geoff Wade, eds., *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), pp. 44-79.

¹² Including *Annan laiwei tuce* 安南來威圖冊 (1571; see n. 36, below); Li, *Yue jiao shu*

In this paper, I will focus on four items – three stories and one poetry exchange – that are individuals’ own accounts. They fill in the gaps in the official histories. The first item is a story that concerns the writing and revision of the Mac petition of surrender. The second item is a story that shows how Ming officials stationed at the border stage-managed the surrender ceremony. Both demonstrate that some border officials were anxious to use the petition of surrender and the surrender itself to persuade Beijing to abandon war plans. The third reveals how a visual account depicts a surrender ceremony at odds with the official account. There are two poems in the exchange. Although late, they may reflect the Mac attitude towards the surrender. Unlike the brief description contained in official histories, these accounts show the careful preparations, secret negotiations, and strong personalities that shaped the 1540 rapprochement. The various players in this international crisis had differing goals: Zhu Houcong and the Inner Court wished to wage war with the Mac, even if that entailed annexing land;¹³ the exile Le hoped that the Ming would use military means to restore them to the throne; several border officials wanted to wash their hands of the Mac without taking any significant action; and Mac Dang Dung and his successors hoped to initiate diplomatic relations with the Ming. These four alternative accounts lead to a surprising conclusion: only Mac Dang Dung achieved his goals.

A LETTER TO PERSUADE THE EMPEROR

The letter of surrender presented to the Ming by Mac Dang Dung lies at the heart of the Ming–Mac rapprochement of 1540. No mere form letter, it was drafted, commented on, and revised over a two-year period. This process of revision reveals that the surrender ceremony was an instance of carefully-managed diplomacy. The Ming officials Cai Jing 蔡經 and Mu Chaofu 沐朝輔 urged the Mac to frame their letter in a particular way, a process of revision that can be plausibly reconstructed from several surviving versions of the letter.

The most important figure in this exchange was the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi and vice-minister of war Cai Jing. Cai Jing had experience putting down the Rattan Gorge rebellion in

(1540); Yan, *Shuyu zhouzi lu* (1574); *Weng Wanda ji* 翁萬達集 (see n. 46, below); and Jiang, *Annan laiwei jilue* (1542).

¹³ Kathlene Baldanza, “A State Agent at Odds with the State: Lin Xiyuan and the Recovery of the Four Dong,” in John K. Whitmore and James Anderson, eds., *China’s Encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the Fiery Frontier over Two Millennia* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Guangxi in 1539, and thus was well aware of the instability of the southern borderlands. Cai Jing had previously submitted a memorial to the throne arguing against war in Annam. Zhu Houcong initially agreed, only to change his mind a year later.¹⁴ Obligated to enact a policy he did not support, Cai, along with several colleagues including Mu Chaofu, who was hereditary duke of Qianguo in Yunnan, sought to find a way to prevent war while still representing to the emperor the Ming as victor. Rather than a clear case of Dai Viet's subordination to the Ming, the surrender entailed factions within China allying with various Vietnamese partners. Cai Jing worked with the Mac to reach the common goal of averting war, while Zhu Houcong, the Ministry of War, and members of the Inner Court aligned themselves with the interests of the exile Le and their proxies.¹⁵

Since these drafts are difficult to authenticate, ambiguity remains. It is clear, however, that the Mac's communication with Beijing became increasingly formal and conciliatory and that the intercession of Ming officials was partially responsible for this change.¹⁶ What is more, these border officials were at times working at cross purposes to the Ming court.

Early in 1538, a full-scale war still seemed like a real possibility. The Ming started to mobilize for war in earnest, amassing troops and building garrisons near the border in Guangxi, signaling their willingness to use force against the Mac. The Le loyalist Vu Van Uyen 武文淵 was dispatched by the Ming to encourage the Le officials among the population to raise anti-Mac armies.¹⁷

At the same time, some Ming border officials advanced a peaceful way out of the impasse. A communication was sent to Mac Dang Dung informing him that if he bound himself with rope, surrendered in person, and presented maps to Ming officials then he would not be executed.¹⁸ This approach to dealing with problems along the Vietnamese border, namely offering the option of surrendering in order to initiate diplomatic relations, had been used successfully in the past. In fact, the founder of the Le dynasty, Le Loi 黎利, had "surrendered" to the Ming in 1427 after he had decisively defeated their troops on

¹⁴ Ray Huang, "Chang Ching," in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (NYC: Columbia U.P., 1976) 1, p. 46.

¹⁵ For a more detailed account, see Kathlene Baldanza, "The Ambiguous Border: Early Modern Sino-Viet Relations," Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

¹⁶ Cheng, *Zhengzhan yu qishou*, pp. 169–70.

¹⁷ *MSL*, p. 508; Cheng, *Zhengzhan yu qishou*, p. 164.

¹⁸ *MSL*, p. 509.

the battlefield, taking the necessary first step to normalize relations.¹⁹ Entering into regular tributary relations with the Ming was a desirable outcome, for both Le Loi and Mac Dang Dung. Under the tributary model of foreign relations, tributary states like Dai Viet sent periodic tribute missions to Beijing and used hierarchical language (for example, Chinese rulers were “emperor” and their Vietnamese counterparts mere “kings”). They received in turn legitimation, military support, and trading opportunities. By gaining Ming recognition, Mac Dang Dung would not only neutralize military pressure from the north, but also go from a capricious usurper to a recognized ruler.

According to Ming sources, early in 1538, Vu Van Uyen defeated both Mac Dang Dung and his son Mac Dang Doanh 莫登瀛 (or 莫方瀛) in skirmishes. After this, a “terrified” Mac Dang Doanh first began discussing the option of surrender. After his defeat, in the wording of the *Ming Veritable Records*, Mac Dang Doanh sent an ambassador to the border to “present a memorial and surrender.”²⁰ There are no surviving Mac sources to indicate whether they considered this move a formal surrender, but it can be understood at least as the beginning of formal negotiations between the two sides.

This 1538 memorial, the first of a series of surrender letters or petitions, is summarized in the *Ming Veritable Records*. In the letter, Mac Dang Doanh explained that the Mac were not usurpers – in fact, his father Mac Dang Dung had *put down* a rebellion by the would-be usurper Tran Cao 陳嵩, and had only taken control of the country at the insistence of the people. As for the request to surrender maps of the country, he demurred on the grounds that they were already contained in *Yitong zhi* 一統志, the “unified gazetteer” of Ming territory (most likely in full awareness that these maps were schematic and lacking in detail). Mac Dang Doanh promised to resume tribute payments and to make good on back payments. Finally, he dealt with the problem of Le legitimacy by claiming that Le Ninh was not a member of the Le family at all, but was actually the son of the Le military leader Nguyen Kim 阮淦 and therefore an imposter, and that the Chinese seal he claimed to have was a fake.²¹

¹⁹ Le Loi politely asserted that all-under-heaven was subject to the Chinese throne, *MSL*, p. 305; the Ming emperor graciously pardoned him.

²⁰ *MSL*, p. 509. There is some disagreement about who won the skirmishes. In *TJS*, p. 37, the Mac first capture Vu Van Uyen’s wife and son before the latter can defeat them, and they also sent spies across the border into Yunnan. In contrast, Cheng, *Zhengzhan yu Qishou*, p. 166, claims that the Mac defeated Vu. The skirmishes are not mentioned in *TT*, p. 846, only the Mac request to surrender.

²¹ *MSL*, p. 509; Cheng, *Zhengzhan yu qishou*, p. 169.

Cai Jing and Mu Chaofu reacted positively to the letter. Mu recommended that Mac be allowed to continue to rule and Ming troops be withdrawn. His only condition was that the Mac return border territory that had formerly belonged to the Ming and promise not to retaliate against Vu Van Uyen and Le Ninh. Cai concurred after reading the letter, deciding that Mac Dang Doanh and his father should be forgiven and allowed to retain control of government affairs for the time being. The two officials' positive response is not surprising. Thanks to their proximity to the border and knowledge of local conditions, officials in the field, unlike members of the Grand Secretariat and the Ministries in Beijing, could more accurately calculate the expense and difficulty of war mobilization. They were more aware of instability in the border region and thus less sanguine about securing the support of local chieftaincies. They also knew they would be personally responsible for the outcome. Border officials thus were more motivated to seek diplomatic, peaceful solutions than were their colleagues in Beijing.

And yet, the Inner Court proceeded with its war preparations, exposing a gulf between their approach and that of Cai and Mu. The Ministry of War rejected Mu Chaofu's proposal on three grounds: that *tusi* 土司 (native chieftaincy) leaders would lend their support to the Ming in the case of war, making it less of a burden on the military; that the Mac continued to refuse to provide maps; and that intransigence must be punished as a general rule. As the Ministry of War wrote, "Even though they are a country of Yi 夷 barbarians, how could there not be loyal officials (of the Le)? The people all want the criminals to be apprehended, how can we deny them our aid?"²² The Ministry was making an ethical case for Ming intervention and presuming widespread support for it among the Vietnamese and the border peoples.

Although these two officials were more open to negotiation than their colleagues in Beijing, they still attached conditions. Cai Jing demanded specific changes to the first letter of surrender submitted by Mac Dang Doanh. According to the unofficial history *Yue jiao shu* 越嶠書, Cai Jing felt that "the style (of the letter) was entirely improper, and it was rejected. Dang Doanh then completely changed it and Cai (Jing) accepted it."²³

²² *MSL*, p. 509.

²³ *YJS*, p. 37.

Table. Iterations of the Mac Surrender Letter

LETTER	TEXT	DATE	AUTHOR	TONE
1	<i>Ming shilu</i> 明實錄	1538	Mac Dang Doanh	curt
2	<i>Ming shilu</i>	March 14, 1539	Mac Dang Doanh	conciliatory
3	<i>Shuyu zhouzi lu</i> 殊域周咨錄	after Aug. 4, 1540	Mac Dang Dung	conciliatory, impatient
4	<i>Annan laiwei jilue</i> 安南來威輯略	ca. 1540	Mac Dang Dung	conciliatory, impatient

What were the changes accepted by Cai Jing? The *Ming Veritable Records* record that on March 14, 1539, Mac Dang Doanh sent his ambassador to the Zhenndan Pass with a second letter of surrender.²⁴ Reading this second letter (see above table, no. 2) against the first, the changes demanded by Cai Jing become clear. This second, revised letter was written in a more formal style, praising the Ming in deferential language. It affirmed, “I know that the land and people of my country all belong to the Heavenly Court (of the Ming)...,” a pro forma confirmation of the Ming’s regional dominance that would not entail the end of kingship in Dai Viet.²⁵ It then went on to explain how the Le line had died out. In contrast to the first letter, this version elided all reference to the rebel Tran Cao. Instead of describing Mac Dang Dung as a hero who defeated a rebel and took over the reins of government in the ensuing power vacuum, it cast him as a reluctant ruler. “Charged by the Le, above, with the handling of state affairs, and compelled by the people below,” Mac Dang Dung had no choice but to accede to their demands and steer the ship of state out of chaos and rebellion. That he failed to inform the Ming court of the changes was entirely due to “relying on Yi barbarian customs in his haste.”²⁶ In this narrative, Mac Dang Dung comes across more like a wise regent reminiscent of the classical hero the Duke of Zhou than as a regicidal maniac. Mac’s swashbuckling past as a successful general was downplayed to

²⁴ Also in *TT*, p. 846.

²⁵ Dai Viet was not alone in using a “humble tone and classical style” of writing in official communications. Wang Yi-T’ung’s *Official Relations between China and Japan, 1368–1549* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1953) translates dozens of Japanese memorials and Ming rescripts that employ the formalized language of diplomacy. Although Japanese communications with the Ming were at times defiant and resistant, at many times “[t]he Japanese were willing to be as submissive and humble to China in order to insure good profits,” p. 65.

²⁶ *MSL*, p. 512.

promote an image of a humble administrator with the proper respect of hierarchy.²⁷

Mac Dang Doanh emphasized administrative irregularities in this second letter, treating the root of the Ming-Mac conflict as mere breach of diplomatic etiquette on his part, not the usurpation of a Ming tributary state. He argued that his father, Mac Dang Dung, was legitimately appointed by the Le to take control of the country. The only real problem was that Ming guards prevented his ambassadors from crossing into China and informing the Ming court of the appointment. He wrote, “All these long years and not even one messenger made it through. My father and I worried day and night. Our food had no taste and we slept fitfully.” Crucially, he included maps and census information.²⁸

After briefly discussing halting the war, the Ming court decided to disregard Mac Dang Doanh’s request and continued to prepare for war.²⁹ In the interim, Mac Dang Doanh died, in March 1540.³⁰ Mac Dang Dung put his grandson Phuc Hai on the throne in his stead and personally took over the role of negotiator formerly filled by his son Dang Doanh. The two letters Mac Dang Dung wrote that year reveal the growing tension in the Sino-Viet borderlands, as the Ming court continued to hold out the possibility of using force to install Le Ninh as king of Dai Viet.

The first letter sent by Mac Dang Dung (table, no. 3) mainly reiterated the content of his son’s previous letter, apologizing for the breach of succession protocol and requesting instructions. His tone was less conciliatory and showed his growing impatience with the Ming’s continued war preparations. He began by paraphrasing the contents of a letter he had received from the Ming on August 4, 1540.

The contents said “concerning the letter of surrender that you just sent, is this the truth of the matter, or is there some other trick?” I respectfully had it read aloud over and over; I could not overcome my sense of fear. I thought to myself, I have reviewed my transgressions and repented my crimes, the true situation and my

²⁷ Instead of seizing the throne from his young nephew, the Duke of Zhou (11th-c. BCE) led the state as regent and stepped aside when the young king came of age. Incidentally, this portrait of Mac Dang Dung troubled the later compilers of *Dai Viet su ky toan thu*, which claims that Mac forced the Le emperor to abdicate but then acted as though he was the Duke of Zhou. The authors of *Dai Viet su ky toan thu* believe that Mac should be classified instead along with usurpers like Wang Mang, Cao Cao, and Ho Quy Ly; see *TT*, p. 842.

²⁸ *MSL*, p. 511–12; *MS* 321, p. 8333.

²⁹ *MSL*, p. 511.

³⁰ *TT*, p. 847. Qiu Luan and Mao Bowen wrote to the Ming court: “Some say he was killed by a bolt of lightning”; *MSL*, p. 515.

sincere thoughts were all disclosed in our previous petition of surrender – nothing was concealed.³¹

Mac Dang Dung then said that he had sent many messengers to the Ming and had been awaiting instructions from the court in good faith. Although his tone was polite, he clearly implied that the Ming court was being unreasonable in failing to confirm him as the rightful ruler of Dai Viet. He had done all that was requested of him, and it was time for the Ming court to stop deliberating about war and recognize his rule. He wrote:

Should your gaze illuminate my sincerity and forgive my transgression, I will be able to start anew. The land and the people all belong to the Heavenly Court. In the past I gave you a true accounting, presented maps and awaited your verdict. I only long for heavenly generosity day and night, the way grain longs for spring rains. How could there be anything else to say!³²

Finally, the letter addressed the issue of the Le family. According to the pro-war camp in the Ming government, if Le heirs still existed, then Mac rule would be illegitimate. Mac claims to power rested on the Mac insistence that the Le line had ceased, and that the last Le emperor had willingly chosen the Mac family as the rightful successor. Mac Dang Dung opined:

As to the Le line being cut off with no heirs, I have already explained this thoroughly in my previous letter. If you still do not believe me, please ask the elders and people of my country to verify its truth. If such a Le heir should appear, then I will gladly accept the charge of duplicity. How could one person's hand cover the eyes and ears of an entire country! I am as true as stone and metal. How could I deceive you?³³

From the letter, it appears that even though Mac Dang Dung was eager to conclude the surrender, at the same time, he was unwilling to cede certain points and allowed his impatience to show.

A sixteenth-century Ming text, *Annan laiwei jilue*, records an undated, alternative letter of surrender (no. 4). Although it repeats much of the language of the previous letters, this one in *Annan laiwei jilue* deals in relatively more depth with two pressing issues—the legitimacy of Le Ninh, and the redrawing of the Sino-Viet border. Here, Mac

³¹ *SZL*, p. 222.

³² *SZL*, p. 222.

³³ *SZL*, p. 222.

Dang Dung stated, “The border officials of Guangdong and Qinzhou have memorialized requesting that [jurisdiction] be as before,” and then agreed to give up claims to land near the southeast Chinese city Qinzhou that had once been ruled by China but was currently under Mac control.³⁴ He added that he was willing to consign some land in the northwest to the control of Yunnan province in China. The implication is that in order to accept this attractive proposal, the Ming would have to recognize Mac’s authority to cede the land.

As for Le Ninh, Mac wrote in this letter, “All I know is that the people are talking to one another about Le Ninh. They all think that he is the son of [the Le general] Nguyen Kim. There are really no descendants of the Le family, so I have already set up temple land in the capital to continue the Le family’s sacrifices.” He concluded, “If it is as the people say, I implore you to be compassionate and think of the good of the common people and allow me to rule this country.”³⁵ The last line is a subtle argument or even a threat against further Ming attempts to restore the Le. According to Mac, the people of Dai Viet know that Le Ninh is an imposter and are content under Mac rule. To interfere would only stir up local unrest.

A comment in an illustrated sixteenth-century account titled *Annan laiwei tuce* 安南來威圖冊, confirms that the negotiation was a give-and-take process. The author notes that negotiations reached an impasse because Mac Dang Dung refused to accept four of the ten crimes he had previously been charged with.³⁶ Although the crimes were not explicitly addressed in the letter, it is likely that he refused to plead guilty to the first four crimes, events that he bore at least partial responsibility for. These were: driving off the emperor Le Hue 黎譔; forcing Le Hue’s mother to marry him; poisoning the royal heir; and forcing Le Hue’s son Le Ninh to flee far from the capital.³⁷ Mac Dang Dung was willing to accept blame and ask forgiveness for crimes he was not actually guilty of, specifically procedural irregularities and for failure to send tribute. He had in fact continually attempted to contact the Ming court since 1528, almost immediately after he came to power.³⁸ Yet he

³⁴ *ALĴ*, j. zhong, p. 436. For more on this land exchange, see Baldanza, “State Agent.”

³⁵ *ALĴ*, p. 436.

³⁶ Liang Tianxi 梁天錫, Feng Shiyang 馮時暘, and Jiang Meizhong 江美中, *Annan laiwei tuce* 安南來威圖冊 (*Graphic Account of the Overawing of Annam*) (1571; Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1988; hereafter *ALT*), p. 388.

³⁷ *MSL*, p. 499; *MS* 321, p. 8330. In Vietnamese texts, Le Hue is referred to as Le Y 黎椅 (reign name Le Chieu Tong 黎昭宗).

³⁸ *TT*, p. 837.

steadfastly denied the more serious crime of usurpation and murder. Nor did he recognize Le Ninh as the legitimate ruler, or even as a true member of the Le royal family.

Reading against the necessarily court-centered bias of the official record, it seems likely that the revised petition of surrender was at least partially instrumental in thwarting war. Since taking the throne in 1527, Mac Dang Dung had tried repeatedly to contact the Ming court, receive recognition, and conduct tributary relations with them. After thirteen years of rebuffs, the Mac were willing to make some concessions to accomplish this goal. Between the first letter sent by Mac Dang Doanh and the alternative letter preserved in *Annan laiwei jilue*, the Mac agreed to share maps and census information and avowed that “the land and people all belong to the Heavenly Court.” They would not budge on the subject of the Le; both Mac Dang Dung and his son refused to accept Le Ninh as a legitimate Le heir or agree to a power-sharing arrangement. Ming officials were persuaded to agree, deeming the background of Le Ninh impossible to verify. A date was set for the in-person surrender to formalize the agreement.

The involvement of the Ming officials Cai Jing and Mu Chaofu in drafting the letter and mediating between the Mac and the Ming court shows that they were interested in using diplomacy to avert war, even when it meant going against the wishes of the Inner Court. They also had a significant amount of discretion in the field. They seem to have coached the Mac court to write in a style and tone that conformed to Ming diplomatic expectations and could mollify the emperor, Zhu Houcong.

November 30, 1540, was selected as the date for a formal surrender of Mac Dang Dung to Mao Bowen 毛伯溫 (1482–1544, *j.* 1508), the Ming-appointed commander-in-chief for the expedition against Dai Viet. Both the Mac and the Ming border officials knew that the surrender ceremony had to be just so: the Mac delegation requested, and were granted, a dress rehearsal in the upstairs room of the border gate before the formal surrender.³⁹

SURRENDER AS POLITICAL THEATER

Several border officials played crucial roles in negotiating the Ming-Mac rapprochement, notably Weng Wanda 翁萬達 (1498–1552, *j.* 1526) and his friend Mao Bowen. Both men worked hard to come to

³⁹ *ALJ*, p. 59.

terms with the Mac, in the process showing different faces to the Mac, to their own soldiers, and to the Ming court. Weng advised Mao Bowen, “The best policy would be to cede [Annam to the Mac] and announce success. The second best policy would be to intimidate them to the point that they dare not disobey. The worst policy would be to utterly destroy them.”⁴⁰ In other words, the best course of action would be to accept the status quo and present it to the Ming court as a victory, second best would be putting on a show of force to convince the Mac that war was imminent, and the worst would be to actually engage in combat. Mao Bowen, a latecomer to the Ming-Mac negotiations, agreed. Both men set out to impress the Inner Court with their progress, and to coax and intimidate the Mac, combining the best and second best approaches. They hoped to burnish their own reputations in the process.

Like Cai Jing, Weng Wanda’s knowledge of the Ming southern borderlands stemmed from experience in official positions there. In 1533, when he was thirty-six, he served as prefect of Wuzhou 梧州 county in Guangxi. He won praise in that position and was promoted to Assistant Commissioner of Guangxi, with jurisdiction over the Mac affair.⁴¹ Weng felt that management of the *tusi*, the aboriginal offices or native chieftaincies that studded Ming China’s southern borderlands, was of central importance to resolving the Dai Viet crisis. The situation, in his estimation, was not good. Ming soldiers were poorly fed and morale was low. Ming control in the south was weak, as aboriginal officials openly fought and usurped one another, defying Ming attempts to stabilize the area. If the Ming did not exert more control, the *tusi* might be pulled into Dai Viet’s orbit, further weakening Ming control. Weng Wanda thought that the disarray and instability of the Ming southern borderlands signaled to Mac Dang Dung that the Ming was not capable of threatening his hold on power. Mac Dang Dung allegedly said, “Aboriginal officials (*tuguan* 土官) in China frequently kill their leaders and have been uncontrollable for decades. Why are you investigating me?”⁴² Cai Jing was worried about this, and discussed it with Weng, who thought that problems in the borderlands would have to be solved in order to give the Ming a credible negotiating position, and to prevent rebellious aboriginal officials from linking up with Mac.⁴³ Weng then listed several examples of *tusi* leaders who usurped the throne or

⁴⁰ Cheng, *Zhengzhan yu qishou*, p. 175.

⁴¹ *MS* 198, *liezhuan* 86.

⁴² *MS* 192, p. 5244.

⁴³ Ying Jia 應欉, *Cangwu junmen zhi* 蒼梧軍門志, j. 20 (Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku <hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw>; accessed Nov. 13, 2013).

assassinated rivals with no repercussions or reaction from the central state, concluding: “if they are planning to start an internal rebellion, we will not be able to protect ourselves.” He advised that the Ming first deal with the problem of the aboriginal officials, and then Dai Viet would fall in line as a consequence. With Mao Bowen’s approval, four aboriginal officials were arrested. From this time, according to the *History of the Ming*, Mac Dang Dung began to fear the Ming.⁴⁴

Weng took other steps to persuade the Mac that the Ming were prepared to invade at a moment’s notice. According to Weng’s biography in the *History of the Ming*, a Vietnamese spy was captured while Weng was dealing with the crisis at the border. Weng treated him graciously and released him, hoping that the spy would return to Dai Viet and report that the troop build-up along the border was more than the Mac could counter.⁴⁵ If his biographer is to be believed, Weng’s actions had the desired result, leading directly to Mac’s request to surrender.

Weng’s collected works contain several pages of his thoughts on Dai Viet. His policy suggestions were thoughtful and practical – for instance, suggesting that Vietnamese envoys be housed and questioned separately from one another. He argued that Ming troops would fight well, but only if they were given sufficient food. Following the second best policy, he used strong language to threaten Mac Dang Dung; for instance, he wrote, “This Vietnamese joker is rude and impertinent, and this is why Heaven will strike him down. We should have a long-term plan. In this battle, we should send the troops first, followed by provisions. If the troops have enough to eat, we will come down on them like a ton of bricks. The advantage will be with us.”⁴⁶ At the same time, he was negotiating with the Mac to avert the worst option, war. Weng Wanda was a master of political theater, working to boost his troops’ morale, both to prepare for a possible war and to intimidate the Mac from taking them on. His collected writings preserve a piece titled “Vow to Attack Annam,” in which we learn that in order to rouse morale, Weng performed a torch-lit dawn sacrifice in front of the arrayed troops, calling on them in rousing language to forget their families and their lives and fight together. He exhorted them to fight bravely, like bears and tigers, while warning that those who deserted, lagged behind, or hurt the innocent would be severely punished.⁴⁷ His

⁴⁴ *MS* 192, p. 5245.

⁴⁵ *MS* 198, *liezhuan* 86.

⁴⁶ Weng Wanda, *Weng Wanda ji* 翁萬達集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), p. 97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 684–85.

sacrifice and speech were meant to rouse his troops for a war that, by his own avowal, he wished to avoid.

Weng Wanda's efforts were effective, at least in the eyes of his closest colleagues. In 1539, he was promoted to a position in Zhejiang, but Mao Bowen and Cai Jing petitioned the throne to recall him to Guangxi. Weng's assistance, they argued, was invaluable for solving the Mac crisis. Their request was granted. (Weng would return Mao's admiration. When Mao died in disgrace 1544 after having been dismissed from officialdom, a devastating punishment,⁴⁸ Weng memorialized the emperor to praise Mao's role in securing the surrender of the Mac, and he urged a reconsideration of the dismissal.)⁴⁹

During the process of the surrender, which both allayed the tension between the Mac and the Ming and superseded Zhu Houcong's initial call for war, Mac Dang Dung had to appear sufficiently contrite. Once Mao Bowen finally arrived in Guangxi to take up his post in the summer of 1540, he assured his audience, the Inner Court, that this was so: "From a distance, Mac Dang Dung saw that our armies were near the border and became violently afraid. He quickly requested to cross the border to surrender and await punishment. His emotion was piteous and sincere."⁵⁰ In fact, this was not a new situation: Mac Dang Dung had requested such a surrender from as early as 1538, when he sent his ambassador to the Ming court.⁵¹ These earlier attempts were conveniently forgotten as Ming officialdom found the march to war increasingly fatiguing.

Mao Bowen set about planning an appropriate ceremony for the surrender, taking the same kind of care Cai Jing had in supervising an appropriate letter of surrender. The Ming troops built a military tent with a high platform inside of it.⁵² Everything had to be just right. In the account he wrote about the event, Mao Bowen comes across as a persnickety master-of-ceremonies:

We stationed the troops about a *li* away from the pass and instructed them not to be rowdy. They looked stern and orderly. When the ritual implements were all ready, we arranged a dragon arch in the tent, covered it with a yellow cloth and arranged the imperial orders inscribed on a banner and a medal within [the tent], and

⁴⁸ Benjamin Wallacker, "Mao Po-wen," in Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography* 2, p. 1049.

⁴⁹ Weng, *Weng Wanda ji*, p. 516.

⁵⁰ *ALJ*, p. 59.

⁵¹ *TT*, p. 486.

⁵² *ALJ*, p. 59.

burned incense before it on the table. Several officials from the Guangdong and Guangxi offices held flags and medals, and were arranged in two rows according to rank. Then we passed along the orders to open the gates. Mac Dang Dung, his nephew Mac Van Minh 莫文明, and the chieftains, elders and scholars came in through the left side of the gate. They took off their shoes and approached barefoot. Facing north, they kneeled on the ground. We received our orders and allowed a student named Xie Tianzong to loosen their bonds and accept their document of surrender. Once Dang Dung had finished crawling forward, bowing five times and kowtowing three times, his nephew, the chieftains, elders, and the scholars all did so in turn, according to rank. All the Yi people of that country craned their necks on their side of the pass, and seemed to be vigorously bowing and knocking their heads on the ground. There were untold tens of thousands of them.⁵³

Mac Dang Dung was allowed to return home and await further instructions from the Ming court.⁵⁴ Mao Bowen's and Weng Wanda's threats had been successful in luring Mac across the border and putting on an event designed to allay Zhu Houcong's concerns about Mac intransigence. The story, however, is slightly at odds with a visual record contained in *Annan laiwei tuce*; in it Mao and Weng play a minor role, and Mac seems more like a foreign dignitary than a cowed enemy.

THE FEARSOME PANTHER

The illustrated work *Annan laiwei tuce* (*Graphic Account of the Over-awing of Annam*), first published in 1571, provides a unique graphic record of the surrender ceremony of 1540. Judging by the account there, it seems that the ceremony resembled a polite meeting of host and guest, not the humiliating affair remembered in Ming official histories. Rather than the Ming official focus on the pomp and grandeur of Mac Dang Dung's surrender, the perspective of the *Graphic Account* follows a relatively minor player, Jiang Yigui 江一桂 (a.k.a. Mr. White Stone 白石先生), the magistrate of Taiping 太平 subprefecture in Guangxi. The *Graphic Account* casts Jiang, and not Mao Bowen, Weng Wanda, or Mac Dang Dung, as the protagonist and hero of this diplomatic affair, lauding him as “the fearsome panther” that single-handedly averted war

⁵³ *ALJ*, pp. 59–60.

⁵⁴ *ALJ*, pp. 60–62.

with the Mac.⁵⁵ Despite the attention he receives in this work, Jiang's name is scarcely mentioned in official Chinese histories.

Although the title *Graphic Account of the Overawing of Annam* suggests that the surrender is its subject, roughly half the text celebrates the life and career of Jiang Yigui and promotes an image of him as a moral father and enlightened civil servant. The Mac surrender becomes the high point of Jiang's career: that it marks a milestone in Sino-Viet relations matters less. After Jiang Yigui's death, his son compiled and published the *Graphic Account* in 1571.⁵⁶ His son may have felt that such a public memorial would attract favorable attention on two fronts, advancing both the legacy of his father and his own career.

Jiang Yigui played the role of intermediary among Mao Bowen, Weng Wanda, and Mac Dang Dung. This role can be seen in a letter preserved in *Annan laiwei jilue*. Jiang sent this letter to Weng:

In the sixth month of this year [1540], we received your encrypted orders about this case, and prepared to receive the provincial military commander. The call to arms was passed on to us, and we diligently forwarded it to Annam. The Yi leader Mac Dang Dung returned his document of surrender to us, and we listened to his confession to see whether or not it was truthful.⁵⁷

It can be seen that Jiang was the main link between Mac and the Ming high officials, not only passing on messages, but making judgments on their content. The *Graphic Account* elevates Jiang Yigui over Mao Bowen. The preface casts Jiang as the voice of reason in a potentially explosive situation preceding the surrender:

Mao [Bowen] had complete control of the military; he mustered several tens of thousands of troops from Yunnan, Guangdong, and Guangxi. They were chomping at the bit. They were divided into columns and ready to proceed. Jiang Yigui said, "The distant Yi are under the loose rein [policy]. We should first send them an announcement to familiarize them with the situation." When the Mac asked to meet him face to face, Mr. White Stone suspected they wanted to stall for time and that the drafting and gathering of troops over the past eight years would come apart. The officials sent an announcement of war, as well as a summons. Mr. White

⁵⁵ *ALŦ*, p. 387.

⁵⁶ *ALŦ*, pp. 375-76.

⁵⁷ He continued: "Mac Dang Dung has started to worry about the danger, yet he continues to hesitate and wants to attenuate our army... . Ambassadors and spies have been sent through the passes one after another"; *ALŦ*, p. 58.

Stone passed through the border gate to handle this, truly doing his utmost. Then the chief Mac Dang Dung listened to orders, memorialized the throne, returned the occupied land and requested to be a tributary state. He put mud on his head and face and surrendered bound in ropes before the regional military commander. When the emperor heard of this he forgave him and changed his title to military commissioner⁵⁸... Thus the distant south was pacified without using troops.⁵⁹

In other words, Jiang skillfully handled the over-eager Ming troops and

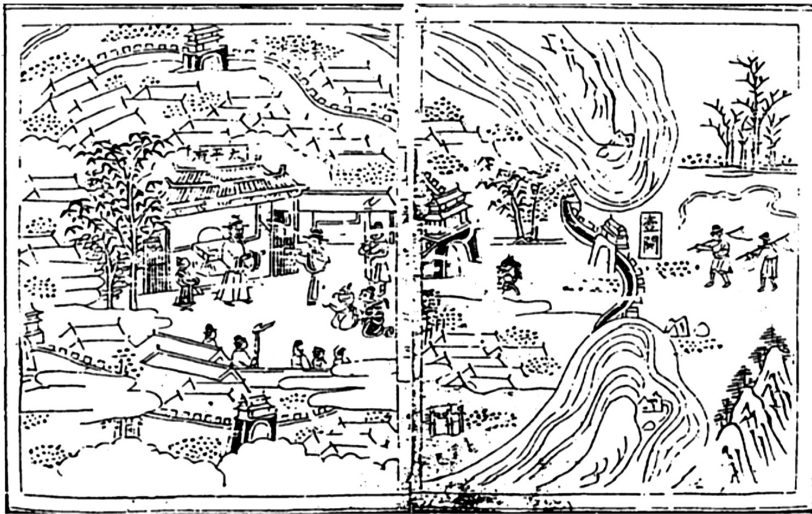


Figure 1. Messengers Fetch Jiang Yigui

From Annan laiwei tuce, p. 380 (cited n. 36). All four illustrations in this article are taken from a modern printed facsimile of Annan laiwei tuce. The original woodblock print (dated 1571) on which the latter is based obviously was not of perfect quality, hence the imperfections in the images.

officials, crossed the border to negotiate directly with the Mac, mollified the previously recalcitrant Mac Dang Dung, and reached a favorable resolution, all without causing bloodshed.

The centerpiece of the *Graphic Account* is a series of seventy-three images, each with a short text, or caption, that describes a scene. The illustrations take the reader through the events that culminated in the

⁵⁸ Military commissioner of Annam (Dai Viet), instead of king/emperor.

⁵⁹ *ALT*, p. 375.

Mac surrender, with Jiang Yigui as the protagonist. Each section has a title and is accompanied by its own short text that both explains the title and heaps praise on Jiang Yigui. The story begins with Mao Bowen's summoning of Jiang to help with the delicate negotiations with the Mac. According to the captions for the illustrations, Mac Dang Dung wrote to Mao Bowen that he would retreat from the border, ceasing negotiations, unless he could meet with Mr. Jiang. According to the *Graphic Account*, Mao wrote Jiang that "Dang Dung came because he admires you. I have known this for a long time but I was afraid it would sully your position so I blocked his request. This affair is now urgent. I will borrow your greatness to quickly complete this important affair." Figure 1, above, shows messengers on horseback, racing to give Mr. Jiang the message from the military commander. In another scene, the messengers kneel before a disproportionately large Jiang, who accepts the letter.

Although Jiang is not mentioned in the *Ming Veritable Records* or the *History of the Ming*, the Vietnamese history *Dai Viet thong su* does highlight his role and even records the content of the letter he sent to Mac Dang Dung. Jiang Yigui traveled to the Zhennan border pass in Pingxiang to be closer to the Mac camp. Jiang was tasked with determining Mac Dang Dung's true reasons for surrendering and gauging his sincerity. Mac responded with the slightly peevish letter cited above (letter 3), to which Jiang replied:

Our emperor, athwart a dynastic revival and touching fortune, united the Hua 華 and the Yi 夷 (that is, the Chinese and non-Chinese). Of distant places, none does not admire us and pay us tribute. Only your country has not come to court for a long while, so the military commander [Mao Bowen] received the order to investigate. Then we found out that there were the father and son Mac Dang Dung and Dang Doanh, who took advantage and capriciously did evil. They usurped the throne of the ruler, incited rebellion, and continuously engaged in war to the point that the people of the country were miserable and their towns and hamlets were destroyed. Since the crime is clear, it would be difficult to pardon him under the law. The Son of Heaven (Zhu Houcong) is the ruler of the Hua and the Yi; he must show the benevolence of restoring a country that has been destroyed (ie, restoring the Le). Wise men are the representatives of virtue; they must manifest the righteousness of punishing rebellion and eliminating evil. Now the Le family line still has not been destroyed, and the Mac family's

ledger of evil is full. People's intentions are clear to Heaven and cannot be hidden.⁶⁰

The letter makes it clear that Mac Dang Dung and his son are considered criminals, and will be held to account by the Ming. As the letter continued, Jiang appealed to the people of Dai Viet to execute Mac Dang Dung and his son in exchange for money and position:

Anyone has license to kill the disordered minister and his bandit son. Although Annam is located in a distant corner of a fiery wasteland, there are always those among them who have heard the Heavenly Court's instruction. How could there not be those that embrace loyalty and uphold righteousness, and talented men who get rid of disorder and return to the right? They certainly are capable of gathering a righteous army to put down the greatest evil, and we will reward them for this in order to speed their progress.⁶¹

The consequences for protecting the Mac were dire: "When the celestial troops gather from the four corners, it will be impossible to avoid utter destruction. At that time, although there are loyal and righteous men, they will not be able to show themselves, but will only be able to stick out their necks and die. Then it will be too late for regret."⁶² Jiang ended this letter to the Mac by noting that he was preparing 14,000 copies of his letter for distribution to the people of Dai Viet.

The "fearsome panther" within Jiang Yigui, as hinted at in the *Graphic Account*, is thus more clearly revealed in the Vietnamese record. Jiang deployed Confucian allusions and ideology like a battering ram to intimidate the Mac and even to encourage uprising. His scare tactics – suggesting to the people of Dai Viet that they execute their ruler and receive a king's ransom – may explain why Vietnamese sources claim that Mac surrendered out of fear. Jiang Yigui's formula of surrender is repeated throughout the *Graphic Account*: "submit, return stolen land, offer tribute and call yourself a tributary state, send a son to be a captive, be bound and await punishment."⁶³

The official histories of Vietnam and China dwell on details that emphasize the submission of Mac Dang Dung, including his bare feet, the rope tied around his neck, ritualized kowtowing, and deliberately mussed hair, while downplaying the purely symbolic nature of the event.

⁶⁰ *DVTS*, p. 29b.

⁶¹ *DVTS*, p. 31b.

⁶² *DVTS*, p. 31b.

⁶³ *ALT*, p. 390.

The images from the *Graphic Account*, in contrast, show a much more standard meeting of host and guest. Although other accounts record that Mac and his followers removed their shoes and crossed into China barefoot, in the illustration of the retinue of Mac Dang Dung crossing through the border at Zhennan gate, only his bearers are barefoot. The Vietnamese are identifiable by their bare feet and round caps, in contrast to the winged hats and shoes of their Chinese counterparts.

In figure 2, overleaf, we see Mac Dang Dung as he is being pulled in a canopied sedan chair. His retinue includes his “captive son,” actually his nephew, Mac Van Minh. Mac Phuc Hai was in mourning for his father, and did not participate in the surrender ceremony. His cousin Mac Van Minh was sent in his stead.⁶⁴ Since Mac Phuc Hai was officially the Mac sovereign, his grandfather Mac Dang Dung was also ensuring a smooth transition in case the Ming decided to detain Mac Van Minh. This substitution must have been sufficient for the Ming border officials in charge of the surrender.

Mac Dang Dung’s arrival at the temporary imperial tent (figure 3) looks more like the arrival of a king of a tributary state than of the defeated head of an opposing army. Labeled “the false king Mac Dang Dung,” Mac stands before a Ming official and bows gently from the waist. Beside him are four translators, two Chinese and two Vietnamese. Beyond them are two illustrators, busily sketching the scene with brushes and easels. Four of Mac’s followers bow their heads to the ground before the tent, but most are standing beside the empty carriage. Although Mac personally performed the role of foreign guest, it appears from the image that the role of supplicant may have been delegated to less exalted members of his retinue.

Ritual completed, Mac Dang Dung mounted his carriage and returned home. As we see in figure 4, Jiang Yigui had a special hall built so that the soldiers and laborers could celebrate, and he distributed money and medals to those who performed especially well. Alluding to a disagreement between Jiang and more hawkish officials, the *Graphic Account* asks rhetorically, “should we open new land, manage Annam and announce our success, or waste time on conflicts all the way to the southern ocean?” Clearly, the answer is peaceful resolution, brought about by none other than Jiang. Finally, servants carried in and unpacked the many boxes of gifts sent by the Mac for the Ming royal family.

⁶⁴ Zhao, *Junzheng beili*, p. 575b.



Figure 2. Mac Dang Dung Crossing the Border
Annan laiwei tuce, p. 389.



Figure 3. Mac Dang Dung's Surrender
Annan laiwei tuce, p. 391

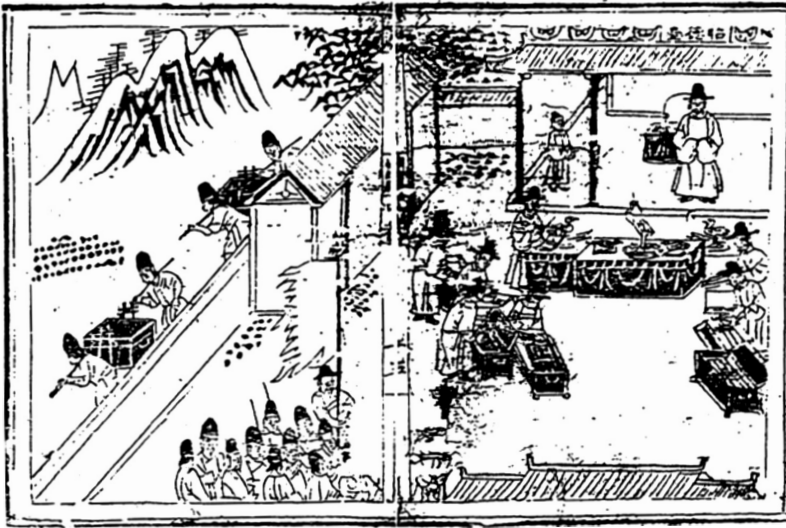


Figure 4. Gifts for the Ming Royal Family

Annan laiwei tuce, p. 399.

The text of the *Graphic Account* enumerates the gifts to be sent to Beijing. We learn that for the emperor alone, there were 4 golden incense burners; a golden turtle; a silver crane and a silver stand; a silver incense burner and silver vase; 12 silver basins; 60 *jin* of agarwood incense; 140 *jin* of “quick-burning” incense; 50 pieces of “white wood” incense; 30 pieces of *Acronychia pedunculata* incense; 200 bolts of “white earth” silk; 80 strands of “black thread” incense; 300 lacquer fans; 230 *liang* of lavender perfume; 6 *jin* of incense; and 20 rhinoceros horns. The prince and empress received similar gifts in smaller amounts.⁶⁵

Thus the resolution of a diplomatic deadlock between two powerful countries was recorded for posterity from the perspective of one of its more humble participants. Jiang’s stature takes on exaggerated proportions literally and figuratively; he is drawn towering over the messengers who come to fetch him, described as the only man who could handle the crisis. If the images are accurate, a typical guest-host ritual was performed by Mac Dang Dung and his Ming hosts. Although the more humiliating aspects recorded in official sources (ropes, mussed hair, faces daubed with mud) may have been present, they were either too brief or insignificant to be recorded by the artist. It is instead the ritual significance of the surrender that was of primary importance,

⁶⁵ *ALT*, p. 398.

a symbolic normalizing of relations between the Ming and their new tributary, the Mac pacification commission of Annam.

Although the Ming army was ostensibly mobilized to punish the Mac and restore the Le, by the time of the surrender, the Le had virtually been forgotten. Instead, the Mac “surrender” as though they had been at war with the Ming, rather than their foes the Le. In effect, the surrender merely normalized relations between the Ming and the Mac court, an outcome the Mac had been working towards for more than a decade. In the exchange, the Mac received more than just breathing room, they also gained the recognition and support of the Ming. This relationship carried over to the Qing and allowed the Mac to continue to dispute Le and later Le-Trinh claims to power, even after the Mac were expelled from Thang Long in 1592 and fled to Ming protection in the north.⁶⁶

A BATTLE OF POEMS

The voice that has been most silent in this political drama is perhaps the most important one, that of Mac Dang Dung. In the sources, he trembles and cowers but barely speaks apart from his cajoling letters. It is my view, however, that Mac Dang Dung was not simply manipulated or intimidated by the Ming, or even by the so-called fearsome panther Jiang Yigui. He stood his ground on the issues most important to him, securing the Ming’s support and their tacit acceptance that the Le royal family was no longer viable. This alliance served his family well for more than a century, as his descendants were given shelter in Ming territory once their dynasty was finally destroyed.

A clue to the way Mac Dang Dung’s contemporaries in Dai Viet viewed him might be found in a (most likely apocryphal) exchange of poems between the Ming general Mao Bowen and his Vietnamese counterpart Giap Hai 甲海 (1516–1588) on the theme of “duckweed.”⁶⁷ These poems are preserved, with some small but significant differences, in two eighteenth-century texts: *Son cu tap thuat* 山居雜述 and *Dai Viet dinh nguyen phat luc* 大越鼎元佛錄. Together they show that disagree-

⁶⁶ Hoang Anh Tuan, *Silk for Silver: Dutch-Vietnamese Relations, 1637–1700* (Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 19. For more on the fate of the Mac dynasty after 1592, see Niu Junkai 牛军凯, *Wang-shi hou yu panluan zhe: Yuenan Moshi jiazuo yu Zhongguo guanxi yanjiu* 王室后与叛乱者, 越南莫氏中国关系研究 (Beijing: Shijie tushu chubanshe, 2012).

⁶⁷ This could also be translated as flotsam and jetsam. In modern Vietnamese, duckweed (*canh beo*) connotes something of little importance.

ment over the legacy of the Mac persisted in Vietnam long after their fall from power.⁶⁸

In the “Song of Floating Duckweed” poems (“Fuping changyong” 浮萍唱詠), “duckweed” stands in for Mac Dang Dung. This is both a play on words (Mac Dang Dung’s grandfather’s name was Bang 萍, “Duckweed”),⁶⁹ and it is also possibly a reference to his purported background as a member of the boat-dwelling Tanka (Dan) minority.⁷⁰ Although it is unlikely that Mac Dang Dung was from a Tanka family, he was from the coastal town of Co Trai 古齋 and grew up fishing and swimming.

In the version contained in *Son cu tap thuat*, Giap Hai sends a boastful challenge to Mao Bowen in poetic form, bragging that even a famous strategist like Jiang Taigong 姜太公 could not find a way to penetrate the Mac defenses.⁷¹ In response, Mao Bowen compares the Mac state to rootless pond scum, too foolish to know it is doomed to destruction.⁷² In response to this poem, according to the text, Mac Dang Dung was so intimidated that he took the unprecedented step of binding himself and surrendering to the Ming.

In the biography of Giap Hai contained in *Dai Viet dinh nguyen phat luc*, the poems are virtually identical, but they come in a different order. Mao Bowen first issued his lyrical challenge comparing the Mac to aquatic weeds, and was answered by Giap Hai, line by line. This order is more plausible because it has Giap Hai appropriating the de-

⁶⁸ I am indebted to Jason Hoai Tran, a scholar of precolonial Vietnamese poetry and literature, for finding these poems and sharing them with me. I am also grateful to him for sharing his interpretations and discussing my translations.

⁶⁹ *TT*, p. 784.

⁷⁰ Tanka heritage is first mentioned in a Chinese text of 1540 (Li, *Yue jiao shu*, p. 46), and picked up by the contemporary historian Tran Quoc Vuong. Nguyen, *Writing as Response*, pp. 238–41, mentions this exchange of poetry, and argues that Mao wrote it to insult Mac Dang Dung’s Tanka heritage. For more on the Tanka, see Whitmore and Antony in the present volume.

⁷¹ 錦鱗密勿不容針 / 帶葉連根不計深。 / 常與白雲爭水面 / 豈容明月墜波心。 / 千層浪打誠難破 / 萬陣風顛永不沉。 / 多少魚龍藏裡面 / 太公無計下鉤尋。

Duckweed’s petals are too close to be penetrated,
Its leaves and tendrils incredibly dense.
It constantly battles clouds for the water’s surface,
How could the moon sink into the depths?
Pounded by a thousand waves, it is truly hard to break;
Shaken by ten thousand gusts of wind, it can never be sunk.
Even Jiang Taigong has no way to drop his hook and catch them.

Son cu tap thuat, p. 33b (accession no. A.822; Vien Han Nom [Inst. of Han-Nom Studies] manuscript collection, Hanoi); my translation.

⁷² *Ibid.*; the poem is the same as the one cited in full below, with the exception of the last line: “大抵中天風色惡 / 掃歸湖海竟難尋。 In the end, when a violent wind blows down from Heaven, / It will be swept out to sea, never to recover.”

rogatory label “duckweed” and turning it into a positive designation.⁷³ In striking contrast to the image of Mac Dang Dung surrendering before Mao Bowen, these poems have Mac besting his rival. They give us a glimpse of how the Mac and their army may have actually viewed Ming military bluster.

According to this version, Mao Bowen first sent this challenge:
The duckweed is scattered on fields and water.
After all, it does not have deep roots.
Without sprouts, without leaves,
It dares to grow branches, it dares to grow a stem.
It knows only to bunch together, not knowing it will be scattered.
It only knows when it is afloat, not knowing it will sink.
When it encounters a violent wind from Heaven,
It will be swept out to sea, never to recover.⁷⁴

Given the context, Mao Bowen is implying that the Mac is a rootless state, bound to be swept away by the superior might of the Ming, never to recover.

In his response, Giap Hai turned the duckweed analogy on its head, making it stand for strength:

The duckweed petals are too close to be penetrated,
Its leaves and tendrils incredibly dense.
It constantly battles clouds for the water’s surface.
Would it be willing to let the sun break through its waves?
Pounded by a thousand swells, it is truly hard to break;
Shaken by ten thousand gusts of wind, it is not easily sunk.
How many dragons wait beneath the surface?
Even Jiang Taigong⁷⁵ would have no way to drop his hook and catch them.⁷⁶

⁷³ Another argument for the plausibility of this order is that it is unlikely that Mao Bowen ever wrote such a poem. It is more likely that Vietnamese authors attributed it to him to serve as a foil for Giap Hai. Pham Van Son also treats this as the correct order of the poems, without explanation. His essay on Mac Dang Dung includes the Vietnamese transliteration and translation of the original poems. Pham argues that Giap Hai’s spirited poems took Mao Bowen by surprise, and that the 1540 surrender was a success since the Mac sacrificed only a little gold and silver and some land that did not really belong to them anyway; Pham Van Son, “Mac Dang Dung (1483–1541)”, in Dang Loi Ngo et al., *Mac Dang Dung va Vuong Trieu Mac (Mac Dang Dung and the Kings of the Mac Dynasty)* (Hanoi: Hoi su hoc Hai Phong, 2000), pp. 51–84.

⁷⁴ 隋田逐水冒秧針 / 到底原來種不深。 / 空有根苗空有葉 / 敢生枝節敢生心。 / 惟知聚處寧知散 / 只識浮辰不識沉。 / 一遇顛狂風浪惡 / 掃歸湖海更難尋。 See *Dai Viet dinh nguyen Phat luc* 大越鼎元佛錄 (Vien Han Nom manuscript collection, A. 771, ca. 1736), p. 40a.

⁷⁵ 姜太公 was a famous strategist of the Zhou period. I am grateful to Hoai Tran for pointing this out.

⁷⁶ 錦鱗密勿不容針、帶葉連根豈在深。 / 常與白雲爭水面、肯容紅日照波心。 / 千層浪打誠難

In Giap's poem, instead of a symbol of transience, duckweed is resilient and unsinkable. The sun, wind, and rain, representing the might of the Ming, cannot break through its defenses. In this exchange, Vietnamese resistance to Ming military aggression is masterfully expressed through the medium of classical poetry. Mac Dang Dung's background may be with humble fishing folk, but that does not negate his strength, heroism, and ultimate success. Put to the test, his state survived.

CONCLUSION

Let us return to that November day in 1540 when a king crossed a border and surrendered to the Ming state. From the perspective of Le writers of history, Mac Dang Dung, his face daubed with mud and hair in disarray, represented the weakness and illegitimacy of the Mac dynasty. Such a dynasty could be left out of the orthodox succession of Vietnamese states, neatly preserving an uninterrupted Le dynasty. In Ming official histories, the Mac capitulation instanced yet again a foreign state paying homage to the Ming.

In the Vietnamese record, as written in *Dai Viet thong su* a century after the event by the victorious Le, the Ming military buildup was transparent bluffing. There it is noted that although the Ming had charged Mac Dang Dung with several crimes, "actually they did not dare to send troops, and were just brandishing empty words to intimidate." In the face of these empty threats, "Dang Doanh and his father Mac Dang Dung quaked in fear, sent [an ambassador] to present a memorial to Guangxi and request to surrender and accept punishment. Their words were very heart-rending. Because they offered huge bribes to the officials of the three offices of Guangdong and Guangxi, and others in Qinzhou and Lianzhou 廉州, those officials accepted the bribes, so the Ming officials requested the court that the army not be sent."⁷⁷ Later Le scholars and kings proudly traced their lineage to Le Loi, the brave and persistent resistance fighter against earlier Ming occupation.⁷⁸ In contrast, the Mac come across as weak and unpatriotic, willing to trade land and treasure in the face of toothless threats from the Ming court.

破、萬陣風飄未易沉。/多少魚龍藏裡面、太公無處不鉤尋, from *Dai Viet dinh nguyen Phat luc* (Vien Han Nom manuscript collection, A.771; a biography of Giap Hai); reference provided by Jason Hoai Tran, personal communication.

⁷⁷ *DVTS*, p. 27a.

⁷⁸ Whitmore, "Chung-hsing and Cheng-t'ung," pp. 116-35.

The narrative structure of the *History of the Ming* implies that the emperor was informed of and engaged with preparations for the surrender. This linear narrative is contradicted by the Ming *Veritable Records*, the primary account of the happenings at court used as the basis of the official histories. In the *Veritable Records*, the emperor's reaction to the surrender was not recorded as happening until April 1541. By that time, the Mac surrender was an accomplished fact. At that point, the emperor had little choice but to accept it, though he appended his own set of conditions.

According to the *Veritable Records*, after being informed of the surrender, Zhu Houcong emerged from his increasing seclusion to claim victory. In his remarks, Zhu acknowledged the divisive effect on the Ming court of the Dai Viet crisis: "In the past, my intention was to punish Annam, but there were those who quailed, scoffed, and blocked state affairs."⁷⁹ The lavish surrender ceremony and conciliatory letter allowed the emperor to treat the venture as a success, despite the interference of officials whose quailing and scoffing had so frustrated him. With a stroke of the writing brush, the emperor executed a bloodless (if largely meaningless) administrative coup, demoting Annam from independent kingdom to something akin to a native chieftaincy. Mac Dang Dung, he ordered, was no longer a king, but a pacification commander; Annam was no longer an independent kingdom of alien Yi people but the historical territory of China, reclaimed through the desire of its own inhabitants to be subjects of the Ming throne. Instead of using words of military conquest, Zhu Houcong drew on a conventional vocabulary of imperial benevolence, casting himself as a savior to the people of Annam. He wrote, "I have examined their letter of surrender and the characterization of the people of the country. Since the situation is understandable, I will pardon them. It has long been the plan of the Vietnamese people to get rid of this label of kingdom, in order to prevent uncontrolled power struggles among rival groups." As for the support the Ming owed their former tributary state the Le, he dismissed it: "the Le line has no heir and Dang Dung is already accepted by the people."⁸⁰ In truth, the Ming had no reliable way to gather information about events in Annam. Accepting Mac Dang Dung's claims that the Le had no viable heirs was easier than verifying it.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *MSL*, p. 519.

⁸⁰ *MSL*, p. 519. Geoff Wade characterizes this instance as drawing on the topoi of "the emperor as possessor of virtue." Geoff Wade, "Some Topoi in Southern Border Historiography," in Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderick Ptak, eds., *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy, 10th to 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), p. 141.

⁸¹ Zhao, *Junzheng beili*, p. 577a.

According to the account in the *History of the Ming*, Mac Dang Dung received this notice revoking Dai Viet's status as a kingdom in fear and trembling.⁸² In actuality, he had died of illness, at the age of fifty-nine, before the addendum of the emperor arrived.⁸³ He did live to see the welcome result of his surrender: the Mac went from being beset by enemy states on two fronts to gaining the patronage of the Ming.

The Mac surrender reveals the complex workings of the Ming government. In this case, a group of border officials blocked and outmaneuvered the emperor's stated desire to wage war on Dai Viet. At the same time, since their careers and or even lives depended on the whims of the emperor, these officials worked hard to bring about a surrender that would mollify Zhu Houcong. Indeed, the final letter left no room for Zhu and his supporters to find fault, without conducting exhaustive inquiries into the parentage of Le Ninh.

Unraveling the moment of surrender reveals it as a case of true diplomacy. Historical scholarship tends to emphasize the Vietnamese state's need to be pragmatic in the face of Chinese pressure, to compromise or acquiesce to the conditions of the so-called tributary system in order to avoid conflict. But this view overlooks the Chinese state's need to exercise caution in its relations with Dai Viet in order to prevent costly and destructive wars. The surrender was a compromise, which entailed the Ming's abandoning support of the Le and thwarting Zhu Houcong's initial desire to wage war. Just as the Mac pragmatically neutralized the Ming state as a foe through their surrender, border officials like Jiang Yigui, Cai Jing, and Weng Wanda guided the state towards peace rather than waste resources in an ambiguous struggle with a foreign state.⁸⁴

Since the abandonment of Annam as a province in 1427, the Ming government had been torn between interventionist and anti-imperialist approaches. By facilitating and accepting the Mac surrender, the court effectively postponed formulating a comprehensive Dai Viet policy. The government of the Ming settled for a compromise, becoming involved in Vietnamese politics but stopping short of dethroning the Mac dynasty. The resolution marked by the surrender was not so much an exercise of China's hegemonic power, but rather acceptance of a more limited role for the Ming in the region. Zhu Houcong, despite his tri-

⁸² *MS* 321, p. 8336.

⁸³ In the eighth month of 1541; *TT*, p. 847.

⁸⁴ For a recent article arguing for the flexibility of the late-imperial tribute system, see Jack Wills, "Functional, Not Fossilized," *TP* 98.4-5 (2012), pp. 439-78.

KATHLENE BALDANZA

umphant claims of victory, comes across as an autocrat frustrated in his attempts to wage a (to him) justified war. Despite going through a tedious if contrived surrender, Mac Dang Dung – unlike his fellow rulers Le Ninh and Zhu Houcong – achieved his goals.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ALJ</i>	<i>Annan laiwei jilue</i> 安南來威輯略
<i>ALT</i>	<i>Annan laiwei tuce</i> 安南來威圖冊
<i>DVTS</i>	<i>Dai Viet thong su</i> 大越通史
<i>MS</i>	<i>Mingshi</i> 明史
<i>MSL</i>	<i>Ming shilu zhong zhi dongnan ya shiliao</i> 明實錄中之東南亞史料
<i>SZL</i>	<i>Shuyu Zhouzi lu</i> 殊域周咨錄
<i>TT</i>	<i>Dai Viet su ky toan thu</i> 大越史記全書
<i>YJS</i>	<i>Yue jiao shu</i> 越嶠書