

agrarian base nor extensive natural resources. Their greatest source of wealth came from commerce, but during periods of instability, if their ports were considered unsafe by foreign traders who therefore avoided them, they were unable to collect the taxes that undoubtedly formed a large part of their income. They sometimes resorted to plunder of the cities of the north and of Cambodia, or piracy of passing ships. Little is known of their ports, though one important center lay on the Thu Bon River, just south of present-day Da Nang. Cham vestiges have been found along the north bank of the river, in the vicinity of the sixteenth-century city Hoi An (see below).⁴⁹ The region centered on the Thu Bon River continued to be important for shipping up to modern times.

Tra Kieu, located sixteen miles upriver, and with easy access to the port, thrived throughout most of the fifth to the eleventh centuries as an ancient capital of one of the polities of Champa. One might expect the capital to be located closer to the port, but piracy and war along the vulnerable littoral were good reasons to retreat into the interior. Their own acts of piracy were attested by the Chinese refusal in A.D. 1167 to receive a Cham tributary mission because the goods they carried had been plundered from the ships of Arab merchants.⁵⁰ Through the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Southeast Asian ships had carried the products of the South China Sea to and from China. But in the thirteenth century, the Southern Song (A.D. 1127–1279) administration initiated a policy of trading with its own ships. This must have been a blow to the economy of the Champa polities, which had suffered from the wars that were being fought with the Cambodians throughout the thirteenth century.

The Mongols, who came to power in China in A.D. 1271, and who advanced south as far as Java (1293), further affected trading patterns in Southeast Asia. They attacked the north of Viet Nam in 1258 and again in 1287–88, and were repelled. At the Mongols' bidding, the Cham sent numerous tribute missions between 1278 and 1282, when Kublai Khan sent his general, Sagatou, in "a thousand junks,"⁵¹ to conquer the region. The Chinese seized the capital from the retreating king, and over the next three years engaged in numerous battles before leaving the area. The Mongol incursions into Southeast Asia further opened the area to Chinese shipping, and in the course of the fourteenth century, it appears the Chinese traded directly with the eastern Indonesian islands.⁵²

This period also saw the rise of the great maritime Majapahit kingdom (A.D. 1293–1519) of eastern Java, which controlled trade in island Southeast Asia until the coming of the Europeans in the early sixteenth century. Between 1369 and 1509, contact between Champa and the Chinese took the form of frequent tribute/trade missions; during this time, the Cham sent eighty-five missions to China, more than any other Southeast Asian country.⁵³ The first three Ming emperors' suppression of private trade had led to a period of contact through the frequent tribute missions sent by the various Southeast Asian rulers.⁵⁴

Throughout this time, the polities of Champa and the kingdom of Dai Viet in the north engaged in frequent confrontations as they sought to maintain control of border regions. The typical manner of battle in Southeast Asia did not result in heavy human loss, as the shortage of manpower meant that the conquering army sought captives. Hence, retreat—in this case, inland—while the enemy plundered, was common. In 1471, the Vietnamese conquered the Champa city of Vijaya (Quy Nhon), thus pushing the Cham farther south. Throughout the twentieth century, Western scholars believed that 1471 marked the end of the Champa polities; recent