

## An introduction of the valuable and rare antique maps of Vietnam in the XV century

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**Abstract:** *A collection of 24 maps in The Study of Vietnam's portolan in the XV century (Étude sur un portulan annamite du XVe siècle) written in French language, by French scholar G. Dumoutier, was finished in August, 1895. The full version of this study published in the "Bulletin of Historical and Descriptive Geography", No.2/1896 (Bulletin de géographie historique et descriptive, No2 - 1896) was highly appreciated and the author G. Dumoutier was awarded the "Jomard" Prize by Geographical Society in 1897. This is a valuable and rare collection of maps, few people know and can access it in full version possibly because it's a study by a French and published in French bulletin too long ago, and as it doesn't exist in Vietnam yet.*

*According to Prof. Trần Nghĩa, a former Director, Institute of Hán-Nôm Studies, this collection of maps has been in archives in France under the code of Paris.BN.G FF.3677. The authors (Bửu Cầm, Đỗ Văn Anh, Phạm Huy Thúc...) of the book of "Hồng Đức bản đồ" (Hồng Đức maps, Saigon, Department of National Education, 1962, p.XII) said that this collection of maps couldn't be found in all libraries in Saigon. However, we have the print extracts from the above mentioned bulletin consisting of full text of this study and 24 maps, presented by a French friend. We also realized that the collection of maps are attached as an appendix of the study published in the Bulletin of Historical and Descriptive Geography, No.2, 1896 that is kept in the Library of Institute of Social Sciences Information, Hanoi.*

**Key words:** Antique map, Portulan annamite du Xve siècle, the XV century, G. Dumoutier

Recently, on collecting materials related to history of the East Sea and its islands we obtained *The Study of Vietnam's portolan in the XV century*, in which there is a collection of antique maps of Vietnam in the XV century that has been extracted from *the Bulletin of Historical and Descriptive Geography*, No.2, 1896 in form of separate edition and we also

found this collection in the Library of Institute of Social Sciences Information, Hanoi in two formats: in separate edition and as a part printed in above mentioned bulletin.

24 maps were in series from Thăng Long Imperial City to the ancient capital of the Champa Kingdom attached with appendices titled *Land navigations* and *Waterway navigations*

that are regarded by the author as: "This is a military material developed basing on the information collected in around the end of the XV century from King Lê Thánh Tông's envoys, who was sent on reconnaissance to draw maps creating favorable conditions for taking over Champa" (G. Dumoutier, 1895, p.1).

### The format of maps

The collection of maps is attached as an appendix to *The Study of Vietnam's portolan in the XV century* by G. Dumoutier. Maps are color printed, the drawing style and the legend are simple, the



**The Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long and its neighborhood  
in the XV century**

whole map pages are clear to look at and to read. If *Hồng Đức maps* was negative because of its black pattern, white drawing style and legend, this collection of maps were positive since it has light yellow pattern, sharp, embossed and black legend; mountains, forests, rivers, streams, depots, workshops were presented with different strengths of the blue and brown.

24 maps were numbered by G. Dumoutier with Roman numerals from I to XXIV as well as Latin numerals closely corresponded with the geographic names, legends in Hán or Nôm scripts on each page. In correlation with each map, there was a list of geographic names, legends transliterated, translated and transcribed from Hán into Vietnamese scripts that makes readers easy to look at.

Yet G. Dumoutier created 25 lists of geographic names,

legends (numbered with Latin numerals) corresponded with 25 maps (numbered with Roman numerals). Among them, there was one line of “Xiêm Thành” with the only note numbered 669 that “Xiêm Thành – a city of Xiêm country (the capital of Champa)” in the list of geographic names, legends numbered 25, while



**Map numbered XVII -  
The old land hadn't been named as Huế**

there was no map numbered XXV in the collection (01 map numbered XXV was absent).

### **The value of this map collection**

Although these maps are the key basis of *The Study of Vietnam's portolan in the XV century* by G. Dumoutier, there were not only the portolans from the North Central Coast Region to Chà Bàn, ancient capital of Champa (Ninh Thuận province nowadays) but also the maps of certain numbers of in-land provinces, which have the interprovincial roadways as landmarks and many geographic names as well as olden village, commune names, and lots of other information like depots, workshops, mineral mines, rivers and mountains of the Đại Việt country etc.

Without any title, name of author and date of completion in each map page in particular and the whole collection in general, in the preamble of his study, G. Dumoutier wrote that “Đại Việt sử ký” (Annals of Đại Việt) mentioned about these maps as follows: “In February, year of Tân Mão or in the Spring, the second year of Hồng Đức reign [1471], King Thánh Tông sent many troops to garrison in Đô Bá, then arrested the King of Champa named Trà Toàn. When they reached Thuận Hóa river, the King commanded to pitch camps and held manoeuvres in land and in boats of war. The King assigned a native named Nguyễn Vũ to

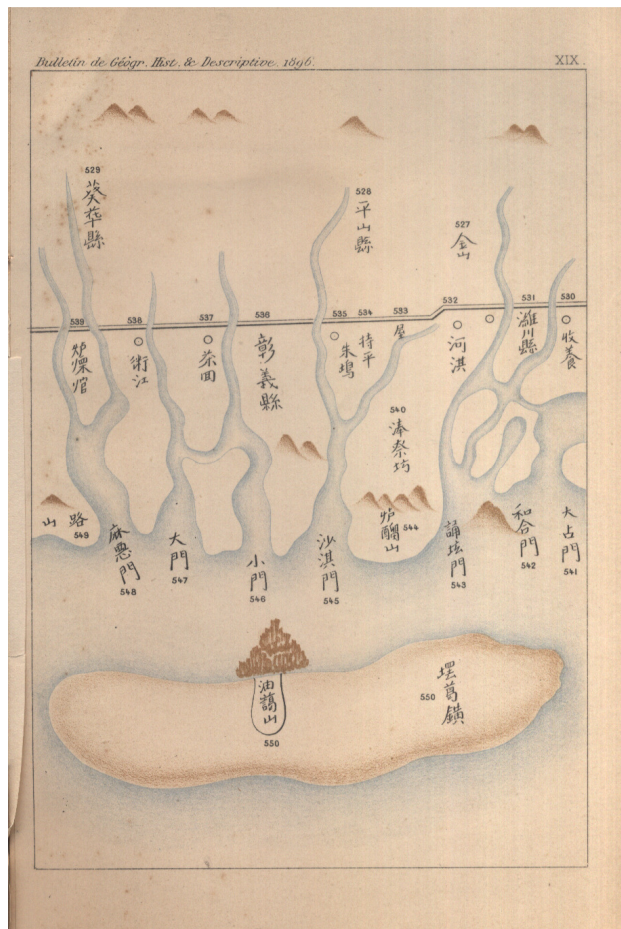
collection necessary data to create the map of Xiêm Kingdom”<sup>(\*)</sup>. G. Dumoutier added: “The date of the attack deployed in 1471 was not indicated in our map collection, yet after ravaging Chà Bàn and this city had been ruined, the capital was moved to Bình Thuận. The Annals also shows us the maps of Champa based on the information provided by provincial chief mandarin and completed some years later, after its restructured as a province of Đại Việt country in 1477 (G. Dumoutier, 1895, p.2). Accordingly, G. Dumoutier identified that the dates and the above mentioned events were reliable to define the original time of completion for this map collection.

Another interesting and fairly important fact discovered by G. Dumoutier was that in the map numbered XVII, the area of Triệu Phong district (is in the Central Coast Region now) was not named as Huế city (refers to map XVII). This makes us reestimate and reconfirm the time of completion of the map collection. According to G. Dumoutier, in that time, the capital of Annam was under control of Champa authority and was totally destroyed in March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1371. Its title did not exist in the following century, but this area still played an important role and functioned as a

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<sup>(\*)</sup> Chiêm Thành (NVT).





**Map numbered XIX in the collection**

military supplying center for the frontier troops. This was the place for the establishment of Huế city, and was represented by the semicircular system of ramparts and moats with two ends connecting to the rivers, the military supplying stations (n°475), the bazar outside the station (n°475), and Trà Ân district (n°473). On the upstream direction, there were many depots and construction material workshops (n°469), possibly were wood stores and elephant stations (n°470).

Regarding the portolan map, G. Dumoutier pointed out: "[...] The first port was marked under the name of Đại Xiêm Môn (Cảng Đại Xiêm - n°541) in the map numbered XIX of this collection. That was Fai-Fo port (Hội An), a strip of land with this name is Duy Xuyên district nowadays (n°531). It was indicated in the map as Cửa Đại, meant Big Gate. It's often called as Cửa Đại, but this could only denote a half wording, the full name was Cửa Đại Xiêm.

The Vietnamese maps were usually shortened as we could find Bàn Khôi cape locating in the entrance of Ban Cầu nguyên port (Tụng Đàn Môn - n°543) and Hòa Hợp port (Hòa Hợp Môn - n°542), the confluence of rivers and streams flowing towards the chief town of Duy Xuyên district (n°531). The next port was Bantam cape<sup>(\*)</sup> (Bàn Than). This was a sandy

<sup>(\*)</sup> The collection of *Nos richesses coloniales 1900-1905*, Louis Laurent, G. Darboux, Edouard Heckel (1906, p.283) indicated: 'Between Bantam and Batangan capes, there were some pools and gulfs that were very difficult to protect, and a big island of Cù Lao Chàm raising to cope with strong waves and squalls as an 'outpost' in the sea of the Central Coast Region. Bantam was located in the south of Batangan cape', [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batangan\\_Peninsula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batangan_Peninsula). Collating in the current military maps, the Bantam

port (Sa Kỳ Môn - n°545) and was shaped with the river flowing downwards from Bình Sơn (n°528).

A large raised sandbar with a rocky mountain named Du Ai Sơn (a mountain with high quality oil - *Bonne huile*) stood in the bottom of the map numbered XIX. That was Đại Xiêm island in the maps.

The fact could be found in maritime navigations translated from new documents under our study, was that the sandbar lasted “from Đại Xiêm port to Hoang Sa port, measured at 500-600 li<sup>(\*)</sup> long and 30-40 li wide. It was a standing danger for boats traveling in this sea, many accidents had occurred. In December every year, many people come here to grasp the remaining things found in the wrecks (Refers to the map XIX). There was only a name of Núi Dầu for the rocky mountain, which deeply originated from sea water level in the Central Coast Region. This name was annotated that there were many sea turtles in the sandbar and the ancient Nam Việt people did established an oil manufacturing center here[...]”.

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cape was named in Vietnamese as Bàn Than, located in the south of Batangan cape with the Vietnamese name of Ba Làng An (three villages has the same word ‘An’ in their names: Vân An, An Chuần, An Hải in Bình Châu commune, Bình Sơn district, Quảng Ngãi province).

(\*) Measurement unit: li = lý = dặm = 576 meters, old measurement unit (Chinese) (refers to: The French-Vietnamese, 2001, p.677).

To date, few people know and can access this map collection in full version possibly because there were only Hán or Nôm scripts and it's a study by a French, published in French bulletin too long ago. The authors of the book of *Hồng Đức bản đồ* (Hồng Đức maps) said: “We couldn't find this bulletin<sup>(\*)</sup> but in the library of the Société des études indochinoises (Saigon museum) there was a printed copy of that study. According to this study, its author did facsimiled the maps, unfortunately, there were no attached facsimiles” (Bửu Cầm, Đỗ Văn Anh, Phạm Huy Thúc..., Saigon, Department of National Education, 1962). On the occasion of launching two volumes of *Thiên Nam Tứ chí Lộ đồ thư* (The Collection of the South's Road Map) and *Giáp Ngọ niên biểu Bình Nam đồ* (Maps of the Pacified South in the Year of Giáp Ngọ) in the book titled *Hồng Đức maps*, Prof. Trần Nghĩa proposed the concept of “antique map” as a type of map that was drawn with traditional style before the official establishment of cartography. And he added that “The Portolan map has been in archives in France under the code of Paris.BN.G FF.3677 belonging to the type of colored hand-drawing with unidentified date, consisted 24

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(\*) the Bulletin of Historical and Descriptive Geography, № 2, 1896 (Noted by: NVT).

portolans (maps) in Vietnam, bound in the portolan charts of many countries” (Trần Nghĩa, 2014, p.8). On writing about Hoàng Sa Islands, Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn also researched the map XIX and inserted the facsimiled version of the map XIX by G. Dumoutier in this collection with a caption of “Road map crossing Quảng Nam in Lê reign, facsimiled version by G. Dumoutier”. At the same time, Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn pointed out that the facsimiled version was originated from one collection of maps, but there were many details added: “Bãi Cát Vàng” and “Đảo Du Trường” in Vietnamese scripts. In the part of studying Hoàng Sa Islands, Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn remarked that “the expressions of Đại Tràng-sa, or Bãi Cát-vàng imply Tràng-sa or Hoàng-sa by the ancient topographers, these are called Parcel or Paracel by the European. And in the contemporary European topographic maps, Paracel was drawing as a very long sandbar standing in front of territorial water of our country” (Hoàng Xuân Hãn, 1975, pp.7-15). It’s unfortunate that Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn didn’t indicate the number of G. Dumoutier’s facsimiles and the place, where the original and the facsimiles has been kept.

In the frame of this article we couldn’t introduce 24 above mentioned maps in

full. We will gradually review the whole study and the attached maps in the next articles □

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