

The Tongking Gulf through History: A Geo-Political Overview

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Introduction

The Gulf of Tongking runs from the western side of the Leizhou Peninsula and the coasts of present day Guangxi to north and central Vietnam. This crescent naturally embraces Hainan Island's western coast. Many harbours and islands dot the 130,000 kilometres² Gulf. Among all mainland Southeast Asian coasts, the Gulf of Tongking first reached the current sea level more than 2000 years ago, while the coastline of peninsular Thailand/Malaysia reached this level 500 years later, whilst the coast of Chao Phraya and the Mekong deltas formed last, which was still swampy and uninhabitable from between the 10th and 15th centuries BC.¹ Today's Hanoi area also known as the "Hanoi Valley" has a long history of settlement.² A principal difference between the prehistoric chronology of northern Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia is the presence of an early Neolithic, dated from c.7000 to 5000 BP – dates which are shared with western Guangxi.³

I was first drawn to considering relations between ancient Guangxi and the Red River plain in the Gulf of Tongking. In this regard two matters were striking. First, although adjacent to Guangdong, the earliest Chinese province to open up in the 1980s, Guangxi only grew slowly during the two subsequent decades, merely providing labor and foodstuffs for Guangdong. As time would show, Guangxi's economic take-off required the opening of northern Vietnam. And second, that if it took Vietnam to give life and meaning to Guangxi's maritime connections, it also took Vietnam to provide Guangxi with the overland connections that would make the Yunnan–Northern Vietnam–Guangxi triangle into the new Golden Triangle of Growth. In short, the recent "Two Corridors and One Rim" project mentioned in the Preface crystallized the significance of Vietnam for the development of Guangxi, both overland and by sea.

¹ Miriam T. Stark, "Early Mainland Southeast Asian Landscapes in the First Millennium A.D.", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, June 2006, 21:5-6.

² Vu Trung Tang et al. "Bac Bo Delta Estuarine Area", in <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/bac-bo/estuary.html>, accessed 4 June 2009.

³ Nishimura Masanari, "Settlement patterns on the Red River plain from the late prehistoric period to the 10th century AD", *Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Bulletin* 25, (2005):102.

As this suggests, Guangxi's importance can only be properly understood in a regional context. From the perspective of central China, Guangxi was a remote and underdeveloped area for thousands of years and contributed little to the glory of Chinese civilization; from the Vietnamese side looking north, once the Red River Delta became the key building block of Vietnamese nationalist historiography, Guangxi was abstracted into the immensity of "China" overshadowing "Vietnam". This book challenges these earlier perspectives. By trying to put the former principalities and peoples in the area we now call northern Vietnam back into a coastal context and, conversely, by putting coastal Guangxi back into what is now "Vietnamese" territory, where historically appropriate, its chapters reveal a complex pattern of inter-relationships going back more than two millennia in this region. As the French scholar Denys Lombard persuasively argued, during the last two millennia at least southern China and the lands surrounding the South China Sea were so interwoven by overlapping networks of exchange and cultural interactions that they formed an ensemble which can fruitfully be compared to the Mediterranean as analyzed by Fernand Braudel.⁴ This is particularly true in regard to the Gulf of Tongking area of modern northern Vietnam, the only Southeast Asian region that shares a contiguous coastline with southern China.

The following chapters represent an effort to put the essential players whose interactions shaped the Gulf of Tongking's history in the foreground, while the political centers in central China or Hanoi are pushed somewhat further into the background, for at many different times in the past, central governments were far from the driving force for change in the Gulf. The Gulf of Tongking emerges as a centre of interaction, through which multiple players helped shape each other's histories. In this sense the Tongking Gulf does resemble Braudel's Mediterranean, a region he described as having "no unity but that created by the movements of men, the relationships they imply, and the routes they follow."⁵ As a result, the focus of most chapters is principally economic and, in some cases, cultural. For both these reasons, it seems useful to provide readers with a chronological overview of the large-scale geopolitical conditions that affected the Gulf

⁴ Denys Lombard, "Another 'Mediterranean' in Southeast Asia", *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, vol. 1, 2007, http://csds.anu.edu.au/volume_1_2007.

⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), Vol. 1. p. 276.

region over this long stretch of time, within which the detailed explorations of individual chapters are located. That is the task of this Introduction. Following the structure of the book, it is divided into two broad parts: the first covers the era from the Neolithic to the tenth century, when an independent state emerged from old Chinese Jiaozhi (交趾 modern northern Vietnam); the second surveys the nine centuries that followed, in which two states shared the maritime shores of the Tongking Gulf.

Part I. From the Neolithic Period to the Tenth Century

From Prehistory to Han-Era Jiaozhi

Scholars long believed that Vietnamese civilization had developed independently in northern Vietnam before the era of Chinese influence. For the Bronze Age, this ancient period is often referred to as Đông Sơn culture, after the location where its characteristic bronze drums were first unearthed.⁶ However, archaeological research in the last decade has shown greater interaction between peoples here than previously imagined. Higham and Lu, for instance, have demonstrated that rice was introduced into the Red River region from South China during the prehistoric period, with evidence dating back to the Phùng Nguyên culture (2000–1500 BCE).⁷ Another of these important breakthroughs is Judith Cameron's research on Southeast Asian cloth production. In her chapter, Cameron reports that Phùng Nguyên sites in the Red River plains have produced a distinctive type of spindle whorl which first occurs at Tanshishan sites in modern Fujian. This diagnostic type, the biconical whorl, developed from basic types evidenced much earlier at Neolithic sites with rice in the Yangzi Valley, long before the emergence of Phùng Nguyên or Đông Sơn sites. These advanced spinning tools have also been found in Hepu, Guangxi and Thanh Hóa. Had spinning been invented independently in the Red River valley, basic whorls would have been found there. In fact, Cameron's research into spinning technology illuminates a pattern of migration moving from modern southern

⁶ For a comprehensive analysis on the scholarship of Bronze Age culture of Đông Sơn in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, see Haydon Cherry, "Digging Up the Past: Prehistory and the Weight of the Present in Vietnam", *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 4, 1 (2009): 84–144.

⁷ Charles Higham, and L. D. Lu, "The origins and dispersal of rice cultivation," *Antiquity* (1996) 72: 867-77, cited by Cameron in this volume.

China southward into mainland Southeast Asia and eastward to Taiwan and island Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines during the late prehistoric period. As Cameron points out, there might be a material basis for the Vietnamese legend, the Lạc Long Quân or the Lac Dragon Lord, who came from the sea, and taught the local hunter-gatherers how to cultivate and weave.

These ancient migrations draw our attention to the frequent intermingling of different peoples on different Asian shores, and hint at the possible influences of external groups in the foundations of various civilizations. One way of tracing these intermingles is the Việt-Mường languages. According to Vietnamese scholars who have studied the relationship between Vietnamese and Mường, their basic shared vocabulary which relates to the body and to the natural world of hunter-gathers originated from an early Mon-Khmer language, while words relating to agriculture tools and society derived from Tai.⁸ This connection between Tai vocabulary and more advance culture is further reinforced by the archaeological discovery that, the Cổ Loa citadel of the early Vietnamese king An Dương Vương was used both as a dike and a citadel, a concept and technique of which came from Tai speakers.⁹

Bronze drums are another index of the intensity of interactions of Gulf peoples. Up to the 1990s Chinese scholars believed that bronze drums had originated in Shizhaishan (today's Yunnan), from where the concept and technology radiated to the Red River Delta. Since Guangxi and Yunnan are adjacent and nowadays both within Chinese territory, they believed that the bronze drums found in Guangxi had been directly influenced by Yunnan. However, more recent archaeological research by the Japanese scholar Yoshikai, as discussed in Michael Churchman's chapter, has demonstrated that bronze drums were largely absent from the area between Yunnan and Guangxi, therefore it could not have been the transmitting route of the bronze drums. Rather, drums and drum-casting techniques from the lower Red River delta were directly transmitted into the Li-Lao country in Guangxi via the Gulf and its internal rivers systems. Recent Chinese studies on the alloys used in Đông Sơn drums suggest an even more tangled story, with some Đông Sơn drums coming from Yunnan while others found in Guangxi

⁸ Phạm Đức Dương, *Văn hóa Việt Nam trong bối cảnh Đông Nam Á* [Vietnamese culture in the background of Southeast Asia], (Hanoi: Social Sciences Press, 2000), pp. 170-183.

⁹ Phạm Đức Dương, *Văn hóa Việt Nam*, p. 191.

had been made in the Red River Delta and taken to Guangxi later.

The Gulf of Tongking was the most convenient commercial outlet to the South Seas for western China, the powerbase of the earliest Chinese dynasties of Qin (221 BCE - 206 BCE) and Han (206BCE-220CE) at that time located in the capital, Changan (Xian). The Tongking Gulf straddled the economic axes of the Han Empire: it was connected to the overland Silk Route via Changan, and was also the departure point of the Maritime Silk Route to the South Seas and beyond. An almost direct transportation link shot can be traced from Changan 长安 to the Tongking Gulf: over the Qin Mountains and the central Han plain, across Dongting Lake 洞庭湖 and the Xiang River 湘江 in Hunan, and down the Ling Canal 灵渠.¹⁰ A system of waterways operated as a major corridor bringing travelers across central China to the sea at the Gulf of Tonking. It is not incidental that the majority of Han era tombs in modern Guangxi containing precious South Seas' grave goods are located along this corridor. This important economic corridor also contributed to the confluence of the two major cultures of southern China – the Chu 楚 and Yue 越. As Li Tana's chapter discusses, this communications network gave Jiaozhi access all the major trade routes of the time, including the overland Silk Road before the Han abandoned it in early in the second century CE. From then on, Jiaozhi's main ports -- Hepu 合浦 and Xuwen 徐闻 to its north (modern Quangzi), and Cũu Chũn (in modern Thanh Hoá) and Nhật Nam (around the 15th in central Vietnam -dominated the lucrative maritime Silk Road as markets and entrepôts for goods arriving by land or sea. Jiaozhi was also an important manufacturing center for items of local consumption and export. Brigitte Borell's chapter explores the glassware industry in the Gulf region. She points out that the potash glass vessels found in Guangxi were different from both nation-based Mediterranean and Western Asiatic glasses and the lead-barium glass made in central China. Such glassware has found throughout the Tongking Gulf from northern Vietnam to southern China, and possibly even as far away as south India. We can also assume that silk was well-

¹⁰ The Ling Canal in present Guangxi was dug in 214 BCE to subdue the Yue peoples in the south. It was the most significant water project carried out in the southern China, importance of which equalled the Great Wall in the north of the same era. It links the two major rivers of the south, the Yangzi and the Pearl Rivers, in place of an absent single major river system in the southern China. It was the first serious attempt of a Chinese regime based on the western China to reach and subdue the sea.

established here because by the third century cocoons were produced eight times a year in Nhật Nam. Silk is too fragile to survive in the Gulf climate, but the decoration on a bronze drum provides one clue to its manufacture, as shown by Cameron. This drum, which depicts textile production, shows an organized spinning and weaving workshop supervised by an elite woman and operated by slaves, some clearly belonging to a different ethnic group. This suggests that silk production, like glassware, was organized and integrated into the local patterns of consumption and trade. The rice growing Red River plains was the economic lynchpin of the whole Jiaozhi commandery: its high population density and food production enabled the Red River area to supply rice to neighboring districts in exchange for their own local products, like pearls from Hepu or valuable forest products from the southern coast. Interregional exchanges within the commandery thus increased local integration at the same time that they multiplied the wealth of Jiaozhi elites and local chieftains alike.

The sound of bronze drums must have re-echoed throughout the Gulf in 40 CE, as peoples of 65 citadels, from as far south as modern central Vietnam and as far north as Hepu, flocked to the rebellion. The value placed on these drums by the Red River elite at the time made them status markers for surrounding peoples and, as Churchman discusses, impelled local leaders to purchase and produce drums to symbolize their own chiefly authority. Bronze drums particularly caught the imagination of the Kam-Tai speaking Li and Lao tribes in the modern Quangxi hinterland and by the third century this area had become the major regional center of bronze drum production. Thousands of drums, from large ones measuring 1.65 meters in diameter to those tiny enough to sit on a palm, were cast within 300 years by the Li and Lao peoples living between the Left Hand River 左江 and the west bank of the Pearl River 珠江. By that time, however, the Han-influenced Sinitizing-Red River Delta ruling elite had stopped valuing bronze drums. Under the influence of Buddhism from South Asia and Confucianism and Daoism from the north, by the third century bronze drum ownership was abandoned as a barbaric custom.

This understanding helps us to visualize a political map of the Tongking Gulf of the time. The Sinitic-speaking settlers were concentrated in key centers such as Nanhai, Hepu and Jiaozhi. Outside these tiny dots, the court in 洛阳 Luoyang had to abandon the

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vast areas of the present day Guangxi, and left them on their own. This was the background within which the Li and Lao rose. As Churchman reveals, these wild and uncontrollable Li and Lao country, standing between central China and a much more “civilized” Jiaozhi, for 300 years between third century and sixth century BC. Their vast territory stood between the government at the north and Jiaozhi at the south, and they occupied all the strategic traffic routes opened between the north and the Gulf since 3rd century BCE. This vast insulated area greatly slowed the migration from the north. Historical evidence and brick tombs found in the Delta both confirm that much smaller number of HanSinitic-speaking people lived in the Red River Delta after the third century CE. Household numbers of Jiaozhi also show a remarkable decline suggesting out-migration between 280 and 464CE. All these factors effectively made Jiaozhi an island. Thus these stubborn Li and Lao societies, who were stateless and being called by varies names and ultimately faded into the “Chinese” history, might have played an important role in changing the historical course of Jiaozhi. As Churchman points out, the Kam-Tai speaking Li and Lao people facilitated the birth and development of a trend towards self-rule within the local Jiaozhi leadership which would ultimately result in the successful creation of a separate Viet kingdom in the tenth century.

To the list of midwives of Đại Việt’s independence we should also add the Tai speakers of the Upper Red River area. The original name for the Red River (红河 Sông Hồng) should be mentioned in this context. Although well known, the name “Red River” did not appear before the 20th century. Its most well known name, up to the 19th century, was Phú Lương (富良江 in Chinese), derived from “Phu Leung”, a Tai origin, meaning the “Yellow River”, because this area had been the territory of ancient Yellow Tai group.¹¹ Việt and Tai speakers must have lived side by side for a long period in this region. Vietnamese believe that Phong Châu was where the Hùng kings were originated, but this area was called Sip Song Chu Tai, from where Phùng Hưng rose against the Chinese rule in the late 8th century. Although Phùng is generally worshipped as a Việt hero, Tai speakers believe that he was a Black Tai, founder of the Sip Song Chu Tai of the

¹¹ Xu Songshi, “Taizu, Zhuangzu Yuezuo Kao”, p. 355. The section that the Phú Lương River runs towards the Lý Nhân district is still called “Đại Hoàng” (Great Yellow) today.

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Upper Red River area.¹²

For centuries the peoples at the upper Red River and the Lô River areas bartered horses for salt, with the coastal Jiaozhi. Horse trade formed one of the key links in the mountain-sea exchange chain of this region and was an important component of the economy of the Red River delta. Horses were in fact the very reason that local chiefs invited the mighty Nanzhao to invade their country, when a greedy Governor of Annam enforced a low price on the salt-horses exchange rate.¹³ The fighting was centered in the Phong Châu area where again Tai speakers played a crucial role. Only in this context could one understand why Nanzhao, and the routes to Nanzhao,¹⁴ occupied the thinking of contemporary Vietnamese and Chinese governors alike; and why a kingdom that seems so remote from modern Vietnam could invade the Viet capital four times (846, 860, 862 and 863CE) and occupy it for two years (863-865 CE). Like the Li and Lao at the north of Jiaozhi, the attack of Nanzhao from its west greatly weakened Tang rule in Vietnam and thus helped paving the way for Việt independence in 939 CE.¹⁵

More significant changes had been happening on China's south-eastern coast. The migration of northern Chinese towards the Yangzi River delta was the most momentous movement in Chinese history, a movement of which also made big impact on the Gulf. Chinese economic gravity moved to the southeast most visibly from the 4th century CE, increasingly away from the earlier Han's policy and outlook of leaning on the northwest. The Yangzi river area and later Fujian both rose as strong commercial rivals to Jiaozhou, on top of its long time rival, Guangzhou.

By this time, patterns of the South China Sea exchange also changed in a big way. The princes of the South China Sea (南海 *Nanhai*) trade of the ninth century, the Persian

¹²J.R. Chamberlain, "The Efficacy of the P\PH Distinction for Tai Languages," in *The Ram Khamhaeng Controversy*, ed. J.R. Chamberlain (Bangkok:Siam Society,1991), p. 474; cited in John Whitmore, "Colliding Peoples: Tai/Viet Interactions in the 14th and 15th Centuries", paper to AAS, San Diego, March 2000, p. 15.

¹³ *Toàn Thư*, p.163. See also Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp.240-41; J.K. Whitmore, "Colliding Peoples: Tai/Viet Interactions in the 14th and 15th centuries," AAS, San Diago, 2000.

¹⁴ See the detailed routes and distances of each between Annam and Yunnan, recorded in the *Manshu* 蛮书. Fan Chuo, the author of the book was an officer of the Annam Protection Office and lost all his family during the Nanzhao attack of 863. *Manshu* [Book on the southern barbarians], com. 9th century, annotated by Xiang Da 向达 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), pp. 1-10.

¹⁵ Li Tana, "A View from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, no.1, 37 (2006): 83-102.

and Arab merchants preferred to sail directly to Guangzhou on the open sea, a route of which completely by-passed Khmer coast. This change of trading route led to the fall of a series of small port kingdoms at the Malay Peninsula, who were Jiaozhi's trading partners.¹⁶ Registered population of central Vietnam dropped suggesting an out migration between 742 and 820.

The absolute advantage of Jiaozhou that no one could deprive from was its natural connections overland with the Lao, Cham and Khmer regions. And this seemed to have driven the Việt to seek its development south and southwest ward. There might not be a coincidence that the overland path across the Trường Sơn Cordillera became well known by the 8th century, which passed the region known to the Chinese as 'Lu Zhenla' (陆真腊 or the Land Khmer, southern Laos and/or northern Cambodia) and then to the sea. Traders using this route are specifically mentioned as being of Vietnamese origin in early Khmer inscriptions, such as an A.D. 987 inscription on the lower Mekong.¹⁷ The Việt's increased traffic on and effort in making the loss of its maritime access and the revenue from this route might also have contributed to the rise of the Kingdom of the Land Khmer.

Part II. From Independence to the Eve of Colonialism

The First Centuries after Vietnamese Independence

When the Tang Empire collapsed in 907 it brought a landslide of change to southern China and the Gulf of Tongking. All major southern areas claimed independence and various local kings emerged there, from Fujian to Annam (Jiaozhi). Yet, for the reasons examined in the last section, only Vietnam was successful. The tenth century marks a major new beginning for the Tongking Gulf region.

Numerous conflicts happened within the Gulf in the 10th century, between the newly independent Đại Việt and China, all of which have been presented as China's attempts to retake old Jiaozhi. However, they are better understood in a local context, as contests between rival regional political powers seeking to win the upper hand within the

¹⁶See Li Tana's chapter in this book.

¹⁷Kenneth Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p.184, quoted from George Coedes, *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol.6, pp. 183-186. Hall reckons that the Việt traders used a Mekong river route to enter Cambodia, from Nghê An through the Ha-trai pass and down the Mekong, p. 173.

Gulf. Ngô Quyền's defeat of the Southern Han in 939 is one example. Although often simplified into "the Chinese", when viewed from the regional perspective of the Tongking Gulf, the Southern Han (917-971) regime appears as a local rival based in Guangzhou and thus more or less an equal of the Min Kingdom 闽国 (909-945) in Fujian and Đại Việt in the Red River delta. The commercial centrality of Guangzhou made the Southern Han potentially far more dangerous, however, so the Sino-Việt leader Khúc Thừa Mỹ formed an alliance with the Min ruler, for both of whom Guangzhou was a threat.¹⁸ This alliance also reflected centuries of increasingly unequal political and commercial rivalry between the rising Guangzhou and declining Jiaozhou. The polity in Guangzhou even called itself Da Yue 大越 (same as Đại Việt in Vietnamese) kingdom, before changed into the name Southern Han. Vietnam's first name Đại Cồ Việt (大瞿越 "Great Greater Viet")¹⁹ was most likely a reply to the Guangzhou-based polity. These details hint the political struggles between the local regimes in the Gulf region at different levels.

On the Guangxi coastal region the contests were of slightly different nature, but as Anderson discusses in his chapter, their focus was also virtually local. A constant source of conflict between Đại Việt and Guangxi was struggle over the control of manpower. Old Jiaozhi had suffered a steady decline in registered population from the third century demise of the Han Empire onward. By the tenth century, combined household numbers in north and central Vietnam never exceed 40,000, less than half those recorded at the height of the Han period.²⁰ This decline partly reflected the obstacle posed by the Li-Lao country which, as noted earlier, had blocked large-scale Han Chinese overland migration for 300 years; but perhaps more importantly it also indicated Jiaozhi's own loss of control over its population to local strong men. Chinese sources reveal the index of wealth and

¹⁸Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, p. 263.

¹⁹ See inscription of 1159 CE, 钜越国太尉李公碑铭序 "Cự Việt quốc Thái Úy Lý công thạch bi tịnh tự": the character 钜 *Ju* here equals 巨 *Ju* (great, huge), according to Salmon. Phan Văn Các & Claudine Salmon, *Epigraphie en chinois du Viêt Nam = Văn kh'ác Hán Nôm Viêt Nam* (Paris: Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient ; Hà Nội: Viện nghiên cứu Hán Nôm, 1998), p.192. The character 瞿 *Ju* (Co in Vietnamese) has one pronunciation same as 巨 and 钜, see *Cihai 辞海* [Ocean of Words], (上海: 上海人民出版社, 1977), vol.2, p.2208.

²⁰ *元和郡县志 Yuanhe qunxian zhi* [Prefectures and Districts in the Yuanhe period], j.38, (first compiled in 821 CE, reprint Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), pp.955-966.

power in the Gulf region at this time was “slaves, pearls and elephants”.²¹ Local elites rested on control of these commodities, with slaves at the top of the list. Slaves might be bought, but most resulted from raiding. According to Tang records, slave raids were common practice among the peoples in Lingnan, Yunnan and Annam at this time, and the ancient texts provide many details of the practice among different peoples and tribes. Since manpower was as precious in tenth-century Guangxi as it was in Jiaozhi, Guangxi officials often quietly took in, or even enticed, people fleeing from Đại Việt. The disputes this caused led directly to king Lê Hoàn attacking the Guangxi coast in 995.²²

This was the large context for the repeated disputes and wars between the Viet and the Song. Control of manpower was the key for material wealth and political prestige, and this was what the newly independent Đại Việt competed with the surrounding “men of prowess”. As Anderson reveals in this book, the names of chiefs involved in the disputes indicate they were Tai speakers at both sides of the border. What is also important is that the conflicts or wars happened in the coastal areas rather than the land border area. This suggests that the competition happened especially over the control of the coastal trading communities, as Anderson’s chapter argues. Applying the concept of “subaltern”, as referring to subordinate social groups who were not represented within the terms of a dominant political system, he highlighted the role of these marginalized communities of the Tongking Gulf coastline in shaping the history of Song-Viet relations in the first century after independence.

Việt’s contest with the Tai principalities at its west, of the Upper Red River area became intense in the 11th century. In 1012 King Lý Thái Tổ raided today’s Tuyên Quang province and brought back 10,000 Tai people and many horses. When the Tai principality struck back in 1014, it was defeated and lost more people and horses. A far worse setback for the Tai principalities came in the mid-eleventh century, when a Tai chief known as Nùng Trí Cao was crushed between the Song in the north and the Lý to his south.²³ Once a vital power in the Red River delta, the Tai speakers lost the chance of being the

²¹ “又岭外酋帅因生口、明珠、象之饶，雄于乡曲者，朝廷多因而署之，收其利。”(*Wenxian tongkao* 文献通考 卷2: *Tianfu kao* 田赋考).

²² *Songshi* 宋史, j.384. *Chen Yaoxou zhuan* 陈尧叟传.

²³ James Anderson, *The Rebel Den of Nùng Trí Cao: Loyalty and Identity along the Sino-Vietnamese Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press in association with NUS Press Singapore, 2007).

third force, and regional order would increasingly come to depend on Sino-Viet relations. The out migration of the Tai speakers from the Red River delta must have been considerable. Wyatt points out how the variety of Tai chronicles reflect movement and expansion and look back to a point of origin around Muang Theng (now Điện Biên Phủ).²⁴ The eleventh century also saw significant conflicts between lowland Việt forces and their near kin, the upland Mường. In the early eleventh century three Lý dynasty kings repeatedly attacked the Mường in Vĩnh Phú, Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An, seeking to exert control over areas whose valuable forest products were a staple commercial commodity on the coast.²⁵

Relations with Đại Cồ Việt's southern neighbor, the commercial principalities that made up the kingdom known as Champa, also became intertwined with the Song tributary system. The emergence of a Vietnamese kingdom from former Jiaozhi and its ruling elite's attempts to control Gulf regional trade disturbed Champa, so its tributary missions increased to an unprecedented frequency. But just as Champa was feeling the cold wind from the north, a wider change in the commercial patterns of inter-Asian trade came to its assistance from the south: merchants from Sri Vijaya and Dashi (Arabia) began making a dramatic impact on the volume of Indian Ocean and Insular Southeast Asian trade, from the late tenth century.²⁶ This must have been a boon to Champa, which thrived on it both materially and spiritually. Between 970 and 1011, half of Champa's twenty-five tribute missions to the Song arrived with Sri Vijayan or Arabic envoys on board.²⁷

Despite its rivalries with Champa, Đại Việt's southern neighbor exercised considerable influence on it between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, as is revealed by the presence of Cham arts and architecture in the recently excavated ruins of the imperial palaces of the Lý, Trần, and early Lê in central Hanoi.²⁸ These ruins confirm that, along with economic relations, there were also frequent and intensive cultural interactions

²⁴ Cited in Whitmore, "Colliding peoples", p. 3.

²⁵ Keith W. Taylor, "Surface Orientations in Vietnam", *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1998): 955.

²⁶ Geoff Wade, "Early Muslim Expansion in Southeast Asia from 8th to 15th centuries", in *New Cambridge History of Islam* ed. Michael Cook, Vol. 3: *The Eastern Islamic World 11th -18th Centuries* ed. David Morgan and Anthony Reid, forthcoming.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ My thanks to the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences for granting me a visit to the site, in May 2004.

in the centuries-old contacts between these two peoples. It is worth noting briefly that Champa also played a vital role in Chinese history. China's first population boom resulted from the importation of fast ripening, drought resistant Cham rice, whose cultivation the Song emperor personally encouraged throughout all southern China.²⁹ This rice later made double harvesting possible, with the result that southern China became one of the most densely populated areas in the world. As Cham rice was widely grown in the Red River delta under the Lý dynasty,³⁰ northern Vietnam might even have been a staging-point in its transmission further north.

Đại Việt was born in good timing, from Chinese history's point of view. Đại Việt thrived during China's Northern Song dynasty (960-1127 CE), contemporary to the first 150 years of the independent Đại Việt. The Northern Song stood out in Chinese history for two contrasting characteristics: militarily, it was the weakest of all major Chinese dynasties due to continual troubles with northern nomadic peoples throughout its whole existence; but in economic and social terms, this era experienced China's first commercial revolution, with rapid development and growing consumer demand. Both factors benefited newly independent Đại Việt in its most vulnerable period. Aromatic woods, especially eaglewood, were among Southeast Asia's most popular exports, and Champa was where the best eaglewood was produced.

The rise of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) brought even greater commercial opportunities to the Gulf of Tongking. After retreating from central China to today's Nanjing in the Yangzi River delta, the Southern Song paid much more attention to trading with southern China and Southeast Asia, in order to compensate for lost northern revenue. But its very survival urgently rested on sourcing horses for the army. Previously their horses had come from northern and western China, but now supply moved to the Yunnan-Guangxi-Viet border area. Horses were the Song government's greatest expense, and their purchase sent large amounts of silver flowing throughout the Gulf region. Horse trading became the main driver of regional commerce,³¹ stimulating and organising the

²⁹Li Tao 李燾, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian 續資治通鑑長編* j. 77 1012 CE.

³⁰Cited from Momoki Shiro, "Nam Định trong thời Lý-Trần"[Nam Định in the Lý-Trần period], in *Thông tin Bách Cốc*[Newsletters on *Bách Cốc*], Hội Nghiên cứu Làng Xã Việt Nam, Nhật Bản-Việt Nam, July 2006.

³¹Zhou Qufei 周去非, *Lingwai daida 嶺外代答*: "朝廷南方馬政, 專在邕. 邊方珍異, 多聚邕矣." [The court's business of obtaining horses is concentrated in the district of Yong. It is Yong where the

trade between Guangxi and Jiaozhi, Jiaozhi and Hainan Island, and Jiaozhi and Champa – hence the exchange system of the Jiaozhi Ocean area.³²

The Southern Song period was a new golden era for the Gulf of Tongking, with intensive trade linking all peoples of the Gulf region and beyond. As in the Jiaozhi era under the Han, the Gulf was once more a principal trading centre, not an annex of some other trading system. This period corresponds to the early part of the Trần dynasty in Đại Việt (1225-1400 CE). These frequent exchanges brought about a more intensive mixing of peoples from which new local elites emerged. One important example was the new Trần royal family in Đại Việt, whose original Chinese ancestor came from the Qinzhou trading field.³³ The Southern Song record *Lingwai daida* confirms both that Qinzhou area commerce involved considerable wealth and that the Việt elite took part in it.³⁴

The Trần's original Chinese background was frankly acknowledged by the *Đại Việt sử ký Toàn Thư*. The real question is, did the Trần family emerge individually and incidentally, as is usually thought, or was it based on its own networks of allies? If the latter, what kind of allies were they? Scholars have agreed that flexibility of social and political systems had aided the rise of the Trần,³⁵ and a successful Southeast Asian ruler was one who emerged from a group of competing chiefs or land-based elites, each with his own network of allies. In this context, as Whitmore has recognized, the Gulf of Tongking trading area could have provided an arena in which the Trần's commercial links to China helped the family rise successfully among its competitors.³⁶ Putting the Trần dynasty back into its historical background we find a family of Fujianese descendent who made their living from the sea and intermarried with the Lý royal family thanks to their wealth. This is a common pattern in the history of other Southeast Asian countries. Another such example of a Sino-Viet elite figure rising from a Gulf background was Mạc

valuable and curiosities are gathered.) (Compiled in 1178, reprint in Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), p. 47.

³² Li Tana, "A View from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, no.1, 37 (Feb): 83-102. As John Whitmore notes in his chapter, the name of Đại Việt's major port Vân Đồn first appeared in the official records in 1147, which was only twenty years after the founding of the Southern Song. *Toàn Thư*, p. 290.

³³ *Toàn Thư*, p. 321.

³⁴ Li Tana, "A View from the Sea": 101-102.

³⁵ Whitmore, "Elephants can actually swim", in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore and Canberra: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies & Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1986), p. 131.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Đặng Dung, who usurped the Lê throne in 1527 and founded the Mạc dynasty which ruled northern Vietnam until the 1592, when Lê restoration forces based in Thanh Hóa drove them out of the Red River Delta. This period forms the background to the joint chapter by Niu and Li Qingxin. In this case, however, Mạc Đăng Dung's ancestors were from the fishing (or Dan) people from Guangdong whom Anderson briefly discussed in his chapter.³⁷ The rise to power in Vietnam of a man descended from this marginalized ethnic group, so long hidden from history, highlights the special arena of the Tongking Gulf, from whose exchanges and intermixtures new elites emerged again and again.

Chinese Commercial Bans and Trading Peaks in the Gulf, 15th and 17th centuries

Commerce flourished in the Gulf in two periods after the 13th century, each responding to a maritime ban enforced by a Chinese court. The first was imposed by the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE) because of the activities of *Woko* (or Japanese pirates) off coastal China, from the late 14th century to mid-16th century. The second followed the Qing takeover of southern China, and was part of a series of stringent policies applied to coastal provinces to prevent any support for hold-out anti-Manchu forces under Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong, 1624-1662 CE) on Taiwan from 1655 to 1684. In both cases the court worried about the coastal people trading with and supplying to their enemies. Each of these bans on Chinese maritime endeavors created opportunities for commercial production and increased material exchanges in the Gulf region. At the time of the Ming ban Vietnamese ceramic production and exports soared, out of Vân Đồn; during the Qing ban, Vietnamese silk was produced and exported from Phố Hiến. These two periods of surging export growth are discussed by Whitmore and Iioka Naoko respectively in their chapters.

Ceramics had been the key Chinese export since the thirteenth century, but the Ming maritime ban meant that overseas demand had to be met elsewhere. Thai, Vietnamese and Cham ceramic production all mushroomed to fill this gap. By the

³⁷ Yan Congjian, *Shuyu Zhouzi lu 殊域周咨录* [Notes on surrounding countries] (first print 1574, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), p. 233; also the statement by Mạc Kinh Thự, to the Qing officials: "My ancestors came from the Chaxiang village, Dongguan district, Guangdong." Vol. 7775, No. 25, kept in the National Archives No. 1, Beijing;

fifteenth century Vân Đồn, located almost opposite to the major base of Đại Việt's ceramic production, Chu Đậu, was the primary port exporting Vietnamese ceramics to island Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The chief merchants dealing in these goods were Muslims.

Whitmore's chapter examines the rise and fall of Vân Đồn in this "Jiaozhi Yang" ocean trading system. He sees a flourishing manufacturing zone on 15th century coastal area of the Gulf of Tongking, driven by ceramic production. This manufacture was so important to Đại Việt's economy that the desire to eliminate the ceramics producing centre at the Cham capital of Vijaya might have been one motive behind the Vietnamese king's devastating attack on Champa in 1471. Some archaeological evidence may confirm this hypothesis, with Cham-style porcelain being produced in Vietnamese workshops for at least a generation later. Shipwreck evidence analyzed by the late Roxanna Brown and others shows ceramics exports from northern Vietnam rose dramatically after 1471. Whitmore's chapter explores an overlooked dimension in early modern Vietnamese history, which until fairly recently has tended to follow the political, administrative and military interests of its ancient chronicle sources. What it implies is that this manufacturing and commercial system might have been encouraged by at least the local government. If so, "the rise of popular mass markets" of the 15th century that Momoki Shiro argued would have a government background, a historical reality hidden from the histories compiled by Confucian literati.³⁸

Iioka Naoko's chapter examines the last fleeting "age of commerce" in the seventeenth century Red River delta, when silk was the major export commodity and Phố Hiến its point of departure but the drive was again from other places than China. Japan was the major market of this product, for which Portuguese and Dutch competed with the Japanese (before 1637) and Chinese merchants for profit, in return for Japanese silver. Although travel to Phố Hiến was difficult and from there to Hanoi was hazardous, it became the major port because it was situated among the four silk producing areas of the Delta, and is connected to Hanoi by the Red River. As such this major port reflected the keen interest of the Lê/Trịnh court in controlling the silk related income, the most

³⁸ Momoki Shiro, "Đại Việt and the South China Sea Trade from the 10th to the 15th Century", *Crossroads*, 12:1 (1998): 2-3.

important resource to 17th century Tongking. The half-century war with Cochinchina was an important driver for silk export, since silk was the crucial means for obtaining silver and the more advanced western weapons it could buy. Between the early 17th century and 1680, Japanese, Portuguese, Dutch and Chinese silk traders brought considerable volume of silver into Tongking, at around five tons per year of silver was injected into Tongking's economy. ³⁹

Two chapters, that of Niu and Li on the 17th century and Vũ and Cooke on the 19th century both discussed piracy in the Gulf during the different periods. Piracy becomes an important problem in the Gulf under two different sets of conditions: if pirates are “licensed” by one (or more) political regimes, at whatever level of authority, can thus find shelter and protection somewhere; and second, pirates plague when government control breaks down locally and lawlessness is common in the coastal areas at least, as in the mid 19th century Tongking and similarly for Quangxi. The 17th century piracy belongs to the first category. As Niu and Li reveal, Chinese pirates of this period were often tolerated as political refugees and supplied with provisions. Piracy of the Gulf in this period thus may have been a joint venture between Chinese pirates and local Vietnamese officers, foreshadowing the situation one hundred years later when Chinese pirates were appointed as naval officers by the Tay Son. Based on scattered Chinese sources, Niu and Li also show how the Lê-Trịnh and Mạc manoeuvred in this complicated southern Chinese situation to their best interests. Piracy of the 19th century falls into the second category. This will be discussed in the last section, within the large background of the profound changes in the 19th century Gulf.

Changing characteristics of commerce in the Gulf: 13th century to 17th century

Comparing the Southern Song boom of the 13th century with the two commercial rallies of the 15th century and the 17th century discussed above shows a major change of

³⁹ Hoàng Anh Tuấn, "Silk for Silver", Appendix 3, and p. 181; George Souza, *The survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630-1754* (Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.; Momoki Shiro, "Japan and Vietnam in the Asian Trade System in the 17th – 18th Centuries", in *Phố Hiến: The Centre of International Commerce in the XVIIth – XVIIIth Centuries* (Hanoi: The Gioi, 1994), p. 44; Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), vol.2, pp.18, 24. For the economic and social impact of foreign silver, see Li Tana, "Thinking of Tongking in the Age of Commerce", MS.

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trading direction turning away from the Guangxi coast. The change of Vietnam's three major ports over the second millennium seem to have moved gradually towards the production area: if the Diên Châu port was connected to aromatic trade with Champa, Vân Đồn was close to the site of ceramic producing area of Chu Đậu, then Phố Hiến was located right in the heart of the producing area of silk production. Ceramics were carried out of the Gulf to meet the demand from Central Asia and Southeast Asia, and silk was transported out of the Gulf principally to supply the Japan market, by Japanese, Western and Chinese merchants. Đại Việt's immediate north, Guangxi, ceased to be the Gulf's major trading direction and the partner.

This change was reflected in the Chinese term *Jiaozhi Yang* 交趾洋. In the 13th century when it first appeared, along with private trade, the term included both the Gulf of Tongking and the central Vietnamese coast. By the mid-Ming period however, the term "Jiaozhi Yang" only referred to the space from southwestern Hainan to central Vietnam, with the Gulf of Tongking no longer included.⁴⁰ Several elements must have contributed to the decline of the Jiaozhi Yang, but a critical one was the disappearance of Cham or Muslim merchants in the Gulf of Tongking. This was the direct result of the 1471 Vietnamese attack on Champa and of the purge of Cham prisoner-of-war communities in the Red River delta in 1508.⁴¹ Cham merchants had been intermediaries between the Đại Việt trading world and the Malay Archipelago. Consequently Cham products, especially aromatic woods, no longer came to China by way of Đại Việt. Losing the Cham and Muslim intermediaries was particularly damaging to Đại Việt, which generally relied on outsiders to carrying out trade. More importantly, from the eleventh century, as Hall points out, rather than covering the entire journey between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, merchants began to "specialise in one portion of the route, and transferred their goods to and interacted with merchants from other sectors of the route in a sea polity".⁴² This meant that losing the agents in one section would miss the entire chain of trade and being excluded from the networks. It was from this time onwards that

⁴⁰ For discussion on this term, see Li Tana, "The Rise and Fall of the Jiaozhi Ocean Region", in Angela Schottenhammer and Roderich Ptak ed. *The Perception of Maritime Space in Traditional Chinese Sources* (Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 125-140.

⁴¹ *Toàn Thư*, pp. 786-787.

⁴² Kenneth Hall, "Local and International Trade and Traders in the Straits of Meleka Region, 600-1500", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47:2 (2004): 235.

the Gulf began to lose out in a new round of international commerce.⁴³ Losing the Muslim and southern connection means losing the precious alternative that Jiaozhi and early Đại Việt had enjoyed for centuries. As Keith Taylor points out, it was the access to the alternative of Chams and Khmer, both with high levels of non-Chinese culture, which had broadened the cultural perspective of the Đại Việt ruling class throughout centuries.⁴⁴ This source of Vietnamese strength at the Red River plain was lost, both in cultural and material terms. From the 15th century on Đại Việt's products became increasingly competitive rather than complementary with the products of Guangxi, and by the late 1770s a Cantonese merchant reported that visiting the Gulf would no longer bring much profit: "while valuable items were abundant in Quảng Nam [in Cochinchina, Đàng Trong], there was only rice to be obtained from the Tongking area".⁴⁵

The strength of the old Jiaozhi and early Đại Việt eras was picked up and developed yet again in another Viet polity, the kingdom of Nguyễn Cochinchina, in the 17th and 18th century central and southern Vietnam. This new development changed the map of the mainland Southeast Asia and brought Vietnam 2/3 of its current territory, but had also serious implications to the fate of the Gulf of Tongking. The last section will examine this process and those elements that separated and divided the 19th century Gulf.

Changing nature of society and politics on both sides of the border, 18th-19th century

The birth of the Nguyễn Đàng Trong was a most significant page of Vietnam's history in its second millennium. Its major port Hội An was conveniently located on the central coast near Đà Nẵng: ships from the north - Japan and southern China - arrived and loaded goods much more easily than sailing into the Gulf of Tongking, and junks based in Hội An frequented south to purchase from Cambodia for the Japan market. Aromatic woods from the Cham area were on the top list of the Nguyễn export to Japan, silk

⁴³ Exported Vietnamese ceramics reduced dramatically from the early 16th century, and among which many types of ceramics were no longer produced. Bùi Minh Tri, "Gốm Việt Nam trong thương mại đường biển châu Á thế kỷ XVII" [Vietnamese ceramics in the maritime trade of the 17th century], in Đại Học Quốc gia Hà Nội ed. *Việt Nam trong hệ thống thương mại Châu Á thế kỷ XVI-XVII* [Vietnam in the commercial system of Asia, 16th-17th centuries], (Hanoi: Thế Giới, 2007), p. 665.

⁴⁴ Keith Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, p. 299.

⁴⁵ Lê Quý Đôn, *Phủ biên tạp lục* [Miscellaneous Nguyen records], (Saigon: Phủ quốc vụ khanh đặc trách văn hóa, 1973), p. 34b.

production boomed to supply the Japan market, and in the port of Thanh Hà, near Huế, sophisticated ceramics for Japanese tea ceremony were produced.⁴⁶ The fact of this more open, accessible and vibrant Vietnamese polity situated on the exposed coast of central Vietnam dramatically changed the thousand years of history, when Jiaozhi was hidden in the Gulf, and when the central coast was a constant source of struggle between Champa and Đại Việt. Once the seesawing battles between the two were over, Vietnamese southward movement towards the southern coast and the Mekong Delta and finally the Gulf of Thailand, became only a matter of time. From the historical point of view however, the Nguyễn Đăng Trong was both new and old. Its pattern of development – trade with hinterland of Laos and Cambodia for exchange with the merchants from the sea; developed craft productions near the port and the capital; and open to different cultural influences and alternatives, were the very strength of old Jiaozhi for a thousand of years.⁴⁷ Like the old Jiaozhi, Đăng Trong's source of strength was from the forest at the west, and from the sea at its east, but its outlook and drive was towards the south. The existence of the Nguyễn Đăng Trong highlighted and accelerated the shift of Vietnam's economic gravity southward.

More dramatic changes were to come for the 19th century Gulf. Vietnam's last dynasty, the Nguyễn dynasty (1802-1885) was fundamentally a southern regime. It was built on the two hundred years old Nguyễn Đăng Trong, and to a certain extent, its success lay precisely in turning its back to the north, the Gulf of Tongking. When the 30 years of civil war (1771-1802 CE) was over, the Nguyễn chose to rule from the old capital Huế, and this was an unprecedented and devastating change to the Gulf of Tongking. For most of the two thousands of years the government site was around Thăng Long, where dragon or the kingly energy was gathered and reign. With the Nguyễn court settled in Huế all this was gone. Thăng Long was not even allowed to keep its old name, and was given a most insignificant name, Hà Nội (“inside the River”). Vũ and Cooke's chapter conveys this sense of change and reveals a general disregard of the Nguyễn court towards the north. Large amount of rice and newly cast coins were transported from the

⁴⁶ Hasebe Gakuji, “Historical Relations between Japan and Vietnam in the area of trade in ceramics”, in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, ed. The National Committee for the International Symposium on the Ancient Town of Hoi An (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1991), p. 53.

⁴⁷ For Cham-Viet interactions in this period, see Nola Cooke, “Later-Seventeenth-Century Cham-Viet Interactions: New Light from French Missionary Sources,” *Amalen der Hamburger Vietnamistik*, 2008-09.

Red River delta to Huế but little was given in return. As Cooke points out, not even one imperial princess of the Nguyễn dynasty married into any family from north of Thanh Hóa,⁴⁸ a stunning departure of centuries old Việt practice.⁴⁹ The Huế based elite essentially excluded those of the Red River delta.

Two major incomes had been largely reduced from the 19th century Tongking: locally, mining, a pillar of the Lê/Trịnh court in the mid-late 18th century,⁵⁰ was principally exhausted by the 1840s; and nationally, the Nguyễn reduced direct dependence on maritime taxes in favor of internal tolls, taxes on the production of goods and market taxes.⁵¹ When the court was settled in central Vietnam, gone with it were the high officers, court ladies, eunuchs, and big merchants, who dealt with the rich and the most powerful. Tongking rapidly lost its prestige, its elite and the material life that accompanied with elite culture, which it enjoyed for thousands of years. Except for the two decades of Minh Mạng reign (1820-1840), for most of the 19th century the Red River delta was let delay.⁵² Tongking's local interests were ignored to such extent that its only available way to claim a voice in the politics of a new dynasty was to express the nostalgia towards the previous Lê dynasty (1428-1789), as Keith Taylor points out.⁵³ Although the Red River delta was the departure point and the drive of Vietnamese southward movement, an earlier stage of which owed its intellectual, family and political ties to the Delta, it was ultimately this movement that pushed the Red River delta to the political and economical backwater.

While the Red River delta was experiencing a drain to its south, at the other shore of the Gulf, Guangxi's economy had been drawn eastern wards to Guangdong since the

⁴⁸Nola Cooke, "Southern regionalism and the composition of the Nguyen ruling elite (1802-83)", *Asian Studies Review*, 23, 2 (1999): 215-28.

⁴⁹ Previous Việt princesses married to the local chiefs around Đại Việt, to Lạng Sơn, Phong Châu, Tuyên Quang, and Thái Nguyên area in the north, and to Laos, Champa and Chieng Khouang at its south and west. Li Tana, "The Ming Factor and the Emergence of Đại Việt of the 15th Century", in Geoff Wade ed. ***, forthcoming.

⁵⁰ Woodside, "The relationship between Political Theory and Economic Growth in Vietnam, 1750-1840", in *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies* (London: McMillan, 1997), p.259; Victor Liberman, *Strange Parallels*, p.453.

⁵¹ Charles J. Wheeler, "Cross-cultural Trade and Trans-regional Networks in the Port of Hoi An : Maritime Vietnam in the Early Modern Era (PhD Thesis, Yale University, 2001), pp.33, 171.

⁵² Nola Cooke, "Southern regionalism", pp. 223-224.

⁵³ Keith Taylor, "Surface Orientations in Vietnam", p. 972.

17th century.⁵⁴ As late as the 16th century the majority of local residents were still non-Han peoples⁵⁵ and they formed the demographic basis that allowed Southern Ming forces to resist the Qing for a decade in Guangxi. As soon as gained control, the Qing set out to encourage large-scale Han migration and to change jurisdiction from local chiefs to the central government officers. Between 1749 and 1850, Guangxi's population nearly tripled, from over three million to 8.2 million, thanks mainly to this immigration.⁵⁶ Nineteenth century Guangxi had all the earmarks of Chinese migrant society in Southeast Asia: the gender ratio was imbalanced, the Heaven and Earth Society emerged in the early 19th century and over 100 secret societies mushroomed between the 1820s and 1850s,⁵⁷ many of the leaders came from Guangdong. To one disgruntled Qing officer in 1854, 20-40% of the Guangxi population appeared to be either bandits or pirates.⁵⁸

Guangdong's influence in Guangxi became obvious from the 17th century and intensified throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. This influence was spread mainly along the river-coast of Guangxi.⁵⁹ Numbers of markets doubled sometimes tripled, where Guangdong merchants dominated the large deals.⁶⁰ In the 1720s Viet export items were still reported as being more valuable at the border town markets,⁶¹ by the late 18th century

⁵⁴ Wu Xiaofeng, *Mingqing guangxi shangpin jingji shi yanjiu* 明清广西商品经济史研究, pp. 191-192. Between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries population of Guangdong increased by 32%. 蒋建平, Jiang Jian Ping, *qingdai qianqi migu maoyi yanjiu* 清代前期米谷贸易研究[A study on rice trade in the early Qing dynasty], (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1992), pp. 200-201. Cash-crop production was so developed in Guangdong and its profits so much larger than growing rice that few people were willing to grow rice.

⁵⁵ 读史方輿纪要

⁵⁶ Chu Hong-yuan, *Rebellion to Militarism: First stage modernization in Kwangsi, 1860-1937* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1995), p. 27.

⁵⁷ Xie Yuyao 谢舆尧, *Taiping tianguo qianhou guangxi de fanqing yundong* 太平天国前后广西的反清运动[Anti-Qing movements in Guangxi around the period of Taiping Rebellion] (Beijing: San Lien, 1950), pp. 38-47.

⁵⁸ Yan Zhengji 严正基, *Lun yuexi zeqing bingshi shimo* “论粤西贼情兵事始末”, *Qingchao jingshi wenbian xubian* 清朝经世文编续编, j. 94.

⁵⁹ Huang Bin, *Jindai yuegan keshang yu guangxi chengzhen jingji fayu* 近代粤港客商与广西城镇经济发展[Modern Cantonese merchants and commercial economy in Guangxi], (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005), p. 8.

⁶⁰ Guangdong's participation of Guangxi's commercial exchange was so crucial that a well known saying in Guangxi is “a market without Cantonese merchants is not a market” (无东不成市). Wu Xiaofeng, *Mingqing guangxi shangpin jingji shi yanjiu* 明清广西商品经济史研究[A study on commerce in the Ming and Qing Guangxi], (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2005), p. 137.

⁶¹ “Taiping prefecture [of Guangxi] is at the end of the border ... and the items being traded here were nothing but cotton fabric, silk, rice and salt. Other items such as silver, copper, lead, tin, cinnabar, mercury, and gems were all from Jiaozi, and not produced locally”. *Taiping fuzhi* (Gazette of Taiping), *juan*

this area was frequented by traders from Guangdong province,⁶² and trade items at the Sino-Việt border towns became increasingly focused on Chinese manufactured goods from Guangdong.⁶³ All the merchants engaged in rice trade were from Guangdong, who commanded large number of ships and controlled all the river-sea transportations.⁶⁴

The two shores of the Gulf of Tongking were therefore drawn into two different orbits and into different directions. Guangxi was drawn towards its east and Tongking towards the central Vietnam, and in both cases they were marginalized and no longer the growth engine of the region. The marginalization of the two neighbouring shores made the Gulf of Tongking a political and economic vacuum. As Vū and Cooke point out, this situation helped promote lawlessness at the local level: piracy, banditry, and smuggling flourished, involving many local people, who tried to find ways of surviving in difficult and dangerous times.⁶⁵ The chaos which lasted for more than a decade intensified the shortage of rice which was increasingly sought after from the Red River delta. Moreover, the Gulf of Tongking was a direct victim of the Taiping rebellion. Guangxi was where the rebellion started, and the Gulf was where many of the defeated rebels ended up. The Gulf was plagued both by the land and by the sea, and various names frequently appeared in Vietnamese chronicles, referring to different kinds of Chinese bandits and pirates.⁶⁶ Large resources were spent to pacify them at different times but to no avail by the mid-century. Piracy became even more paramount in Tự Đức's reign (1851-1883 CE), since the loss of Cochinchina and huge indemnity paid to the French made any serious effort in the north

"Shihuo" (Economy).

⁶² "Report of Fukangan 福康安"to Qianlong emperor, reprinted in *Mingqing shiliao gengbian 明清史料庚编* [Archival sources of the Ming and Qing dynasties], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), Series G, p. 404.

⁶³ See *Tuần ty thuế lệ 巡司稅例* (Tax regulations in ports and poll boxes), MS, held in Han-Nom Institute 漢喃研究院, Hanoi, shelf number A. 978. Analyzed in Li Tana, "'National' and 'Overseas' markets in the early 19th century Vietnam: A View from the Mountains and the Sea", in *Proceedings of Dynamic Rimlands and Open Heartlands: Maritime Asia as a Site of Interactions* (Osaka and Singapore: University of Osaka/National University of Singapore Press, forthcoming), pp. 177-179.

⁶⁴ Wu Xiaofeng, *明清广西商品经济史研究*, pp. 191-192. Between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries population of Guangdong increased by 32%. 蔣建平 Jiang Jian Ping, *清代前期米谷貿易研究* [A study on rice trade in the early Qing dynasty], (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1992), pp. 200-201. Cash-crop production was so developed in Guangdong and its profits so much larger than growing rice that few people were willing to grow rice.

⁶⁵ Before the Taiping rebellion (1851-1864 CE) Guangxi had already been poverty and hunger ridden. So many people were hungry that the leaders of secret societies were often called "mifan zhu" (米饭主, master who had rice to feed his followers). 谢奥尧, *太平天国前后广西的反清运动*, pp. 32-35.

⁶⁶ *Djia phi* (bandits), *cổ phi* (bandits belonged to Secret Societies), *Anh phi* (bandits in Tuyên Quang area), *hải tặc* (sea pirates), and *thủy phi* (water or river pirates).

financially impossible. Plagued by both, the Việt court also asked help from both: at sea the French help was sought after to drive out the Chinese pirates, and on land, Black Banner's help was enlisted to fight the French.

The two thousand years history of the Gulf came full circle, when the piracy was finally eliminated by the French, and in 1899 CE, just as the eventful 19th century was about to finish, the French forced the Qing government to “rent” the Leizhou peninsula (wrongly called Guangzhou Bay), thereby completed its control of the Gulf of Tongking. Throughout of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, Gulf of Tongking's trade volume was the smallest among all the China Maritime Customs.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See Takeshi Hamashita, *中国近代经济史研究* [Studies on modern Chinese economic history], trans. Gao Shujuan & Sun Bin (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2006), pp. 446-448, 471-473.