

silver out of Spanish America, much of it reaching Southeast Asia via the galleon trade into Manila. Most was absorbed by China indirectly through Hoi An, Manila, Patani, Ayutthaya, and Cambodia, and by about 1630, silver was in effect the accepted international currency of Southeast Asia, either in Spanish *reales*, as was the case in insular Southeast Asia, or by weight.⁴⁷ A stoneware jar, made in Dang Trong and traded into the Philippines, features a profile that matches the one on an eight-*reales* Spanish coin struck in 1774 (fig. 3).⁴⁸

As more traders arrived, Hoi An became an increasingly attractive center of trade for all comers. In 1620, Christopher Borri described traders coming from Tunchim [Tongking], Cambodia, China, Macao, Japan, Manila, and Malacca. The pattern of trade was influenced by the arrival and departure of the monsoons, and the foreign population fluctuated accordingly. Trade, chiefly driven by the Chinese and Japanese, was conducted by means of a large open-air fair held yearly for approximately six months. Through customs and imports, it brought in great revenue for the ruler and country. The Chinese brought plate to the value of four or five millions, while the Japanese took infinite quantities of very fine silk, among other commodities. Borri described Hoi An as a large city that could really be described as two—one Chinese the other Japanese, each having a distinct governor, and each living according to the laws of their respective countries.⁴⁹ Recent excavations in Hoi An have helped define the areas inhabited by these two dynamic communities.⁵⁰ This trade brought to seventeenth-century CochinChina a real economic boom, which enabled it to afford the modern arms needed to successfully fight the north so that it could exist in its own right as a separate state.⁵¹

Silk yarn and silk cloth were now the leading local exports, but calambac (eaglewood), sea-swift nests, cinnamon, dried areca nuts, tortoiseshell, rhinoceros horn, and gold were all traditional exports. By the mid-eighteenth century, a long list of precious timbers were entering the trade, and in addition to the rare calambac and aloes (resin from the heart of this eaglewood), there was sandalwood, rosewood, ironwood, sappanwood, and ebony.⁵² By the early 1640s, black sugar was listed as an export to Japan, while a century later, large quantities of white sugar went from Hoi An to China.⁵³ New technology to process white sugar was introduced from China, and the urns and jars required for this boosted production at local kilns. Likewise, a demand arose for wooden containers to pack cinnamon exports. A shift to commercial crops, driven by the demands of the foreign market, saw cash crops, silk, sugar, and pepper replace rice, which was then imported from Cambodia, Siam, and from the early eighteenth century, the Mekong delta. An increasing need for coastal shipping to transport all sorts of goods from local pickup points to the Hoi An entrepôt, and to bring rice to the main population centers, greatly benefited the local boat-building industry.⁵⁴ In pursuit of the hinterland produce, Vietnamese traders traveled on bamboo craft to all the littoral ports. Many centers in Hoi An specialized in building this type of craft.⁵⁵ In all directions, the local economy was stimulated by, and responded to, the burgeoning trade and seamlessly meshed with the international trading circuit.

But the carefully nurtured and highly successful trading interaction between CochinChina and Japan ended when Japan implemented a closed-door policy (*sakoku*). A series of five decrees issued between 1633 and 1639 prohibited any Japanese national from traveling abroad on pain of death, and with this, their diaspora trading community in Hoi An scattered and the Chinese inherited its place. The 1636 edict effectively

FIG. 3

Stoneware heirloom jar, provenance northern Luzon, Philippines, traded from Dang Trong. Profile of man's head matches that on a Spanish coin struck in 1774. H: 38 cm. On his visit to CochinChina in 1821, John Crawford remarked that the Spanish dollar was current.

