

NGUYEN LORDS (Chua Nguyen). Powerful aristocratic family and founder of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) in Vietnam. The family rose to prominence during the decline of the Le Dynasty (1428-1788) in fifteenth-century Vietnam, when an influential mandarin, Nguyen Kim, supported the restoration of the Le against the usurping dynasty established in 1527 by Mac Dang

Dung. After Nguyen Kim's death in 1545, two branches of the family, represented by his son, Nguyen Hoang, and his son in law Trinh Kiem, assisted the Le in returning to power in 1552.

During the next two centuries Le Dynasty rulers were dominated by the two powerful families--the Trinh and the Nguyen--who had restored them to the throne. The Trinh lords were dominant in the North, and in the capital of Thang Long (present-day Hanoi), where the imperial family was located. The Nguyen Lords controlled the area of Vietnam south of the Hoanh Son Spur, where Nguyen Hoang had been named governor in 1558. At first the two families cooperated against their common enemy, the Mac. But after the Mac were driven from Thang Long in 1592, the Trinh and the Nguyen themselves became rivals. For two centuries Vietnam was divided, although both accepted the legitimacy of the powerless Le Dynasty.

Under Nguyen rule, the Vietnamese boundary gradually extended toward the south. The rump state of Champa was destroyed, and the lower Mekong Delta seized from the disintegrating Kingdom of Angkor in the late seventeenth century. But rural unrest led to the outbreak of the Tay Son Rebellion in 1771. In 1783, the Nguyen capital at Saigon was conquered by the Tay Son and Nguyen regime overthrown. Nguyen Anh, a prince of the deposed Nguyen family, was able to survive, however, and in 1802 he defeated the Tay Son and proclaimed the establishment of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945). (See Nguyen Anh; Nguyen Hoang; Nguyen Kim; Tay Son Rebellion; Trinh Kiem; Trinh Lords)