

speaking peoples had made their way to insular and mainland Southeast Asia, and in subsequent centuries settled as far away as Madagascar.³⁹

Chinese sources provide our earliest information about the country of Lin Yi (the Chinese name for a polity of Viet Nam located north of present-day Hue) and its importance in the trade routes of the day. The countries of Lin Yi and Fu Nan, along with twenty other countries, sent tribute missions to China between 284 and 287.⁴⁰ During the early part of the fifth century, Lin Yi attempted to gain control of the trade centered in Tongking, invading several times,⁴¹ but had clearly made peace by A.D. 491, when the Chinese emperor bestowed the title “General Pacifier of the South, Commander-in-chief of the Military Affairs of the Seashore, and King of Lin Yi”⁴² on the ruler Fan Tang, thus acknowledging his control over the routes that ships traveling from the Strait of Malacca and island Southeast Asia to China.⁴³ The first mention of Champa in Chinese texts occurs in the ninth century, though vestiges (fig. 7) and inscriptions exist from an earlier period. These Chinese sources, along with later Vietnamese chronicles, continued to tell the story of commerce in the region.⁴⁴

The Chinese sources are particularly useful in their descriptions of Southeast Asian tribute missions that arrived in China. For instance, in A.D. 992, a Cham mission arrived at the Chinese court with medicinal and ornamental rhinoceros horns, ivory tusks, areca nuts, textiles, camphor, and *jian xing* (?) as a gift for the emperor. In exchange, the Chinese sent horses, flags, silver swords, silver spears, and sets of bows and arrows back to the Cham king. Other transactions also took place during this mission; the deputy head of the mission gave ivory, rhinoceros horns, turtle shells, and *jian xing* to the court, while a monk in the mission party brought camphor, golden bells, and a bronze incense burner. Just as he had given gifts to be taken back to the king, the emperor gave the members of the mission “appropriate gifts,” often valued at more than the goods he had received from them.⁴⁵ The trade component of those tribute missions, in terms of what was exchanged between king and emperor as well as between trader and emperor, formed an important part of the trade of the time and region.

The height of tribute missions between Southeast Asia and China occurred between 1369 and 1430, the years when the first three Ming emperors (1368–1424) had suppressed private trade in favor of diplomatic missions. By forbidding private trade, they attempted to set up a royal monopoly, ensuring that transactions were made only between the court and royalty overseas.⁴⁶ Not only was this monopoly beneficial to the emperor, but recognition of a Southeast Asian ruler by the Chinese court also served to support the legitimation of that ruler, for the emperor not only accepted the “tribute,” but in some instances bestowed a title on the king or transferred the title of the former king to a new king.⁴⁷ Since hereditary transmission of rulership, from father to son, was not the norm in Southeast Asia, and leadership was often contested as it passed from one charismatic and powerful person to another, the emperor’s recognition further bolstered legitimation. In relation to trade, it is important to understand that the Chinese validation of a particular ruler also constituted endorsement of the ports under his jurisdiction.

While the Chinese histories detail missions between the two countries, the north Vietnamese chronicles record the frequent conflicts that occurred between themselves and the Cham from the fifth to the eighteenth centuries A.D.⁴⁸ Located along the narrow length of central and southern coastal Viet Nam, the polities of Champa had neither a strong

FIG. 7

Banh It, 12th century, Binh Dinh Province.

