

Phuc Nguyen (reigned 1613–35), would later marry one of his daughters to the Japanese merchant Araki Sotao, who took a Vietnamese name and gained the status of a local noble. The Nguyen even took the extraordinary step of dispatching a ship to Japan in 1602 with exotic gifts—a tiger, an elephant, and a pair of peacocks—for the Tokugawa. This relationship was so amicable that in the first decades of the seventeenth century Cochinchina was Japan's most important trading partner.<sup>32</sup>

Some Japanese merchants had wealthy connections. Chaya Shinrokuro, who died in 1698, belonged to one of the three richest families in Kyoto, and in his day he traveled to Hoi An. Such merchants brought another dimension to this trade.<sup>33</sup> While they were overseas, members of this elite merchant class, keen practitioners of *chanoyu* (tea ceremony), sought suitable appurtenances that could be used in the tea ceremony, but this occurred through no formal trade arrangement.<sup>34</sup> The merchant Osawa Shirozaemon visited Hoi An on a number of occasions and also resided there. Thus, the Vietnamese ceramics in the possession of his descendants are thought to be those he acquired in Hoi An.<sup>35</sup>

Louise Cort notes that all heirloom Vietnamese ceramics used in the tea ceremony, regardless of which part of the country they had come from, are described in tea ceremony terminology as Annam, or *namban*. Cort assigns to central Viet Nam the tall, slender jars known as *kiritame* (cut and save), used to hold cut flowers before someone arranged them.<sup>36</sup> Vietnamese ceramics brought to Japan during these decades of direct contact are highly prized and survive as precious heirlooms. Various accounts relate that Japanese ceramics were made in stylistic homage to them.<sup>37</sup>

By the first decades of the seventeenth century, Cochinchina was one of the most competitive states in mainland Southeast Asia, and international trade lay at the heart of this development. Visitors to Hoi An reported approximately a thousand resident Japanese. This diaspora also included Japanese Christians, who had left Japan following the imposition of an edict expelling Christians. In early 1615, the Macau-based Council of Bishops of Portuguese Missions in the Far East sent a Jesuit mission to Hoi An. It comprised two priests and three friars, two of whom were Japanese, valued as language intermediaries. Within decades, the cooperative efforts of Portuguese, Italian, and French missionaries, together with local assistants, created a romanized script to help facilitate communication with the general population, and in 1651, Alexander de Rhodes had published at the printing workshop of the Missionary Society in Rome the first Vietnamese-Latin-Portuguese dictionary using romanized script. The foundation for the means of transcribing was based on the Portuguese language, which was at the time the dominant lingua franca in the Asian maritime trade.<sup>38</sup>

Much has been made of the role of women in the Hoi An trade; one historian describes the phenomenon as a “trading gender” rather than a “trading class.”<sup>39</sup> Cross-cultural marriages between foreign traders and local women became a feature of all Southeast Asian trading ports. For the foreign trader, temporary marriage to a local woman facilitated commercial transactions and helped overcome language barriers. Such women were usually themselves small traders. Mixed marriages gave rise to the Chinese mestizo communities in the Philippines and to the Peranakan in Java. The Buddhist monk Da Shan, visiting Cochinchina between 1694–95, said Hoi An women carried out all the commerce, and “were very good at trade, so the traders who came here all tended to marry a local woman to help them in their trading.”<sup>40</sup> But Tongking women were no less impres-