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*Dedicated to Prof. Stanislaw Kuczera,
my teacher in science and life*

Kinh People in Southern China

The Vietnamese always lived in the territory of modern Kwangtong and Kwanghsi Provinces. In ancient times these territories were known as the region of “Bai Yue” (“Bach Viet”, namely “Many Viet Tribes”). In the end of the III cent. BC this territory was conquered by the troops of the first unifier of China – Chin Shih-Huang, but soon after it, when Chin Empire collapsed, a new independent Nam Viet state came into being and existed in the territory of Kwangtong, Kwanghsi and North Vietnam until the end of the II cent. BC.

As Chinese authors recognized it, the Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese, the main nationality of present Vietnam) live in this territory originally, before the Chinese (Han) came here. Now there are few descendents of Viet people in Kwanghsi Province, living here for ages. Not so many materials are available about this small group of Kinh nationals, though there are known two special researches to this question. The Committee of National Affairs of Kwanghsi Province published one of them, “The situation with Vietnamese in Fangcheng County” in April 1954 “for internal secret use”. It was compiled by unnamed “15 officials” and consists of 240 pages [1]. Local ethnologists edited another research, not so thorough, in 1993 [2]. It consists mainly of folklore and other ethnological material, and has very brief outline in history and economy of Kinh people.

The first and very important question, we need to discuss, is the ethnical affiliation of the Kinh living in Kwanghsi province. For us it seems to be a senseless question. But it is not so for the authors. The change of their position is very interesting. In 1954 book Vietnamese living in Kwanghsi for ages were called “Yue” (“Viet”). To distinguish them from new emigrants from Vietnam for the later the name “Yue qiao” (“Viet kieu”) was used in the meaning “ngoai kieu” (“foreign Vietnamese”). It was said that “Viet kieu” belong to the same nation as “Viet toc” (Vietnamese, “Yue tsu”), speak the same Vietnamese language and

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have relations with their compatriots in Vietnam. “Viet kieu” became “Viet toc” after marriage to somebody from Kwanghsi Viets [1]. In 1993 this position changes completely, and Viets in Kwanghsi are called “Jing tsu” (“Kinh toc”, i.e. “Kinh nationality”). It is said that they are independent nationality whose language “is similar” to Vietnamese [2, p. 3]. Linguistic affiliation of their language is defined as Sino-Tibetan, and not Austroasiatic as Vietnamese! The similar position contains the “Encyclopedia of New China”, where Kinh are said to be a nation of “unknown linguistic affiliation” [4, p. 31].

The amount of Vietnamese living for several ages in Kwanghsi is not so much now, it was only 13 100 in 1987. They live in Fangchen (Phong Thanh) county. In 1954 Viets amounted to 2896 persons (without “Viet kieu”) and they were the second national minority in the county (after the Pien (Thien) nationality), 1,31 % of all population of the county.

They are living compactly in three islands of Manwei (Man Vi), Wutou (Vu Dau), Shanhsin (Son Tam), where they make the majority of the population (80,7 % in 1954) and live separately from other national groups, and live also in two rural districts Chianglong (Giang Long) and Chushan (Truc Son), where they live neighbouring to the Han (in Vietnamese – “Hoa”). The Kinh people usually live in the villages, rarely in towns. They live very close to the Vietnamese border, and the shortest distance to the border is only 20 *li* (10 km) by sea [1, p.1–3, 184–185]. This fact made their existence a political question, especially in the period of political tensions between Vietnam and China.

In the same county “Viet kieu” are also living. In the early 50-s there were only 141 “Viet kieu”, first generation emigrants from Vietnam. They immigrated to this region during the Liberation war with French army around 1947–1953, and some of them were called “revolutionaries”. The region of their origin was Mong Cai in Hai Ninh Province, only one family was reported to be from Hanoi and one from Ha Nam Province. In China they didn’t get land during agrarian reforms and lived as rural and town workers and also on subsidies of the Committee for Support of the Vietnamese Emigrants, which guided and possibly controlled the emigrants. They considered themselves to be temporary emigrants and were going to return to Vietnam after the war. Only few of them married Kwanghsi Viets and were stricken from the list of the Committee. It was reported that they had President Ho Chi Minh portraits in their houses, “liked Chairman Ho”, though Kwanghsi Viets “liked Chairman Mao” (Mao Tse-tung) [1, p. 6–8]. The majority of the Vietnamese emigrants were not participating in revolutionary transformations and elections in China. Vietnamese emigrants didn’t speak Chinese, didn’t know Chinese characters, though some of them had to send their children to Chinese schools. The destiny of the Vietnamese emigrants after 50-s is unknown to us. Now there are some Vietnamese nationals in South China, though any concrete official figures on their amount are unknown to us, but it seems to be not so many of them. As our Vietnamese respondents in China supposed, in 2000 there were several hundreds of Vietnamese nationals in

China. Vietnamese study and work in Canton, Shanghai and some other big cities. Vietnamese restaurants exist now in many big Chinese cities.

In Hong Kong the situation is different. Vietnamese were the second large national minority in this territory (after the Philipinians). Their amount was 40 000 in 1993. They live mainly in floating boat town named Aberdeen and not much involved in the city infrastructure. Their material problems are decided by the administration of the territory and other organizations only partly and in the second turn after the Cantonese emigrants [3, p. 35, 51].

Kinh people in Kwanghsi call themselves “the Annamites” (“nguoi An Nam”) and now are quite integrated into Chinese society. They have a long history in this region. As it was written in the beginning of this paper, the Vietnamese lived in this region since the prehistoric times. These concrete families of Fangchen (Phong Thanh) County live here at least since 1511, according to their family genealogies, village chronicles, inscriptions in the temples etc. They migrated mainly from Hai Ninh and other Northern regions of Vietnam in different times till the 19-th century. They use 25 family names, the main of which are Luu, Nguyen, Vang, Ngo, To, Vu (61–73 % of all) [1, p. 2–3]. During Min and Ching dynasties they lived under the Chinese administration, but preserved their own customs, style of life, religion. They carefully preserved Vietnamese folk songs. They preserved some very old traditions. Here the further detailed ethnological research is necessary. Also one very interesting fact must be noticed: Kwanghsi Vietnamese still use Chinese characters and “chu Nom” (Vietnamese characters made on the base of Chinese characters) for writing in Vietnamese, which are extinct in Vietnam already. This fact was noticed both in 1954 and in 1993. In the past they invited teachers of Nom from Vietnam. The way of writing was marked as the main difference between the Kwanghsi Vietnamese and Vietnamese emigrants. Kwanghsi Vietnamese couldn’t write “quoc ngu” (Latinized Vietnamese writing), and Vietnamese emigrants didn’t write “chu Nom”. Kwanghsi Vietnamese also all could speak Cantonese [1, p. 123–134; 2, p. 3].

Historically, this territory was for a long time on the border of China with Vietnam. After Han Empire has conquered Nam Viet state, Vietnam struggled for independence from Chinese Empire for more than 1000 years. When Northern Vietnam finally gained independence in 939, China left Kwangtung and Kwanghsi under its control. Fangchen became a border region. In 1592 Mac dynasty (1527–1677) flew from Ha Noi and formed a small principality near the Chinese border with capital in Cao Bang. For a short time Fangchen was under Mac rule and in 1677 was returned to Chinese administration.

In 1886–87 this territory was occupied by French army, which established here military administration and tried to influence the religion and educational system of the Kinh. After the territory came back to China, Kinh continued to live according to their own social-political traditions, guided by the decisions of own rural councils, though the nature of their relationship with local Chinese administration is not very clear. Relations with Han (Hoa) were not always good. The compilers of the first book about Vietnamese in

Kwanghsi tell us about the examples of mutual unfriendliness before 1949, and sometimes Hoa broke Vietnamese stone tablets and burial stellae. Vietnamese almost didn't get their own land before the agrarian reform in 1952 [1, p. 181–191, 23–24].

In 1948 the movement against Kuomintang began in this territory, but the liberation of this region happened only in the end of 1950. After the liberation the life of the Kinh got better. They got land, the quantity of Vietnamese pupils in primary schools increased twice. Before the liberation there was only one Vietnamese schoolteacher and in 1954 – 7 teachers. Infectious diseases decreased twice [1, p. 118–122].

Despite all of this, the economic situation was not so good. Many Vietnamese were fishermen, but the real price of fish (comparing to the price of one pound of rice) since 1948 till 1954 decreased 6 times. The majority of the Kinh even after the reform were attributed officially as “poor farmers”, or “poor agricultural workers”. We can judge of their economic situation by the figures of the governmental material aid. In 1953 the Kinh got 75,9 % of all material aid in the region (1542 persons against 418 Chinese) [1, p. 193–232].

In 1953 Wutou Vietnamese Autonomous Rural District was established, and in 1958 part of the territory where the Kinh live was included in the “Multinational Autonomous District of Tunghsing”, but the three islands inhabited by Kinh solely didn't get any status of autonomous territory [1, p. 1; 3, p. 2–4].

Nowadays, Kinh in Kwanghsi are continuing their life of farmers and fishermen, sometimes craftsmen or agricultural workers, developing their own society in the conditions of New China. We don't know if they maintain their relations with Vietnam now and what was the situation there in the 70-s – early 80-s, when the relations between the two countries worsened and even came to Vietnamese-Chinese War.

The material, contained in these two books, especially in the first one is very spacious. Here we offer only the brief outline of the history and present day life of Vietnamese in Kwanghsi. Their further research will be very perspective and useful, and not only for ethnologists, who can find a very interesting material preserved in this isolated and small society, but also for economists, politologists and researchers of Vietnamese-Chinese contacts in different spheres as well.

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Người Việt Nam ở phía nam Trung Quốc

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*Đề tặng cho giáo sư Xtanislav Kuchera
thầy của tôi về khoa học và sự sống*

Đây là bài viết về lịch sử và tình hình thực tế của người VN ở phía nam Trung Quốc (theo số liệu ở Trung Quốc). Tài liệu nói về người VN sống ở TQ rất ít. Chúng tôi chỉ tìm thấy có hai quyển được viết về họ bằng tiếng Trung Hoa, những người Kinh ở Quảng Tây. Một quyển được viết vào năm 1954 và chỉ dành cho nhà nước, không được bán rộng rãi bên ngoài. Quyển thứ hai được viết vào năm 1993 do nhà dân tộc học viết. Hai quyển sách này có tin tức quan trọng và rất quý.

Về truyền dân gian của họ có nhiều những giá trị quý báu. Nhiên đôi khi kết luận của các tác giả TQ không hoàn toàn chính xác.

Ngoài ra còn có bản báo cáo về người VN ở Hồng Kông, những chung tôi không hề biết về những người VN ở Quảng Châu.

Người Việt ở Quảng Tây là hậu sinh ở rìa Bắc, họ xuất hiện ở đây trước 1511 và bây giờ sống riêng lẻ ở một vùng quê. Họ sống khác so với những người ở Hồng Kông. Họ sống trên 3 cái đảo nhỏ cạnh VN ngoài ra tiên bờ biển cạnh những người dân Trung Quốc và người Tráng. Họ làm nông nghiệp và câu cá, luôn giữ gìn bản sắc truyền thống văn hoá VN. Vào năm 1886-1887 thực dân Pháp đã chiếm đóng lãnh thổ của họ, thực dân Pháp mưu toan để những người dân Kinh theo đạo và học theo sự chỉ đạo của thực dân Pháp. Sau đó lãnh thổ được trả lại Trung Quốc và họ lại sống độc lập ở đó. Năm 1958 Trung Quốc lập lên khu tự trị cho người Kinh gọi là Tunghsing. Bây giờ người Trung Quốc coi họ không sai là người Kinh chỉ có ngôn ngữ giống với VN.

Ở 3 đảo này không sai là khu tự trị của Trung Quốc bởi họ thông thể làm gì với sần lòn người dân VN ở đó. San cách màng ở TQ, người dân ở đây cải cách ruộng đất và khai hoá rất nhiều những vùng đất nông nghiệp.

Tất cả con người và thiên nhiên ở đây rất có ý nghĩa đối với các nhà dân tộc học bởi vì họ vẫn giữ được truyền thống dân tộc Kinh mà có thể bây giờ ở VN không còn.

Ngoài ra họ cũng rất cần thiết đối với các nhà trình trị học và những ai quan tâm đến quan hệ Việt-Trung.