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**HOI AN IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES:  
AN INTERNATIONAL ENTREPOT**

**A MASTERS THESIS  
in  
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## PART I. INTRODUCTION.

What makes a city "international" in character? Perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is the degree of contact the city has with other countries, whether in the form of business and trade contacts or in the form of cultural contacts. A second feature of "internationalism" might be the population of the city. A diverse population leads to a variety of other factors that can bestow an international feel, such as religious diversity and even different types of cuisine. Yet another distinctive indicator of internationalism may be the architecture of the city. Many cities have wonderful combinations of both western-style buildings (ranging from Classical Roman to Gothic to Renaissance to Baroque) and eastern-style buildings (whether Chinese, Japanese or Arabic) as well as neighborhoods and areas which have their own style and feel. At the same time, the word "international" must be used with a degree of caution, as it denotes the fairly modern concept of distinct nations and states. "Multicultural" or "polyethnic" might be equally applicable descriptions. In any case, when a place is described as international or multicultural or polyethnic, it is associated with a certain sense of dynamism, excitement and change.

The city of Hoi An during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was "international" in all of the above respects. Located in central Vietnam on the north bank of the Thu Bon River, approximately five kilometers upriver from where the Thu Bon empties into the South China Sea, Hoi An, from at least the turn of the seventeenth century until the 1770s, was a thriving international port. Arising from the confluence



of (i) a newly established kingdom which needed a means to maintain its independence and (ii) a boom in international commerce in Asia which was able to supply that means<sup>1</sup>, Hoi An during this period became one of Southeast Asia's classic trading entrepôts. In addition to the Vietnamese who had settled from the north as part of the "southern expansion" (*nam tien*) and the already present Cham and other local peoples, Hoi An's population included, at various times, numbers of Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and Dutch, not to mention traders from other parts of Southeast Asia who came temporarily for the trading season and assorted western missionaries. It was, however, the Japanese (during the first half of the 1600s) and especially the Chinese who had the biggest impact on the city. Likewise, it was primarily trade with Japan and China (which involved not only the Japanese and Chinese but also the Portuguese and Dutch and others) which fueled Hoi An's rise to prominence during this period.

While Hoi An during this time was very much an international city, many themes of Vietnamese history are reflected in its story. As we shall see, for example, intertwined in and central to Hoi An's development was the establishment of a polity in central Vietnam independent from the traditional northern heartland. Similarly, Hoi An was inextricably linked to the "southern expansion" of the Vietnamese people down the long coastline. This expansion down the coast, the absorption of new peoples and ideas and a certain degree of openness to foreigners, resulted in substantial differences between

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<sup>1</sup> See Li Tana's pioneering work on Nguyen Cochinchina, *Nguyen Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1998).

northern and southern Vietnam, differences which are discernible today to even the most casual tourist. Yet another element of the Hoi An story - the dominance of the Chinese - foreshadows the critical role the Chinese would play in the economic development of central and especially southern Vietnam in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a role tinged by racial divisions which continue to modern times. Thus Hoi An, in addition to its internationalism, also provides another perspective from which we can view Vietnamese history.

In examining the nature of Hoi An's "international" character during this period of approximately 175 years, this paper first describes in Part II the local situation in Vietnam - the southern expansion into the traditionally "frontier" area and how Hoi An fit into the new kingdom's needs. Part III then reviews the international economic scene during the period and the factors which influenced the direction of commerce. Both these factors - the southern expansion and the international economic scene - were largely responsible for Hoi An's development into an international city. Part IV then attempts to recreate a typical day in Hoi An during its golden age from 1600 to 1770. In Part V we take a closer look at that golden age, and in Part VI we look at Hoi An in its Vietnamese context - that is, how did Hoi An fit into Vietnam? The paper concludes in Part VII with a look at Hoi An today.

Before we begin our exploration of Hoi An, a brief discussion of sources is in order. The scattered sources in a wide variety of languages pertaining to Hoi An exemplify the challenges facing historians of pre-modern Southeast Asia. No study of Hoi

An during this period which refers to English language sources alone can be complete, and given the author's linguistic limitations numerous sources remain inaccessible to me.<sup>2</sup> I have, however, tried to incorporate non-English materials when I was sufficiently comfortable with the reliability of the translation.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, there are many sources in Japanese (both primary source materials and modern studies) which chronicle the Japan-Cochinchina relationship such as Iwao Seiicho's *Nanyo Nihon-machi no Kenku* (Tokyo, 1944) and *Study in a Japanese Town in the South* (translation)(1977), and Ogura Sadao's *Japanese in the Days of Shuin-Sen* (translation)(1989). There are also numerous sources in classical Chinese, most notably the Chinese monk Da Shan's account (1695) and Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* ('Frontier Chronicles', 1776). W.J.M. Buch has written extensively in Dutch on the Dutch presence in Vietnam during this time (*Nederlander met Annam in de XVIIe Eeun* (1925) and *De Oost-Indische Compagnie en Qnam* (1929), and there are apparently some 7000 pages of material on Vietnam (2000 pages on Cochinchina alone) in the Dutch archives concerning this period (see "Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC): Material on Relations between the Dutch East Indies Company and the Nguyen Lords in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries," by Truong Van Binh and John Klienen in *Ancient Town of Hoi An* (International Symposium March 1990)(Hanoi, Gioi Publishers, 1993)). Pierre-Yves Manguin has written extensively in French on the Portuguese presence in Vietnam - see *Les Portugais Sur les Cotes du Vietnam et du Campa* (1972) and *Les Nguyen, Macao et le Portugal: Aspects Politiques et Commerciaux d'une Relation Priviligee en Mer de Chine 1773-1802* (1984). Other relevant works in French include Nguyen Thanh Nha's *Tableau Economique du Vietnam aux XVII et XVIII siecles* (1970) and Charles B. Maybon's *Histoire Moderne du Pays D'Annam (1592-1820)* (1920, reprinted 1972). I have also had to rely on English language studies of Chinese trading activities, but I have not found a single comprehensive account of Chinese trade and shipping in Southeast Asia, let alone Hoi An, suggesting that historical records of private Chinese trading activities is limited. The aforementioned sources are in addition to the Vietnamese sources, both dynastic chronicles as well as modern historical accounts, which are too numerous to mention.



PART II. VIETNAM: THE LOCAL SCENE AND SOUTHERN EXPANSION.

A. **Vietnam: Overview 1550-1770s.**

The late 1500s and early 1600s witnessed the birth of a new state in what is now central and southern Vietnam. Known to foreigners as Cochinchina, the new state would last until the 1770s when it was rendered asunder by a combination of the Tayson rebellion and aggression by the Trinh in the north. Prior to the 1600s, the Red River delta region in north Vietnam was the traditional heartland of Vietnamese civilization and culture and the place where most of the Vietnamese people resided. In the 1520s, the reigning Le Dynasty was effectively usurped by the Mac family, which ruled in the capital area - Thang Long (today's Hanoi area) - until 1592. Resistance to Mac rule, led by the related Trinh and Nguyen families, quickly broke out. Conflict among the rebels also broke out, however, and a rebel leader from the Nguyen family, Nguyen Hoang, perhaps sensing imminent conflict with the Trinh family, requested (via his sister, who was married to the leader of the Trinh family), and in 1558 was appointed, garrison commander of the province of Thuan Hoa. Thuan Hoa, which at the time encompassed today's city of Hue, was far to the south of the rebel base in Thanh Hoa (which itself was just south of Hanoi) and was generally recognized as a strategic buffer area in the south as well as an area of potential subversion.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Keith Taylor's "Nguyen Hoang and the Beginning of Vietnam's Southward Expansion," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power and Belief*, Anthony Reid, ed. (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1993), especially pp. 43-7. See also Nola Cooke, "Re-  
(continued...)"

In 1572, Nguyen Hoang, still interested in ruling the north but also desirous of expanding his power base in the south, was placed in charge of Quangnam, the large province south of Thuan Hoa, whose nominal authority included Hoi An. While in the south, Nguyen Hoang continued to fight the Mac usurpers, and when the Mac were finally driven from Thang Long in 1592, Nguyen Hoang returned again to the north in 1593 to contest for the throne as well as engage in mop-up operations against the remaining Mac forces. Although he stayed in the north for seven years, he failed to supplant the Trinh and returned to the south in 1600, never again to venture to the north. Despite various entreaties from the Trinh rulers, who were now in command of north Vietnam and seemed to regard Nguyen Hoang and his forces as rebels, Nguyen Hoang preferred to retain his independence in the south and began consolidating his rule. Thus, one may view 1600 as the year of *de facto* separation between the north and the south, when Nguyen Hoang made his final decision to live independently in the south. As one commentator has suggested, Nguyen Hoang provided a model for a new way of being Vietnamese, a model in which "talent and ability began to count for more than birth and position....an escape from ancestors, an escape from the past."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> (...continued)  
gionalism and the Nature of Nguyen Rule in Seventeenth Century Dang Trong (Cochinchina)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 29, No. 1 (1998), pp. 122-161 (especially text from footnotes 80 to 88).

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and Vietnam's Southward Expansion," pp. 48-61, quoted text from p.64. Taylor's view of Nguyen Hoang as starting fresh in the south without reference to the past and outside the confines of traditional Vietnamese culture in the north contrast sharply with the views of Nola Cooke, who argues that the ultimate goal of the early Nguyen rulers was to rule the north and a single, united Vietnam, not simply the south. She believes that it was not until well in the 1700s that the Nguyen rulers were able to overcome their emotional attachment to the north and reori-

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An uneasy truce existed between the Trinh in the north and the Nguyen in the south until the late 1620s. The Trinh were likely too exhausted to fight the Nguyen during this time, and as long as the Nguyen continued to pay taxes to the north and remained peaceful, the Trinh may have been happy to maintain the status quo. In addition, the presence of Nguyen Hoang - with his military skills, sterling reputation, and close relations with the Trinh rulers - likely kept the Trinh at bay. Nguyen Hoang died in 1613, however, and in 1620 his son and successor stopped paying tax to the Trinh, an event which led directly to a series of seven Trinh campaigns against the Nguyen from 1627 to 1672.<sup>5</sup> With the help of Portugese weaponry, the Nguyen were able to withstand these invasions, and from 1672 until the 1770s there was a century of peace between the north and south.

Despite the long peace between the Trinh and the Nguyen, beginning in the middle 1700s numerous rebellions sprang up in the south. The Nguyen were able to suppress most of these uprisings, but apparently did not address the root causes behind them. In 1771 the Tayson rebellion broke out in the central highlands. The causes behind the rebellion were no doubt complex and multiple, and even today there are few

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<sup>4</sup> (...continued)  
ent themselves completely to the south. See Cooke's "Regionalism and the Nature of Nguyen Rule," text from footnotes 182 through 205. Li Tana in her work *Nguyen Cochinchina* does not comment specifically on this issue of the Nguyen rulers' outlook, but clearly suggests that there was a definite break in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century between the north and south from a variety of perspectives, which would seem to align her much closer to Taylor's view than Cooke's view.

<sup>5</sup> See *Nguyen Cochinchina* p. 11, and Thomas Hodgkin's *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path to War* (London, England, The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1981) p. 74. See Hodgkin pp.74-5 for more on the period of civil war.



coherent explanations for the rebellion.<sup>6</sup> The Nguyen, fighting the rebels, were unable to hold off the the advancing Trinh, who had taken advantage of the chaos and had seized Hue - the Nguyen capital - in 1774. However, the rebellion would soon spread north and bring down the Trinh as well. The Tayson rebellion and rule would constitute a 30 year interlude between Vietnamese "dynasties" and result in yet another Chinese invasion in 1778 (the fifth since Vietnamese gained independence from the Chinese in the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century) which was quickly beaten back.<sup>7</sup> From the ashes of the rebellion emerged Vietnam's last dynasty in 1802, founded by Gia Long, the grandson of the last Nguyen leader.

The beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century thus marked a significant shift in Vietnam's history. Prior to this time, present-day central and south Vietnam were not part of the settled, traditional northern heartland based in the Red River area and had been, at least in the eyes of most Vietnamese, the home of the Chams as well as hide-outs

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<sup>6</sup> Li Tana in *Nguyen Cochinchina* offers a few explanations, most relating to the continued expansion of the Vietnamese south and west in the seven-teenth and eighteenth centuries. More specifically, she argues that there were fundamental changes in the economy which the Nguyen rulers failed to address: a decline in overseas trade which was the primary revenue source for the government, and high inflation caused by a government minting program attempting to compensate for a dwindling supply of foreign coins (see Section B below). She also points to the 1765 palace coup, the extravagant royal building program, the unstable Mekong delta area and the regime's reliance on rice imports from that area, increased tax demands and Vietnamese southern expansion and "localization". Thus the rebellion sprang from one of the areas most affected by the policies, the central highlands. See pp. 16-17 and Chapter Seven. See also Hodgkin, *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path*, Chapter Five, for more on the Tayson rebellion.

<sup>7</sup> Hodgkin, *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path*, pp. 87-8.

for criminals and "Vietnamese political refugees and malcontents."<sup>8</sup> From the view of the Vietnamese in the north, this unpacified region to the south was essentially a "frontier" area. From the late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries onward, however, the southern regions would play a major role in Vietnamese history as the "southern expansion" or *nam tien* continued at a brisk pace and the south continued to "develop" under Vietnamese control. Limited by the geographical barriers of the sea to the east and the mountains to the west (which often came very close to the sea, allowing for only a narrow corridor in between), *nam tien* would continue throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century) as the Vietnamese displaced the Chams in central Vietnam and then the Khmers in the Mekong Delta area. It was during this roughly 200 year period that Vietnam acquired over one-half of its current territory (mostly in the south). The north would no longer be the center of Vietnamese culture and civilization, as evidenced by Gia Long's decision in 1802 to make Hue the capital of a united Vietnam, a Vietnam which stretched from the Chinese border in the north all the way to the Mekong Delta area in the south and which for the first time in its long history resembled the shape it bears today.

## B. **Nguyen Cochinchina.**

Turning back to that vital juncture in 1600, it is evident that Nguyen Hoang faced numerous critical decisions in establishing his rule in central Vietnam. Nguyen Hoang needed to find a means to ensure his fledgling kingdom's independence against the threat of aggression from the much stronger Trinh in the north. How would

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<sup>8</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 22.

the new kingdom support itself and its followers? How would it attract followers, a perennial issue in people-starved (but land-abundant) pre-modern Southeast Asia and certainly an issue for the Nguyen in Cochinchina in the early 1600s. The answers were found in promoting trade and commerce, encouraging mass immigration (both domestic and Chinese), and integration with local peoples.<sup>9</sup>

Overseas trade and commerce was a key factor in the development of the Nguyen state. Li Tana notes that "without trade and commerce, it is doubtful whether Dang Trong [the Nguyen kingdom] could even have survived.... [o]verseas trade was the engine driving Dang Trong's spectacular development." Foreign trade supported Nguyen Cochinchina in a number of ways: first, by providing revenue (from customs and duties) to state coffers, second, by stimulating local economic development (see Part VI below), and third, by providing access to European weaponry (primarily Portuguese, and some Dutch) used to keep the Trinh at bay.<sup>10</sup> Even before 1600, Nguyen Hoang realized how essential foreign trade was; the Vietnamese annals noted how during the 1570s and 1580s "seaborne merchants from foreign kingdoms all came to buy and sell, a trading center was established...." and "the boats of merchants from all kingdoms gathered...consequently, a large city was established." The city referred to is undoubtedly Hoi An.<sup>11</sup> With his decision in 1600 to withdraw entirely from the north, Nguyen Hoang made concerted

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<sup>9</sup> By far the best work on Nguyen Cochinchina is Li Tana's *Nguyen Cochinchina* cited previously. Much of the following discussion is drawn from her work.

<sup>10</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 98, quote from p.58.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and Vietnam's Southward Expansion," pp. 49-50.



efforts to attract foreign trade<sup>12</sup>, and Hoi An was designated as the regime's primary port for overseas trade.

Clearly cognizant of the importance of the Japanese trade, Nguyen Hoang in 1601 sent a letter to Tokugawa Ieyasu of Japan seeking to develop trade and good relations. Ieyasu responded positively to the letter and informed Nguyen Hoang of Japan's recently established red seal trade. Correspondence with Japan was regular through the 1620s (during reign of Nguyen Hoang and his son) but naturally decreased with Japan's decision in the 1630s to withdraw from foreign contact. One scholar has counted 56 pieces of correspondence between Japan and Trinh or Nguyen Vietnam from 1599 to 1764; the correspondence comes from both sides and ranges from letters from rulers to letters from mid-level officials.<sup>13</sup> Another example of the Nguyen involvement in promoting foreign trade, in this case also with Japan, was in 1604 with Nguyen Hoang's adoption as his son Hunamoto Yabeiiji, the first envoy of the Tokugawa regime to Cochinchina. The use of family ties in promoting trade continued in 1619, when Nguyen Hoang's son and successor, Nguyen Phuc Nguyen (r. 1613-1635), married one of his daughters to a Japanese merchant who became a noble in Cochinchina.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p.60.

<sup>13</sup> See Kawamoto Kuniye, "The International Outlook of the Quangnam (Nguyen) Regime as Revealed in Gaiban Tsuusho," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An* (International Symposium March 1990)(Hanoi, Gioi Publishers, 1993), pp. 109-112; see also Robert L. Innes, *The Door Ajar: Japan's Foreign Trade in the Seventeenth Century* (PHD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1980), p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 64; Vu Minh Giang, "The Japanese Presence in Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p. 138.

Thus Hoi An, with the encouragement of the Nguyen rulers, was thrown open to the world to trade. As the Italian Jesuit Missionary Borri was to note in the early 1600s, "the King of Cochin-China gave free admittance to all nations whatsoever," despite attempts by the Dutch and Portuguese to exclude each other.<sup>15</sup> Unlike many other regional economies, the government imposed no monopolies on goods, at least initially, with the exception of royal monopolies on calambac and birdnests and later gold.<sup>16</sup> Trade duties

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<sup>15</sup> Borri lived in Cochinchina from 1618-21 (See Part V below). See Borri's *Cochinchina: Containing many Admirable Rarities and Singularities of that Countrey* (1633), translated and reprinted in John Pinkerton, *A General Description of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World*, (London, England, Ninth Volume, 1811), pp. 796-7.

<sup>16</sup> Borri noted royal monopolies on calambac and birdnests. See Borri's *Cochinchina: Containing many Admirable Rarities* in Pinkerton, *A General Description of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels*, (Ninth Volume), pp. 778-9. Li Tana, however, suggests that the royal monopoly on calambac was not imposed until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. See *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 82-3. As described by the French trader Pierre Poivre around 1750 (see Part V below), there are three grades of eaglewood; the finest grade and most expensive is the resinous, waxy heart known as calambac. Apparently the royal monopoly covered only this grade. Poivre's account also noted that the king owned his own gold mine and that "the tyranny and miserliness of the king swallow up everything," suggesting a *de facto* royal monopoly on gold. The account also noted a royal monopoly on ivory and complained that "trade is restricted and carried out clandestinely. Expensive commodities like gold, eaglewood, raw ivory and silk are not sold publicly. To obtain any, one has to scheme and carry on dealings in secret, curry favour with the mandarins and chiefs, who have to be bribed, or otherwise one is a target for plunder or ruinous annoyances." See "Description of Cochinchina, 1749-50" in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on the Economic History of Cochinchina (Dang Trong), 1602-1777*, Li Tana and Anthony Reid, eds. (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 88, 90-92. In addition to gold, calambac and birdnests, Charles Wheeler also suggests there were royal monopolies over cinnamon, pepper and silver (though Cochinchina actually had very limited amounts of silver), with the cinnamon, pepper and other monopolies farmed out to relatives of the king or local traders. See Charles Wheeler, *Cross Cultural*  
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were also initially kept low. In the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, trade duties were raised, at least for European traders. By the mid-to-late 18<sup>th</sup> century, trade duties for European traders had soared and were much higher than duties on Asian traders. Thus the trend is one of gradually increasing duties around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with a substantial increase in the mid 1750s, perhaps to help fund a royal construction program begun in 1754. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> (...continued)

*Trade and Trans-Regional Networks in the Port of Hoi An: Maritime Vietnam in the Early Modern Era* (PHD Dissertation, Yale University, 2001), pp. 165-6.

<sup>17</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 82-3; Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* (Frontier Chronicles) indicates that by the early 1770s, the arrival taxes alone on European ships were 8000 quan, as compared with 4,000 quan for ships from Macao and Japan, 3,000 quan for ships from Shanghai and Canton, 2,000 quan for ships from Fujian, Siam and the Philippines, and not more than 500 quan for ships from other ports. See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp.115-116. (However, the account of Robert Kirsop, an English trader who visited Hoi An in 1750, suggests that the size of the entrance fee varied and was based at least in part on the size of the vessel and the type of goods it carried, as opposed to a fixed fee based on the vessel's origin. This entrance fee was apparently generally negotiated with the King's direct representative in the capital. At another point in his narrative, however, Kirsop suggests that the ship from Macao paid a flat, yearly duty of 3,000 quan in return for an exemption from customs duties, and that the same flat fee for Chinese junks ranged from 1,000 to 2,000 quan; if so, a comparison with Le Quy Don's figures (from the early 1770s) indeed suggests that the entrance fee had risen over the 20 year period. See Robert Kirsop, "Some Account of Cochinchina," in Alexander Dalrymple's *Oriental Repertory, Volume I* (second number; published in two parts from April 1791 to April 1797; Volume I published in four numbers from April 1791 to January 1793), pp. 242-3.) This distinction between European traders and Asian traders supports the view of some commentators who suggest that the Nguyen encouraged Asian traders - especially Chinese and Japanese - but discouraged European traders, perhaps out of fear (no doubt justifiable) of European power. Indeed, many European traders complained about trade conditions in Cochinchina. See, for example, the comments of Alexander Hamilton,

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cash, copper, and later tutenag [zinc], mainly Chinese but also Japanese, which helped the Vietnamese government to keep up with the indigenous demand for money." Whitmore also notes that Nguyen Cochinchina was evidently dependent on the output of a Japanese mint which ran from 1660 to 1684 and produced coins specifically for export.<sup>20</sup>

The Nguyen authorities were aware of the importance of overseas coinage in Cochinchina's economy and were concerned when the overseas coinage market began to dry up in the late 1600s. The Nguyen were so concerned with Japan's attempts beginning in the mid 1680s to limit the outflow of specie (see Part III below for more on Japanese foreign trade) that they sent a letter to Japan in 1688 describing how in Cochinchina there were "many economic activities" but the Nguyen were incapable of coining the much-needed money. The letter went on to request that Japan make coins for circulation in Cochinchina.<sup>21</sup> Japanese coin imports into Cochinchina, already declining as a result of policies instituted by the Japanese government in the 1680s, received a further blow in the 1710s when Japanese foreign trade ground to a virtual halt. Although Chinese coins were to some extent able to fill the void before China began prohibiting copper outflows, royal extravaganza and population growth further increased the demand for coinage. The increasing monetization of the Cochinchinese economy in which cash was the medium of exchange rather than goods or labor (for example, in the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, quote from p. 369; p. 383.

<sup>21</sup> Kuniye, "International Outlook," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 115-6. It may have been the closure of the copper mint in 1684 referred to in the previous paragraph that prompted this letter.

What emerged from this open door economic policy in Cochinchina was an economy based on exports and imports and money which encouraged trade specialization within Cochinchina. Financing this import-export economy and the accompanying expansion to the south was cash, mostly in the form of imported copper currency.<sup>18</sup> Copper coins, traditionally imported primarily from China as Vietnam's copper reserves were limited, had long been a feature of the north Vietnamese economy, and even prior to the 1600s, Vietnam was no stranger to the vagaries of shortages in copper cash.<sup>19</sup> However, with Cochinchina's explosion of economic growth tied closely to foreign trade and the use of coinage as a medium of exchange, the Nguyen economy became dependent on foreign coinage - mostly Japanese and then Chinese - in a way in which the economy of the north had never been. As Whitmore describes, "it was foreign

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<sup>17</sup> (...continued)  
traveling to Cochinchina in the late 1600s, who said that the "Cochin-Chinefe draw one-half of the cuftomes and taxes raifed in Cambodia by commerce and merchandizing, but they give little encouragement for frangers to trade with them." Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, reprinted in Pinkerton's *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels* (Eighth Volume), p. 481. John Whitmore, however, notes that the pattern of duties listed above indicates that the more important the merchants were to the Nguyen, the lower the duty, and that importance was measured by actual trade goods rather than bullion (thus Chinese and Southeast Asian traders who brought trade goods - silks and spices - received more favorable treatment than Japanese and Europeans who brought silver (though we must remember that the Japan trade dried up in the early 1700s, long before the duties listed above were imposed in the 1750s)). See John Whitmore, "Vietnam and the Monetary Flow of Eastern Asia, Thirteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds*, J.F. Richards, ed., (Durham, N.C., Carolina Academic Press, 1983), p. 381.

<sup>18</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 78-98. See Part VI below for more discussion of the effects of trade on the Cochinchina economy.

<sup>19</sup> Whitmore, "Vietnam and the Monetary Flow of Eastern Asia," p. 367.

case of taxes) also spurred demand for coins. The resulting shortage by the 1740s forced Cochinchina into minting coins - using copper and zinc (tutenag) - for itself. This policy, however, was nothing short of disastrous and led to severe inflation, and when combined with the imposition of new shipping duties, led to a major decrease in overseas trade by the late 1760s.<sup>22</sup> This decrease in foreign trade, which had long been a primary source of revenue for the Nguyen rulers, meant that the Nguyen had to turn elsewhere

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<sup>22</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp.94-7; see also Whitmore, "Vietnam and the Monetary Flow in Eastern Asia," pp. 370-3. The Pierre Poivre account from 1750 describes how the Nguyen were forced to buy copper from the Chinese to mint coins (presumably because there were no local reserves and the supply from Japan had dried out), and explains that since the Chinese were prohibiting copper exports the Nguyen were using tutenag to mint coins, thus accounting for why tutenag was the primary Chinese export to Cochinchina at the time. The account further described the currency problems facing Cochinchina and the inflation which had hit the local economy. See "Description of Cochinchina, 1749-50," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 85-7. Kirsop in 1750 also noted how the Chinese brought to Cochinchina tutenag which was "all engroffed by the king" (meaning a monopoly?) and how a type of tutenag was the only currency of the country. See Kirsop, "Some Account of Cochin China," p. 245. Le Quy Don, the Trinh scholar/official sent south after the Trinh occupied Hue in 1774, also commented upon the instability of the monetary supply and Nguyen reliance on foreign sources. Le Quy Don noted how there was no copper in south Vietnam and the Nguyen had to obtain raw copper from China and Japan. He claims the Nguyen ruler accepted the suggestion of a Chinese man to buy tin from the Dutch and use it to mint coins. He then notes that the government began to mint lead coins of good quality; however, the court began to store copper coins which as a result became more expensive. Consequently, people began casting their own lead coins, the price of which dropped drastically, so much so that local people and overseas traders refused to accept lead coins. See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 114-5; see also Alexander Woodside, "Central Vietnam's Trading World in the Eighteenth Century as Seen in Le Quy Don's 'Frontier Chronicles'," in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*, John Whitmore and Keith Taylor, eds. (Ithaca, New York, Southeast Asia Program, 1995) p. 167.

for funding. Thus the Nguyen increased domestic taxes, which only served to spur local discontent, and it was from one of these areas which experienced a tax increase that the Tayson rebellion sprang.<sup>23</sup> With government revenue down, the inflationary economy spinning out of control and other pressing domestic matters arising, the Nguyen regime was in no position to resist effectively either the Trinh advance or the Tayson rebellion. Reliance on overseas trade, so critical to the development of Nguyen Cochinchina, would ultimately be a major factor in the decline of the regime.

Hoi An was a clear beneficiary of Nguyen Cochinchina's opening itself up to foreign trade. Hoi An was Nguyen Cochinchina's commercial window to the world and it was through Hoi An that the bulk of trade in Cochinchina passed. As we will see below, Hoi An grew into a thriving international port as a result of the Nguyen decision to throw open its economy to international trade and commerce and its assignment of Hoi An as the designated place for foreign trade and location of foreign trading factories

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<sup>23</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 147-8. Li Tana clearly believes that revenue from overseas trade was long one of the regime's main sources of funds (see pps. 98, 147-8). This view contrasts sharply with Charles Wheeler, who seems to argue, somewhat obtusely and rather unconvincingly, that "by the early eighteenth century, foreign trade's importance, relative to the rest of Dang Trong's economy, had diminished. By this time, the economy, and in turn the Nguyen state derived its wealth from commerce conducted at the local and regional levels, and inter-regional trade. Both economy and state in Dang Trong did rely on foreign sources for their money supply, and the evidence of the state's dependence upon metal's trade was demonstrated by the currency crisis that the drop in foreign trade generated during the 1760's. If the entire economy were dependent upon foreign trade, however, we would see a decline in most areas of the economy, from tolls to sugar and even rice production. But no such indications are found in eighteenth century sources." See Wheeler, *Cross-Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, pp. 170-1.

in Cochinchina. Hoi An's internationalism and multiculturalism derived from the most part from this linkage to foreign trade. Yet it was also this reliance on foreign trade which would lead to Hoi An's decline by the 1770s.

Mass immigration to the south was another feature of Nguyen rule. In addition to increasing the area of Nguyen power and rule, this "southern expansion" also helped fuel the economy. Prior to the Nguyen push south, central Vietnam had been part of the polyethnic, indianized Cham kingdom whose customs were quite different from the traditional north. Indeed, the two kingdoms had frequently clashed in the past. Nguyen Hoang, however, brought many Vietnamese Mandarins and their families south with him and encouraged many others to move. Population pressure in the north, famine and war also contributed to the push south. Economic opportunity in the rapidly developing Cochinchinese economy undoubtedly also served to "pull" many Vietnamese south. Instead of the previous separate, scattered population movements south, there was after 1600 a "popular movement" from north to south which was encouraged by the regime.<sup>24</sup>

Nguyen Cochinchina also actively welcomed Chinese immigration, which likely began steadily in the last few decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and took off after the Ming dynasty was overthrown by the Manchus in 1644 (see Part III below for more on Chinese immigration in general). Nguyen encouragement of Chinese immigration and overall favorable treatment of the Chinese was in marked contrast to the more restrictive

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<sup>24</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Chapter Two, especially pp. 22-4.

(and at times oppressive) policies of the Trinh in the north.<sup>25</sup> Intermarriage between immigrant Chinese and local women was common and assisted the integration process. Most of the Chinese in Cochinchina would settle in three places: the Hue-Hoi An area, the Mekong delta area, and the Ha Tien area in southwest Vietnam. In the Hue/Hoi An area, the Chinese were mostly merchants (see Part V below for more on the Chinese in Hoi An). In 1679, some 3,000 Ming loyalist soldiers on some 50 ships who were fleeing the Qing landed near Hue and were promptly resettled in the Bien Hoa, north of modern-day Saigon in the Mekong Delta area. This site was abandoned in 1778 due to the Tayson rebellion, with most of the Chinese moving to Cholon, adjacent to Saigon, and after the 1780s Saigon/Cholon developed rapidly into a major trading area (see Part VII below). Sometime in the late 1600s, a Chinese named Mac Cuu along with 400 followers (soldiers, intellectuals and their families) arrived in the Ha Tien area and began to settle it. In 1708 Mac Cuu submitted to the Nguyen and was named governor of the territory. Ha Tien would grow into a thriving port by the mid 1700s primarily because of Chinese traders. It was destroyed by the Siamese in the early 1770s and then again by the Tayson, and thereafter was a fairly insignificant port.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, as Li Tana has noted the "southern expansion" gave rise to a new sense of Vietnamese identity. Cochinchina, already somewhat of a

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<sup>25</sup> See Fujiwara Riichiro, "Vietnamese Dynasties' Policies Toward Chinese Immigrants," *Acta Asiatica* 18 (1970), pp. 43-69.

<sup>26</sup> See Nguyen Hoi Chan, "Some Aspects of the Chinese Community in Vietnam, 1650-1850," *Papers on China* (Volume 24), from Seminars at Harvard University (1971), pp. 104-124.

cultural mix, became a polyethnic melting pot as Vietnamese from the north were "localized" by adopting local customs, especially Cham but also customs from groups from the central highlands. There was an "eclectic weaving of indigenous spirits and beliefs into a syncretic (Vietnamese) Buddhist framework, a hybrid religious system that bestowed moral legitimacy on Nguyen authority...." Mahayana Buddhism - very syncretic and open and far different from the Confucian ethos which influenced the north - provided the means to incorporate the alien Cham and other cultures.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the best example of this integration was the gradual incorporation of the Cham goddess Po Nagar into the Vietnamese pantheon.<sup>28</sup> As Li Tana also points out, foreign Buddhist monks such as Da Shan were also welcomed and certainly enriched the religious and cultural landscape.<sup>29</sup>

Thrown into this open and evolving cultural and religious mix were the Jesuit missionaries, who first reached Cochinchina in the 1610s as an alternative to Japan, which was beginning to limit missionary activity. Although the number of converts cannot be ascertained with any certainty, the intermittent bans on Jesuit activity and occasional persecution of Christians in Cochinchina are certainly indications that the

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<sup>27</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp.99, 102-3.

<sup>28</sup> For an excellent description of this process of incorporation, see Nguyen The Anh's "The Vietnamization of the Cham Diety Po Nagar," in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*, pp. 42-50.

<sup>29</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 108-9.



Jesuits were making their presence felt.<sup>30</sup> Two of the most famous of these missionaries were the Jesuits Christophoro Borri and Alexander de Rhodes (See Part V below), both of whom were in Cochinchina in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Macao provided a convenient regional base for missionary activities in the South China Sea region, and in Cochinchina European missionaries were often assisted by Japanese Christians.<sup>31</sup>

This polyethnic society was undoubtedly reflected in the daily life of Hoi An. In addition to the Vietnamese Mandarins, Japanese residents, Chinese residents, the occasional western resident, the temporary visitors from overseas waiting for the winds to change to return home, there were certainly also individuals of the polyethnic mix described above as well as Christian converts. This polyglot mix of people must have lent a great sense of excitement to the air. When one considers that the original Vietnamese themselves were in effect foreigners from the north who were beginning to

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<sup>30</sup> Micheline Lessard notes that Catholics claimed 82,500 converts in all of Vietnam by 1639; Rhodes reported 300,000 converts in 1650. See Micheline Lessard, "Curious Relations: Jesuit Perceptions of the Vietnamese," in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*, p. 142. Another account from 1642 indicates that "there are a fair number of Roman Catholics around Cape Varella, Gambier, and also in Cadjangh, but their number is on the wane because the king has expelled the papists from the country." See "A Japanese Resident's Account," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History of Cochinchina*, p.32. Poivre, however, noted in 1750 that there were only about 50,000 Christians in Cochinchina. See "Description of Cochinchina, 1749-50," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History of Cochinchina*, p. 82.

<sup>31</sup> See Nguyen Van Hoan, "Hoi An - Vietnam's Center for Cultural Contacts with the World in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p.177.

integrate into local society, Hoi An in its heyday must have been an excellent place for people watching.

### PART III. THE INTERNATIONAL PICTURE.

If the creation of a new state in central Vietnam was the first leg upon which Hoi An's growth was supported, the concurrent boom in international trade and commerce was the second. As Anthony Reid has so eloquently written, the years from 1450 to 1640 were an "age of commerce" for Southeast Asia which saw trade take off and reach unprecedented heights, peaking from about 1570 to 1640. This boom in commerce in Southeast Asia was fueled at first primarily by Chinese and Indian demand for Southeast Asian products, and reached its peak when Japan and various European countries began to get involved.<sup>32</sup> The rise in trade resulted over the years in the flourishing of a number of entrepots in Southeast Asia such as Manila, Malacca, Banten, Aceh, Ayutthaya, Pattani, Pnom Penh, Pegu and Hoi An, to name but a few. With respect to Hoi An, although these four areas of trade - China, Japan, India, and Europe - were certainly interrelated, it is clear that Hoi An itself was less directly affected by the India trade, was more affected by the European trade, and was intricately involved in the

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<sup>32</sup> Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680, Volume Two, Expansion and Crisis* (Chiang Mai, Thailand, Silkworm Books, 1993), especially pp. 12-16.

China and Japan trade. Because economic demand from China and Chinese traders were so critical to the development of Hoi An, our discussion starts with China.

**A. The Chinese.**

Contact between China and Southeast Asia dates back to the beginning of the Christian era. Prior to the Sung dynasty (960-1278), however, this contact for the most part consisted of Southeast Asians coming to China, as opposed to Chinese venturing to Southeast Asia.<sup>33</sup> During the Sung, and especially the Southern Sung (1127-1278), Chinese shipping developed rapidly along China's southeastern coast and Chinese sailors began to venture to the Nanyang (the 'Southern Seas' or Southeast Asia). The Sung regime actively encouraged trade, and most of the Chinese shipping and trade was private in nature. Private trade and shipping to the Nanyang continued to grow under the encouragement of the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1278-1368).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1967). There were a number of Chinese pilgrims, such as I Ching, who passed through the region during this early period on their way to the west, but this number appears to be very limited. Southeast Asians came to China to deliver 'tribute' and to trade, two phenomena which are closely linked; this growing trade in the first millennium resulted from increased demand in China for Southeast Asian products.

<sup>34</sup> See Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2000). The Yuan is perhaps better known for its efforts in assembling the first great Chinese navies; these navies were sent to Java in the 1290s in failed attempts to conquer that island. A combination of robust private trade in the region as well as deserters and those left behind from the Yuan navies likely led to the first settlements of Chinese in the Nanyang, though these settlements must have been quite small.

The Ming dynasty (1368-1644) immediately banned private trade and overseas travel and insisted that all contact and trade with foreigners be conducted within the traditional tributary system.<sup>35</sup> Such developments were not welcomed by China's southeastern coastal provinces (Zhejiang, Guangdong, and especially Fujian), which had come to rely on overseas trade as a principal means of survival.<sup>36</sup> Another element working against the Ming ban was the series of naval expeditions the Ming sent out from 1403 to the early 1430s under the command of Zheng He. These missions were the last great show of Chinese maritime power and reached as far as the African coast. The motives of the Ming in dispatching these voyages are unclear, but it is likely these missions were diplomatic and political in nature and were also intended to encourage

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<sup>35</sup> See O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1970), and Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*.

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, one wonders how effective the Ming ban really was during this period, as the first recorded communities of Chinese in Southeast Asia appear around the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. See Pin Tsun Chang, "The First Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century," in *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade*, Ptak and Rothermund, eds. (Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991). These early communities were located in Cambodia, Siam, Patani, Aceh, Palembang, Brunei, Tuban and Gresik. Most Chinese in Southeast Asia at this time were probably involved in trade and shipping as well as statecraft - accompanying tribute missions to China. See Anthony Reid, "Flows and Seepages in Long Term Chinese Interaction with Southeast Asia," in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, Anthony Reid, ed. (St. Leonards, Australia, Allen & Unwin, 1996). We can reasonably surmise that the existing Chinese communities in Southeast Asia during the period of the ban became more assimilated into the local cultures, as they were cut off from China (see Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*, pp. 50-51), but we should also bear in mind that these communities were likely still quite limited in number and population (see J.A.C. Mackie "Introduction," in *Sojourners and Settlers*, xxii).

tribute missions and trade.<sup>37</sup> One of the unintended effects of the missions, however, was to increase Chinese demand for Southeast Asian products and thus encourage illegal private trade outside the confines of the tributary system.<sup>38</sup> After the voyages were suddenly ended in the 1430s, a period of official Chinese isolation resumed.

The Ming trade and travel ban was suddenly lifted in 1567 (with the exception of Japan) at the request of the southeastern provinces.<sup>39</sup> Although the effectiveness of the ban up to this point is questionable as illicit trade continued in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is clear that Chinese trade and immigration to Southeast Asia shot up after the rescission of the ban. Growth in trade and immigration would continue until the 1640s, after which a decline is evident. 1567 thus must be seen as a key turning point for the Chinese presence in the Nanyang. With respect to trade, Chinese junks licensed to trade in Southeast Asia jumped from 50 per year in 1568 to 88 per year in 1589 to 137 per year in 1597.<sup>40</sup> Shipping levels are

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<sup>37</sup> See Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia* (St. Leonards, Australia, Allen & Unwin, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1992), pp. 108-115.

<sup>38</sup> Reid, "Flows and Seepages," p. 29. It is also probable that a number of Chinese from the Zheng He missions remained behind in Southeast Asia, a repeat of the same phenomenon that resulted from the Yuan voyages.

<sup>39</sup> Wang, *Community and Nation*, p.17.

<sup>40</sup> See Anthony Reid, "The Unthreatening Alternative: Chinese Shipping in Southeast Asia, 1567-1842," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 27/1-2 (1993, pp. 13-32) p.15; Yung Ho Tsao, "Chinese Overseas Trade in the Late Ming Period," in *Proceedings, Second Biennial Conference of International Association of Historians of Asia* (Taipei, Taiwan, October 1962, pp. 429-458), p. 431.

important during this time not only because of their economic implications, but also as a barometer of immigration - Chinese immigrants (mostly from Fujian) arrived in Southeast Asia mostly by ship.<sup>41</sup>

Another important result from the 1567 decision to authorize private trade was the official division of Chinese overseas trade into two routes, the "eastern route" and the "western route". The eastern route led to the Philippines and the spice islands of modern-day eastern Indonesia; the western route followed the Chinese coast west, then headed south between Hainan Island and the Paracel Islands, hitting the central Vietnamese coast, where it followed the coast south and then west, at which point it could cross the Gulf of Siam to the north (heading for Ayutthaya) or to the south heading to the eastern coast of the Malay peninsula. From there the route could either head north through the Malacca Straits, or south along the Sumatran coast and then

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<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the numbers of Chinese in Southeast Asia seemed to increase dramatically after 1567 along with the increased shipping. By 1602 there were an estimated 20,000 Chinese living in Manila, by far the largest concentration of Chinese in Southeast Asia. See Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1965), p. 6. There were also substantial Chinese communities in Batavia, Hoi An, Banten, Pattani, Pnom Penh and Ayutthaya by first part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see Reid, "Flows and Seepages," p. 39), and Chinese traders could be found at most major ports ( see Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*, p. 51). Although it has been argued that the rescission of the ban allowed the traditional Chinese practice of 'sojourning' (temporary settlement in foreign lands, with the general intention to return to China) to continue ( see Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*, pp. 50-1), the period from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century can also be seen as one in which many permanent communities of Chinese were established in Southeast Asia.

northern Javanese coast into the Java Sea. This western route varied little over time.<sup>42</sup> The key ports along this route were, at various times, Hoi An, then Pnom Penh and Ha Tien, Ayutthaya, Johor, Malacca, Palembang and Jambi in Sumatra, and Banten and Batavia in Java. A look at the 1589 licenses indicates that the total of 88 licenses granted were evenly split between the eastern route and western route; of the 44 ships allowed to go west, four were licensed for Hoi An.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps more importantly, Hoi An was strategically positioned along the western route so that Chinese junks going to other ports had the option of stopping by Hoi An. In other words, Hoi An's (or another port located in central or south Vietnam) geographical location virtually ensured its exposure to numerous Chinese vessels so long as the Chinese economy continued to hum along and there was demand in China for goods from Southeast Asia, India and Europe.

By the mid-1500s, two hundred years of prosperity in China had fueled an economic boom in China and Southeast Asia, a boom that was to peak from about 1570 to 1640. Indeed, China during this time was one of the drivers of the world

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<sup>42</sup> See Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht, Holland, Foris Publications, 1986), pp. 111-113; Tsao, "Chinese Overseas Trade," p. 436; Leonard Andaya, "Interactions with the Outside World and adaptation in Southeast Asian Society," in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume I: From Early times to c. 1800*, Nicholas Tarling, ed. (Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, 1994), p. 347. I suspect this route had long been the primary route to the west (a look at the map indicates this is really the only way to go), but was simply formalized in 1567.

<sup>43</sup> Tsao, "Chinese Overseas Trade," p. 421; Reid, "Unthreatening Alternative," p. 16.



economy.<sup>44</sup> China's primary export was silk as well as finished products such as ceramics, and its primary import was silver - which it was in desperate need of - from Japan and the Americas, along with various Southeast Asian products. Indeed, China was a major "sink" of the world's silver supply, the production of which increased dramatically in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the discovery of new mines in Spanish America.<sup>45</sup> Concurrently in the middle 1500s, Japanese production of silver began to increase dramatically, which fueled a large jump in Japan's foreign trade with silver serving as the primary export.<sup>46</sup> Japan's primary import was Chinese silk, and a flourishing trade market of Chinese silk for Japanese silver developed. However, because of the continued Ming ban on direct trade with Japan after 1567, a large part of this silver-silk trade was carried out in ports outside of China and Japan - much of it in Southeast Asian ports, primarily Hoi An and Manila (see Section B below). Manila, after the Spanish takeover in the early 1570s, had the additional lure for the Chinese as the

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<sup>44</sup> For a good summary of China's importance in the world economy during this period, see Andre Frank, *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, (Los Angeles, CA., University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> For more on silver production, outflows and the massive amounts imported by China, see Frank, *Reorient*, cited above; Ward Barrett, "World Bullion Flows, 1450-1800," in James Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* (Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1990); and William Atwell, "International Bullion Flows and the Chinese Economy Circa 1530-1650," *Past and Present* No. 95 (May 1982), pp. 68-90, and "Some Observations on the 'Seventeenth Century Crisis' in China and Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* Volume XLV, No.2 (February 1986), pp. 223-244.

<sup>46</sup> See Robert L. Innes, *The Door Ajar: Japan's Foreign Trade in the Seventeenth century*, PHD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1988, pp. 21-26.

Asian terminal for the vast amounts of silver produced in Spanish America, and Manila was likely the center of the Chinese junk trade in Southeast Asia for the period from the 1570s until the 1640s. Macao also was an important port for the silk-silver trade, and the Portuguese were heavily involved in this trade (Macao to Nagasaki) until their expulsion from Japan in 1639.

From the mid 1640s to the mid 1680s, Chinese shipping, and the Chinese economy for a portion of this period, slowed dramatically, primarily due to internal chaos in China resulting from the Qing (1644-1910) conquest of China in the mid 1640s as well as a global economic downturn. In the wake of resistance to the Qing in southern China, trade and navigation bans were imposed by the Qing court from the mid 1650s until 1684 (the Qing believed that those involved in maritime trade supported resistance activities), and the Qing also carried out a policy of forced relocation inland of the population residing along the coast of Fujian. Ming resistance in the south was led by the Cheng family, the first of whom, Cheng Chih Lung, was a smuggler-turned Ming official - turned Qing official.<sup>47</sup> Most of the Chinese shipping to Southeast Asia during this period was likely controlled by the Cheng family, which controlled the coasts and shipping lanes around southern China during this period.<sup>48</sup> Cheng Chih Lung's son was the famous Ming

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<sup>47</sup> See Chin Keong Ng, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683-1735*, (Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1983), pp. 48-52.

<sup>48</sup> See Blusse, *Strange Company*, p. 117; Cheng Ko Cheng, "'Cheng Cheng Kung's Maritime Expansion and Early Ching Coastal Prohibition,'" especially p. 233, and Chin Keong Ng, "The South Fujianese Junk Trade at Amoy from the 17<sup>th</sup> to Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries," especially p. 303, both in  
(continued...)

loyalist Koxinga, whose efforts to resist the Qing were continued after his death in 1662 by his sons. It was during this period that Amoy city in Fujian province became a great Chinese maritime center (though Fujian province itself had always been a maritime center), and thereafter most of the Chinese Nanyang trade would originate from Amoy.<sup>49</sup> With the pacification of the south and the conquest of Taiwan - the Cheng family stronghold - in 1683, the trade ban (including the ban with Japan) was lifted in 1684.

The number of Chinese ships sailing to Southeast Asia and the number of Chinese immigrants to the region shot up again after 1684 as a result of the rescission of the trade ban.<sup>50</sup> Although Reid has suggested that the number of Chinese ships visiting the region did not return to the pre-1640 levels until the 1740s, there was a clear jump in junk trade, especially to Batavia. In fact, the junk trade to Batavia reached its peak

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<sup>48</sup> (...continued)

E.B. Vermeer, ed., *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Leiden, The Netherlands, E.J. Brill, 1990). See also Seiichi, "Japanese Foreign Trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries," *Acta Asiatica* 30 (1976), p. 12, with respect to the impact of the Cheng family on Chinese trade with Japan.

<sup>49</sup> See Ng, *Trade and Society*. It should be noted that although the Qing bans resulted in reduced trade and shipping and perhaps even immigration to Southeast Asia, the Qing takeover of China in the 1640s did generate an exodus of refugees and Ming loyalists from China to Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam (no doubt due in part to Vietnam's geographical proximity to China). For example, we saw in Part II above how in 1679 an estimated 3000 Ming loyalists seeking refuge arrived in Cochinchina, and as we shall see in Part V Section B, the Ming village in Hoi An was established around 1650.

<sup>50</sup> Ng, *Trade and Society*, p.55; Blusse, *Strange Company*, Chapter VI. Iwao Seiichi in "Japanese Foreign Trade," p. 13, has also noted an explosion of Chinese junk trade in Japan after 1683.

from 1690 to 1740, and Batavia was likely the center of Chinese junk trade in Southeast Asia during this time, similar to Manila in the period from the 1570s to the 1640s. For other parts of the region, however, this second boom period of junk trade may have lasted only until the 1710s.<sup>51</sup> One reason the junk trade with Southeast Asia may have slowed in the 1710s was another series of bans on trade and travel imposed by the Qing from 1717 to 1727. These measures were largely directed at Manila and Batavia, however, and the ban on trade with Vietnam was lifted after only six months.<sup>52</sup> The effectiveness of the ban is uncertain, but as noted above by the 1740s the junk trade had reached its prior highs.

The 1684 recession also resulted in another substantial jump in Chinese immigration to the region, which would lead to unsuccessful efforts by the Spanish in Manila and the Dutch in Batavia to control immigration. This surge in immigration after 1684 brought a different type of Chinese settler to the region - manual laborers. Although Chinese laborers and artisans had been coming to Manila and Batavia throughout the 1600s, most Chinese communities in Southeast Asia up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were merchant communities. Around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and

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<sup>51</sup> Reid, "Unthreatening Alternative," pp. 17 and 23. For the Batavian trade, see Blusse, *Strange Company*, Chapter VI.

<sup>52</sup> See Blusse, *Strange Company*, pp. 131-5; Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade 1652-1853* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 55-6; Ng, *Trade and Society*, pp. 57-8; Reid, "Unthreatening Alternative," p. 23. Reid suggests several other reasons for the slowdown: the VOC trade monopoly, the decline in trade with Japan after 1715, and trade doldrums for Siam in the last decade of the seventeenth century.

particularly in the western archipelago, there began to appear laborers' settlements, usually composed almost exclusively of young Chinese males.<sup>53</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> century would witness a continuing influx of this type of immigrant to Southeast Asia, and due to the larger numbers of immigrants and continued contact with China we can surmise that less assimilation into local societies occurred.

By the 1740s, Chinese junk trade in Southeast Asia had reached the levels of about 110 per year found in the previous peak period of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the period from 1760 to 1840 is considered to be the boom years of the Chinese junk trade as the number of Chinese vessels engaged in trade reached unprecedented levels.<sup>54</sup> The center of the junk trade shifted from Batavia to Siam, which would maintain its

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<sup>53</sup> See Carl Trocki, "Chinese Pioneering in the Eighteenth Century Southeast Asia," in *the Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900*, Anthony Reid, ed. (New York and London, St. Martin's Press and Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997).

<sup>54</sup> For numbers of vessels, see Reid, "Flows and Seepages," p. 43 (citing Ng and Viraphol, who themselves derive the number 110s not from statistical evidence but rather a comment of a Chinese trade official based in Fujian). For the period 1760-1840 as a golden age for Chinese junks, see Reid, "Unthreatening Alternative," pp. 24-29. For a discussion of the commercial expansion in Southeast Asia from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Anthony Reid, "A New Phase of Commercial Expansion in Southeast Asia, 1760-1850," in *Last Stand of Asian Autonomies*, pp. 57-81.

position until the 1840s.<sup>55</sup> Chinese immigration to the region, particularly that of the lower economic class, continued steadily during this period.

What did the trends described above mean for Hoi An? We would expect that Chinese trade with Hoi An would reach a peak from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century through the early 1640s, then slow down from the 1640s to the 1680s during the early Qing period. We could then anticipate another surge in trade beginning in the 1680s with the recission of the trade bans, and possibly slowing down by the late 1710s, though the effect of the 1717-1727 bans on Vietnam itself is unclear. We would then expect another trade surge beginning in the 1740s and peaking from 1760 to the early 1800s. As we will see below in Part V, however, Hoi An did not always follow the general Southeast Asian pattern, especially after the 1760s. With respect to Chinese immigration, the above trends indicate that we can expect a Chinese trading presence in Hoi An after 1567, with immigration - mostly of traders and merchants - continuing steadily until the 1640s. The nature of immigrants perhaps changed during the 40 year period from the 1640s to the 1680s, as many were Ming loyalists fleeing the Qing. After the early 1680s we can expect another surge in immigrants, this time both traders/merchants and perhaps manual laborers. Thereafter we can anticipate another upsurge in immigration beginning in the 1740s as the junk trade reached another peak. Indeed, as we will see below in Part

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<sup>55</sup> See Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*; Jennifer Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2000); Reid, "Unthreatening Alternative," p. 26. The VOC was in decline by the 1740s, and the Batavia trade was further hurt by the 1740 massacre of an estimated 10,000 Chinese in the city. See Blusse, *Strange Company*, pp.139-40.

V, Hoi An did follow these general immigration trends, although the Chinese presence in Hoi An was seemingly dominated by traders and merchants.

## B. The Japanese.

We noted above how, at the same time the Chinese economy was peaking beginning in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese production of silver also began to increase dramatically as a result of new smelting techniques and exploitation of new mines. This increased production resulted in a tremendous jump in Japan's foreign trade, with silver serving as the primary export and silk as the primary import. This silk-for-silver trade, with copper becoming increasingly important by the second half of the 1600s, would characterize Japanese foreign trade until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Yet because of the continued Ming ban on direct trade with Japan, a large part of this silver-silk trade was carried out in ports outside of China and Japan - much of it in Southeast Asian ports, primarily Hoi An and Manila. In addition to silk, the Japanese also imported a number of Southeast Asian goods, such as deerskins, silk, sugar, aromatic woods, etc.

In the early 1590s, in a reaction against growing piracy, the Japanese government attempted to install some sort of order in the growing overseas trade by instituting the *shuin-jo* or "red seal" trading system. Only ships which were issued the red seal (these ships were called *shuin-sen*) were allowed to leave Japan and engage in trade



overseas (a red seal was issued to one ship for a single voyage).<sup>56</sup> As reflected in the 1601-2 correspondence between Nguyen Hoang and Ieyasu, the Japanese authorities actively encouraged trade and simultaneously took measures to ensure that overseas authorities were aware of this red seal system.<sup>57</sup> A review of the period between 1604 and 1635 (the system was abandoned after 1635) reveals that of the 356 red seals issued during this time, 87 or 25% were for central Vietnam (Hoi An), and 56 or 17% were for Philippines. Ships bound for Siam also claimed 56 seals, ships bound for Cambodia claimed 44 seals or 12%, those bound for Tongking claimed 37 seals or 10%, those bound for Taiwan claimed 36 seals or 10%, and those for Macao only 21 or 6%.<sup>58</sup> Thus Hoi An was the primary destination for the *shuin-sen* ships, accounting for one-quarter of the total ships; the next biggest destinations were Manila and Siam with 17% each.

One may wonder why Hoi An was a primary destination for Japanese ships given its much further distance from Nagasaki than both Macao and Manila; Innes suggests that, in addition to the large Chinese presence (thus making it easy to obtain precious Chinese silk), independent kingdoms such as Cochinchina were more receptive

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<sup>56</sup> Innes, *Door Ajar*, pp. 106-118.

<sup>57</sup> See also Seiichi, "Japanese Foreign Trade," pp. 9-10, and Innes, *Door Ajar*, Chapter Two, for more on Ieyasu's efforts to establish friendly relations and promote trade with other Southeast Asian countries. In spite of these measures, however, there were certainly unauthorized Japanese ships engaging in trade while the *shuin-jo* system was in effect. See Innes, *Door Ajar*, pp. 56 and 111.

<sup>58</sup> Figures from Innes, *Door Ajar*, pp. 57-9.

to the Japanese merchants than the European enclaves of Macao and Manila.<sup>59</sup> We saw earlier that Nguyen Cochinchina did indeed make concerted efforts to promote trade, especially with Japan. Another factor may have been the ability of the Japanese to obtain products from other parts of Southeast Asia in Hoi An (see section D below for a discussion of Hoi An as a regional entrepot). Similarly, the availability in Hoi An of local silk, though inferior in quality, as a substitute for Chinese silk may have attracted Japanese traders. Japanese suspicion of Europeans and missionaries may also have played a role, especially with respect to Macao, though as noted Manila was an important destination. For whatever reason, Hoi An was a major beneficiary of the Chinese silk - Japanese silver trade in the first half of the 1600s, and the Japanese presence (and influence) in Hoi An was at its apex during this period.

In 1630s and early 1640s, Japan initiated a series of measures that resulted in a withdrawal of the Japanese presence overseas and changes in Japanese trading practices. As Innes has shown, the reasons for these changes related primarily to internal Japanese politics (including Japanese distrust of resident Jesuits) and were not intended to result in a decrease in foreign trade. Indeed, although the nationalities of the traders would change, the levels of trade were not significantly altered by these changes, and trade levels maintained consistent patterns throughout most of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> In 1635, Japan imposed a ban on overseas travel - Japanese (including traders) could no longer travel or live overseas. In the same year, the Japanese limited Chinese traders to

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Innes, *Door Ajar*, Chapters Two and Four, especially pp. 420-32.

the port of Nagasaki with the Portugese; previously Chinese junks could trade all over Japan. At this point there were three main foreign nations trading in Japan (the English trading factory had closed in the early 1620s), all of whom were now confined to single ports: the Chinese and the Portugese in Nagasaki, the Dutch in Hirado. In 1639 the Japanese expelled the Portugese entirely and in 1641 the Dutch factory was relocated to Nagasaki, and thus by the early 1640s only the Chinese and the Dutch (both operating out of Nagasaki) were allowed to engage in trade with Japan. Chinese traders stepped into the void left by the restrictions on individual Japanese trading and the withdrawal of the Portugese. The Dutch also continued a steady and highly profitable trade with Japan, but Chinese traders accounted for the vast majority of the trade through the early 1700s.<sup>61</sup> Much of this trade continued to flow through Southeast Asian entrepots such as Hoi An.

By the middle 1680s, however, in part because of the tremendous jump in trade in 1684 after the rescission of the Chinese trade ban, the Japanese became concerned about the outflow of silver and copper (which by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century had become a major export) and began limiting trade. These measures began to make an impact after 1700 and culminated in 1715, with drastic declines in permitted trade and outflows of silver and copper.<sup>62</sup> The initial restrictions were on the value of goods the Chinese and Dutch were allowed to import. These measures were followed by

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. See also Appendix One.

<sup>62</sup> See Innes, *Door Ajar*, pages 319-62: Seiichi, "Japanese Foreign Trade," p. 13.

limitations on the number of vessels allowed to trade - 70 to 80 for the Chinese, only 3-7 for the Dutch. These numbers were further reduced in the early 1700s, and by 1715 the door was effectively shut, with the Chinese allowed only 30 junks per year of limited cargo value and the Dutch allowed only two ships, also of limited value.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, for much of the period under discussion Japan would have a direct impact on Hoi An and Cochinchina. Japanese contact and trade with Hoi An probably dates back to the last few decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the presence of Japanese merchants (if not residents) in Hoi An is evident by the early 1590s.<sup>64</sup> As we will see below in Part V, the Japanese maintained a significant presence in Hoi An for the first half of the 1600s, as Hoi An was their primary foreign trading port. Despite the withdrawal of Japanese traders in the 1630s, Hoi An would continue to play a major role in trade with Japan, as Chinese traders, many based in or stopping by Hoi An, would continue to service the Japanese trade. Although the Japanese were not nearly as visible in Hoi An by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Japanese still had a major influence on Hoi An and Cochinchinese economy because Japan was, until the late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century, a primary source of silver, copper and specie for Nguyen Cochinchina. As we have seen, the drying up of this source of bullion and specie resulted the shortage of coinage in the 1700s which had severe repercussions for the Nguyen regime.

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<sup>63</sup> Innes, *Door Ajar*, pp. 6, 319-62, Appendix One.

<sup>64</sup> See Vu Minh Giang, "The Japanese Presence in Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 135-6.

### C. The Europeans.

It was not just the Chinese and Japanese which were involved with trade in Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Europeans in the latter stages of the 1500s also began to make their presence felt in Southeast Asia. The Portuguese were the first to arrive in the region, taking Malacca in 1511, moving on to the spice islands of eastern Indonesia shortly thereafter, establishing a presence in Macao in 1557 and then a trading post in Nagasaki in 1571. The posts in Macao and Nagasaki proved especially fruitful with respect to the China-Japan silk-for-silver trade in which the Portuguese were heavily involved from the 1570s through the 1630s; this was the primary, as well as most profitable, area of Portuguese trade activity in the South China Sea. One commentator has even suggested that the Portuguese "were able to secure a more or less official monopoly of trade between the two countries"<sup>65</sup>, though this seems a bit exaggerated given the Chinese junk trade and the *shuin-sen* ships.

The Portuguese position in Asia suddenly atrophied in the late 1630s and early 1640s, owing in large part to the ascendancy of the Dutch. In 1635, the Dutch expelled the Portuguese from Taiwan. In 1639, the Portuguese were expelled from Nagasaki, which was a severe blow to their China-Japan trade. In 1641, the Dutch took Malacca, which left Macao as the only Portuguese stronghold east of Goa (the

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<sup>65</sup> See C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Sea Borne Empire, 1425-1825* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969) p.63: see also C.R. Boxer, "Macao as a Religious and Commercial Entrepot in the 16<sup>th</sup> and Seventeenth Centuries," *Acta Asiatica* 26 (1974), pp. 64-90.

Portuguese did maintain a fairly insignificant post in East Timor, which not until the 1970s would merit much attention). Thus by the second half of the 1600s, the Portuguese influence in Asia was waning, though they would continue to be active in trade. The Macao-Hoi An trade in particular would persist throughout most of the 1700s.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to trade in Hoi An, perhaps as early as the 1540s, and were certainly regular visitors to Hoi An beginning in the late 1500s.<sup>66</sup> There were permanent Portuguese residents in Cochinchina, most likely in Hoi An, perhaps as early as the 1580s, and trade was carried out by individual country traders (as opposed to a single company conducting trade on behalf of a country, such as the VOC). At least one, and perhaps two, Portuguese ship visited Hoi An annually from Macao for most of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>67</sup> With the Portuguese expulsion from

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<sup>66</sup> As cited in footnote 2, Pierre Manguin has written extensively in French on the Portuguese presence in Cochinchina, but these works unfortunately remain inaccessible to me. See *Les Portugais Sur les Cotes du Vietnam et du Campa* (1972) and *Les Nguyen, Macao et le Portugal: Aspects Politiques et Commerciaux d'une Relation Priviligee en Mer de Chine 1773-1802* (1984).

<sup>67</sup> See Chingho Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An (Faifo)*, (Carbondale, Illinois, Southern Illinois Press, Center for Vietnamese Studies, Monograph Series IV, 1974), p. 19; Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p.72, 88-9. Chen draws a fine line between a permanent trading factory as opposed to a permanent trading resident on the theory that since Portuguese trade was conducted by individual country traders rather than a united trading company such as the VOC or British East India Company, there could be no permanent factory (but there could be permanent resident individuals). For our purpose, it is sufficient to note that there was an established Portuguese presence in Hoi An. Curiously, George Souza in his English language study of the Portuguese empire, *The Survival of Empire:*

(continued...)

Japan in the 1630s, Portuguese traders were more likely to focus on trade with Southeast Asia, especially island Southeast Asia.<sup>68</sup>

The Portuguese impact on Cochinchina was manifested in two other ways in addition to trade. First, much of the weaponry acquired by Nguyen Cochinchina in their fight against the Trinh came from the Portuguese, initially from the Bocarro gun foundry in Macao (c. 1627-1680s) and then the Da Cruz gun foundry which was set up in Cochinchina (established sometime in the 1660s)!<sup>69</sup> It was in part thanks to Portuguese

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(...continued)

*Portugese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea 1630-1754*, (Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 1986), hardly mentions Portuguese trade with Cochinchina, suggesting that Portuguese trade with the Trinh was much more extensive. Manguin - see previous note - would undoubtedly be useful here. Souza further notes that the Portuguese rarely came to Tonkin after the 1660s (p. 119). An account of Cochinchina from 1642 indicates that 10 to 12 Portuguese came to Hoi An annually to trade, though presumably these gentlemen all came on one ship. See "A Japanese Resident's Account," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 32. The Poivre account of 1749-50 noted that there was a resident Portuguese trader in Hoi An, and each year one large Portuguese ship from Macao came bringing 'tutenag, tea, porcelain and other goods from China for use by the Cochinchinese." See "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 95. Robert Kirsop in 1750 noted the presence of the Portuguese trading factory as well as the cozy relationship the Portuguese seemed to have with the local government mandarins. See Kirsop, "Some Account of Cochin China," pp. 244, 247.

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Souza, *The Survival of Empire*, p. 87. Li Tana, citing Manguin, says four Portuguese ships arrived in Hoi An in 1651, and more in 1650, and suggests that Portuguese traded more with Cochinchina in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an alternative to Japan (*Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 89). This makes Souza's failure to explore Portuguese trade with Cochinchina all the more puzzling.

<sup>69</sup>

See C.R. Boxer, "Macao as a Religious and Commercial Entrepot," pp. (continued...)

cannon that the Nguyen were able to hold off the Trinh. Second, many of the Jesuits active in Cochinchina were also Portuguese. One commentator has suggested that there was an intricate relationship between missionary activity and the supply of weaponry from the Portuguese; when the guns and cannon "were slow in coming, the Nguyen brought pressure on the missionaries and threatened to expel them, relaxing the persecution when the coveted cannon arrived."<sup>70</sup>

The Portuguese lost their position as the dominant western power in Asia primarily because of the Dutch, who first arrived in Southeast Asia in the 1590s. With the consolidation of Dutch trading companies into the VOC in 1602, the Dutch presence in Asia grew rapidly. The Dutch captured the principal spice islands of eastern Indonesia in the 1610s, founded a trading factory in Hirado in 1609 (which was to move to Nagasaki in 1641), established Batavia (modern Jakarta) as their Asian headquarters in 1619, founded a trading post in Taiwan in 1624 (lost to Koxinga in 1662), established numerous trading factories in Southeast Asia in the 1630s, and as noted above generally wreaked havoc on the Portuguese, their European rivals in Asia. The Dutch made vigorous efforts throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century to break into the China trade, but ultimately

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<sup>69</sup> (...continued)  
78-9, and "Asian Potentates and European Artillery in the 16th-18th Centuries: A Footnote to Gibson-Hill," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malayan Branch*, Volume 38, Part 2 (No. 208, 1965), pp. 156-72, p. 167.

<sup>70</sup> See Boxer, "Macao as a Religious and Commercial Entrepot," p. 79.



were unsuccessful.<sup>71</sup> The Dutch, however, were very successful in breaking into the Japan trade after the exclusion of the Portuguese from Japan in the 1630s, and the Japan trade was the focus of Dutch economic activity in the South China Sea. The Dutch continued to benefit from this trade until the 1660s, when they lost their trading post in Taiwan and the Qing bans on trade began to be felt.<sup>72</sup>

Although the Dutch remained active in trading in the South China Sea for most of the 1600s, by the end of the century island Southeast Asia had become their primary focus. By late 1680s the Dutch realized that they would not be successful in the China trade; at roughly the same time, the Japanese started limiting trade and exports, which naturally did not forebode well for what had been the mainstay of Dutch activity in the South China Sea. The tremendous increase in Chinese trade and shipping beginning in the middle 1680s (after the Qing opened trade up again) perhaps also suggested to the Dutch the difficulties involved not only in breaking into the China market (especially given the lack of an independent, nearby base after the Dutch were expelled from Taiwan) but also in simply competing with Chinese shippers elsewhere. In addition, by the middle 1660s the Dutch were able to exercise an effective monopoly over the clove, nutmeg and mace trade, the production of which was based in the eastern

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<sup>71</sup> See John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China 1622-1681*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1974); Leonard Blusse, "No Boats to China: The Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635-1690," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, 1 (1996), pp. 51-76.

<sup>72</sup> See generally Blusse, "No Boats to China," and Seiichi, "Japanese Foreign Trade," pp. 14-18.

archipelago. Lastly, Batavia was thriving as a trading entrepot, especially after the Dutch took effective control over Banten in 1682, and the Dutch were increasingly drawn into the affairs of Java. These factors all pointed to the Dutch concentrating on island Southeast Asia.

Thus, Dutch trade in Vietnam should be seen primarily in the context of Japanese trade in that the Dutch used Vietnam to obtain Southeast Asian goods as well as Chinese goods to supply the Japanese market in exchange for Japanese silver. The Dutch established a factory in Tongking in 1637 (not coincidentally after the withdrawal of the Japanese from foreign trade in 1635) which lasted until 1700 and became the focus of Dutch trade in Vietnam. From Tongking the Dutch obtained prized silk to sell in Japan; this trade was at its zenith in the 1640s to early 1650s.<sup>73</sup> The Dutch relationship with Nguyen Cochinchina was uneasy at best. The Nguyen were irked by the close Dutch relationship with the north; the Dutch were irked by their inability to break into the trade at Hoi An (likely because of Japanese dominance in the 1620s and 30s) and Nguyen treatment of sailors and salvaged goods from shipwrecks.<sup>74</sup> The Trinh tried to use the

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<sup>73</sup> Blusse, "No Boats to China," p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p.73 and Appendix 3; Frederic Mantienne, "Indochinese Societies and European Traders: Different Worlds of Trade? (17th-18th Centuries)," in *Trade and Navigation in Southeast Asia (14th-19th Centuries*, Nguyen The Anh and Yoshiaki Ishizawa, eds. (Sophia University, Tokyo, L'Harmattan Inc., Paris, 1999), pp. 113-126, p. 118; "The End of Dutch Relations with the Nguyen State, 1651-2," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 33-7.

Buch has written extensively in Dutch on Dutch-Vietnamese relations during this time, but these materials remain inaccessible to me because of my inability to read Dutch. See W.J.M. Buch *Nederlander met Annam in*

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Dutch to vanquish the Nguyen, and indeed the Dutch were drawn into several military encounters with the Nguyen, but were severely routed in at least one encounter in 1643.<sup>75</sup>

The Dutch were in Hoi An as early as 1602, as evidenced by an account of frustrated Dutch traders searching for pepper in Cochinchina.<sup>76</sup> The Dutch established a trading factory in Hoi An from 1636 to 1641, and (after their disastrous military encounter of 1643) tried again in 1651, signing a commercial treaty with the Nguyen. The 1651 treaty allowed the Dutch to exercise "free and frank trade" in addition to establishing a trading factory in Hoi An; the Dutch were also granted the right of extraterritoriality and exemption of trade duties, perhaps indicating that the Nguyen were indeed serious in encouraging trade with the Dutch. The Dutch chose as the site of the factory the place where the original Dutch factory of 1636-41 had stood, which had apparently been owned by a Japanese who sold it back to the Dutch for 500 Japanese taels; the place was "a stone house and two neat godowns or warehouses, and well planted with all kinds of fruit trees...."<sup>77</sup> However, things quickly fell apart and the

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<sup>74</sup> (...continued)  
*de XVIIe Eeun* (1925) and *De Oost-Indische Compagnie en Qnam* (1929).

<sup>75</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, Appendix 3.

<sup>76</sup> See "The Trials of a Foreign Merchant - Letter by Jeronimus Wonderaer from Hoi An, 1602," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 6-26.

<sup>77</sup> See "The End of Dutch Relations with the Nguyen State," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 33-7.

factory only lasted until 1654.<sup>78</sup> The Dutch would not return to Cochinchina or Hoi An until the 1750s, an absence of almost 100 years.<sup>79</sup>

Of the other three European powers involved in Southeast Asia, none had much of a direct impact on Cochinchina during this period. The English were the most active in the South China Sea, and were interested primarily in developing the China trade and Japanese trade. However, for most of the 17<sup>th</sup> century their primary trading post east of India was at Banten, before they were kicked out by the Dutch in 1682. The English did establish minor trading factories in Hirado (1613-1623) and Tongking (1672-1697). The English also made efforts to open up trade with Cochinchina, but these efforts were all unsuccessful. The first attempt, a mission from the Hirado factory in 1613, ended in disaster when the chief trader, Tempest Peacock, was killed under mysterious circumstances. Richard Cocks, the head English factor in Hirado from 1615 to 1622, dispatched several more missions to Cochinchina, all for naught.<sup>80</sup> In addition, nothing came from 1695 mission headed by Thomas Bowyear, sent by the East India Company to open commercial relations and possibly establish a factory.<sup>81</sup> The English

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<sup>78</sup> Reid, *Age of Commerce*, p. 305; Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p. 22.

<sup>79</sup> See Mantiene, "Indochinese Societies and European Traders," p. 115 (citing Buch); Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p. 22 (citing Maybon).

<sup>80</sup> See *The Diary of Richard Cocks, Cape Merchant in the English Factory in Japan, 1615-1622*, (London, printed for the Hakluyt society, 1883), Volumes I and II.

<sup>81</sup> Alastair Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Hue: Narratives of Anglo-Vietnamese Diplomacy from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to the Eve of the French Conquest*, (London, England, Chatto & Windus, 1970), Part One. See (continued...)

did establish a factory in Pulau Condore for a few years in the very early 1700s, but this had little impact.

Beginning around the last decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, British trade with China began to pick up, a circumstance which likely contributed to the closure of their factories in Tongking and the failure of the post at Pulau Condore. By 1710, British trade was increasingly focused on Canton, and by the mid 1700s British country traders were common in the South China Sea. We can speculate that this increased British presence in the South China Sea, with Canton as the main Chinese trading center for foreigners, perhaps led to an increased presence of individual British traders in Hoi An as a way station (not as a primary market) for vessels en route to Canton. However, the British were at no time a significant presence in Hoi An.

The second remaining European power, the French, had little contact with Cochinchina until the 1700s and even then the French were more influential as missionaries rather than traders. The French made little effort to establish trade with Vietnam except for several missions in the mid 1700s, none of which produced results.<sup>82</sup> The final European power in Asia, the Spanish, were influential by virtue of their

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<sup>81</sup> (...continued)  
Part V, Section B below for more on Bowyear's visit to Hoi An.

<sup>82</sup> These missions were the Poivre mission of 1749-50 (see Part V, Section C below), which although a failure produced a wonderful description of Cochinchina (see "Description of Cochinchina, 1749-50," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp.60-97), and a mission in 1748 led by one Dumont (see Lamb, *Mandarin Road*, p. 61).

presence in Manila (established 1571), which became a thriving entrepot primarily as a result of the silver flowing in from America. Generally speaking, however, the Spanish paid little attention to their Philippine empire and did not trade to any significant degree anywhere else in Southeast Asia.

#### **D. Regional Trade Links.**

We have seen how Hoi An thrived as a trading port because of the Chinese silk-Japanese silver connection, and we will see below in Parts IV and VI how another feature of Hoi An which attracted foreign traders was its position as the center of local trade in central Vietnam and along the coast. In addition to these two factors, Hoi An also functioned as a regional entrepot for goods from other parts of Southeast Asia, which similarly drew Chinese, Japanese, European and other Southeast Asian traders to the port city. Buch, in his study of the Dutch in Cochinchina, cites Hoi An's position as a commercial entrepot with close links to other Southeast Asian countries as the main reason why so many Chinese traders came to Hoi An; goods from Palembang, Pahang, and Borneo could all be found in Hoi An.<sup>83</sup> Regional trade links with other areas in Southeast Asia were maintained throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Unfortunately, due to the lack of records the impact of this regional trade will likely never be fully known, but we can get some measure of this trade by examining some primary source material.

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<sup>83</sup> Cited in Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p.20, and Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p.69.

In the 1620s, the Jesuit missionary Borri noted that strangers come not only from "Tunchim [Tonkin], Cambogia [Cambodia], Chincheos [Ha Tien], and other neighboring places, but from the remotest, as China, Macao, Japan, Manilla, and Malacca, all of them carrying silver to Cochinchina, to carry away the commodities of the country...."<sup>84</sup> Another account of Hoi An from 1642 notes trade and goods from China, Siam and Laos, with annual visits from a Siamese ambassador.<sup>85</sup> In addition to ships from Japan and Canton, Thomas Bowyear, the Englishman sent to establish commercial relations with Cochinchina in 1695, also saw ships coming from "Siam, Camboya [Cambodia], Manilha, and of late from Batavia," each bearing goods from its place of origin.<sup>86</sup> Turning to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* lists duties on ships from Shanghai, Canton, Fujian, Hainan Island, Europe, Macao, Japan, Siam, The Philippines, Palembang, Ha Tien and Tongking, indicating that at some time or another ships from these places visited Hoi An. Le Quy Don also noted that the

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<sup>84</sup> See Borri's *Cochinchina* in Pinkerton, *A General Description of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels*, p. 795. Somewhat surprisingly, Borri's statement suggests that only silver was brought in from these various ports, and not other local products, but nevertheless it does demonstrate regional trade links. Presumably these Southeast Asian traders were bringing in silver to satiate Chinese demand, another indication of how much silver China was sucking in; also interesting is that the traders were bringing silver to Hoi An and not to China, indicating there must have been a number of Chinese vessels around to ship the silver from Hoi An to China. One also wonders if these Southeast Asian traders were trading for Chinese goods as well as Cochinchinese goods.

<sup>85</sup> See "A Japanese Resident's Account," in *Southern Vietnam under Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 31.

<sup>86</sup> See Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, pp. 52-3.

abundance of goods available in Hoi An is "why the Chinese like to come and buy goods to carry back." <sup>87</sup>

The above accounts clearly indicate that Hoi An was part of a larger regional trading network linking not only China and Japan but also Macao, Manila, Tongking, Cambodia (Pnom Penh), Ha Tien, Borneo, Laos, Siam (Ayutthaya), Malacca, Palembang, Pahang (Malaysian peninsula), and Batavia; this network may well have included Johor and Banten, both thriving regional ports at some point during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>88</sup> Who were these carriers of regional commerce? Three different

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<sup>87</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 116. Curiously, this list includes Japan, which means either that the list was very outdated or, more likely, that a few Chinese vessels were still plying the waters between Japan and Hoi An.

<sup>88</sup> From a geographical point of view, one would expect that Cochinchinese trade links with Southeast Asian countries/ports would be strongest with Tongking, Cambodia, Laos and Siam since they are the closest to Cochinchina. Nola Cooke has noted that by the 1670s the Nguyen rulers had severely restricted trade with Tongking. See Nola Cooke, "Commerce and Catastrophe: Cochinchina, Cambodia, and the Chinese in Modern Southern Vietnam During the Later Nguyen Lord's Era (c. 1680-1770)," unpublished MS, p. 12. Cooke also suggests that the Nguyen rulers by the 1670s did not allow their subjects to leave the kingdom without permission, a rule which limited trade to well-connected Cochinchinese (pp.12-13). A Vietnamese text dated 1810 lists six different routes to Siam, indicating the Vietnamese were quite familiar with Siam by then. See Geoff Wade, "A Maritime Route in the Vietnamese text '*Xiem-La-Qouc Lo-Trinh Tap-Luc*' (1810)," in *Trade and Navigation in Southeast Asia*, pp.137-170, and Li Tana, "The 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Mekong Delta in the Regional Trade System," unpublished MS. Li Tana indicates that trade with Manila began in 1620 and peaked in the 1660s, when four Cochinchinese junks per year went there (*Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 76, citing P. Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibriques*); trade with Batavia was also regular during the middle 1600s (p. 76), but seemed to  
(continued...)



types of regional traders are readily identifiable; there was undoubtedly some mixing between the three groups, especially groups two and three.

The first group is simply the traders from China who sailed annually to the Nanyang from their bases in China, most likely Fujian. This group includes two types: those whose primary destination was Hoi An, and those who simply stopped off in Hoi An on their way to and from Southeast Asia. Recall how in 1567 the eastern and western routes for Chinese ships were formalized, with approximately half the licensed vessels going on the eastern route and the other half taking the western route. This western route went right by the central coast of Vietnam, meaning that one-half of the vessels licensed to trade in the Nanyang (not to mention the unlicensed vessels) had to pass right by Hoi An. This is not to suggest that all these vessels did stop by, but simply to suggest that Hoi An was within easy striking range on both the departing and return trips, with no other major port in the immediate vicinity. Naturally, on the return trip these vessels would be carrying trade goods, news and perhaps even passengers from other Southeast Asian ports, thus maintaining regional connections.

The second, and perhaps biggest, group of regional traders were Chinese traders based in the various ports of Southeast Asia. This group either targeted Hoi An as their primary destination or stopped by Hoi An on their way to and from China and

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<sup>88</sup> (...continued)  
tail off after the 1680s (see Souza, *Survival of Empire*, pp. 136 and 140, noting that only five ships from Cochinchina - all Chinese - arrived in Batavia from 1684-1754).

Japan. Evidence for this can be found in the 1695 Bowyear account mentioned above; Bowyear noted that it was the Chinese who drove the trade in Hoi An, and that the junks from the various places listed - Japan, Siam, Cambodia, Manila and Batavia - *were all Chinese junks*. Bowyear also highlighted the various goods the Chinese junks brought to Hoi An from these other ports.<sup>89</sup> Another bit of evidence for this type of Chinese trader can be found in the records of junks from Southeast Asia arriving in Japan. Chinese traders were crucial links in Japan's foreign trade, particularly from the 1640s to the early 1700s, and many of these Chinese junks visiting Japan originated from Southeast Asia (see Part V, Section B below). Yoneo Ishii has translated a number of reports these Chinese *Tosen* vessels based in Southeast Asia made to Japanese authorities from 1674 to 1723. A look through these reports indicates that virtually all the vessels coming from Cambodia, Siam, Batavia and other areas passed by Cochinchina on their way to Japan, and a number of these ships actually stopped in Hoi An.<sup>90</sup>

In addition, Chinese immigration to Southeast Asia, as well as Chinese shipping to Southeast Asia, increased rapidly after 1567, and until the late 1600s most

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<sup>89</sup> See Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 52-3. Bowyear does not make a distinction between Chinese junks originating from China and those originating or based in Southeast Asian ports, but his description clearly suggests that these junks were based in Southeast Asia. See also Souza from previous note, indicating that the junks coming to Batavia from Cochinchina were Chinese.

<sup>90</sup> These reports also indicate that communication between Cambodia and Cochinchina was common. Unfortunately, none of the reports from Cochinchina to Japan are translated. See Yoneo Ishii, *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia: Translations from the Tosen Fusetsu-gaki, 1674-1723* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), especially pps. 69, 88, 131, 155, 165, 182-3, 197, and 225.

of these immigrants were involved in trade. Large, extensive Chinese trading networks formed across Southeast Asia with Manila (1570s-1640s), Batavia (1690s-1740) and Siam (post 1740) serving as the centers of the junk trade. There were numerous other, smaller ports in Southeast Asia which featured Chinese traders such as Pnom Penh, Ligor (Nakon Sithammarat), Pattani, Banten, Johor and ports along the north Java coast. As the reports translated by Ishii suggest, this network of Chinese traders, many based in Southeast Asia, undoubtedly functioned, *inter alia*, to maintain links between various parts of Southeast Asia. As we will see in Part V below, after the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Chinese were the dominant traders in Hoi An, and Hoi An was certainly a part of this larger network of Chinese traders in Southeast Asia.

The third group of regional traders were the indigenous peoples themselves - those from Vietnam<sup>91</sup>, Siam<sup>92</sup>, Java, and Malaya<sup>93</sup>. However, with the infusion of Chinese into Southeast Asia and the dominant role in trade that the Chinese

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<sup>91</sup> Li Tana notes the trade carried on by Cochinchinese in Manila, Batavia and Siam (there were also a number of Cochinchinese living in Siam) as well as the presence of small scale traders from Cochinchina; apparently the Nguyen rulers also traded directly with Siam (*Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 76-7). One of the reports translated by Ishii also indicates that a ship coming from Thailand rescued a Cochinchinese vessel somewhere in the Gulf of Siam in 1693 (Ishii, *Junk Trade From Southeast Asia*, p. 69). While the Vietnamese certainly excelled for centuries at fishing and other maritime activities along the Vietnamese coast, overall this international trade was most likely quite small, especially long-distance trade.

<sup>92</sup> For more on Siamese traders, and especially Siamese trade with China, see Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, and Cushman, *Fields From the Sea*.

<sup>93</sup> Javanese traders evidently died out in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, at least in the long distance sphere, according to Reid. See *Age of Commerce*, pp.281-85. Or did it? See discussion above.

rapidly assumed, it is difficult to tell to what extent this group was purely indigenous and to what extent it was made up of Chinese who assimilated into the local culture. For example, Jennifer Cushman, in her analysis of Siamese trade from the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, notes how most of the 'Siamese' traders were in fact Chinese, including those traders who acted on behalf of the royal family. This stemmed in large part from trade advantages China granted to Southeast Asian junks which looked "Chinese," met Chinese ship specifications, and carried mostly Chinese crew.<sup>94</sup> More importantly, the Chinese - whether 'pure' or somewhat 'mixed' with Siamese - had come to dominate Siamese foreign trade by as early as the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>95</sup> Another example of this 'fusion' phenomenon can be seen with respect to Javanese shipping. Anthony Reid has recently noted the remarkable integration of Chinese and Javanese traders and vessels which peaked before 1567, in effect suggesting that the Javanese traders who disappeared by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were mixed Chinese-Javanese.<sup>96</sup> Two patterns are suggested by the above. First, over the years, and

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<sup>94</sup> Cushman, *Fields from the Sea*, Chapters Two, Three and Five.

<sup>95</sup> Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p.23; Cushman puts it at the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *Fields from the Sea*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>96</sup> See Anthony Reid, "The Rise and Fall of Sino-Javanese Shipping," in Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia*, (Chiang Mai, Thailand, Silksworm Books, 1999). In discussing the hybrid nature of the 'junk', Reid builds on earlier work by Pierre Manguin which suggests that the typical junk found in Southeast Asian waters is actually a cross between a Chinese vessel and a Southeast Asian vessel. See Pierre Manguin, "The Southeast Asian Ship: An Historical Approach," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume XI, No. 2 (1980), pp. 266-79, and "The Vanishing *Jong*: Insular Southeast Asian Fleets in Trade and War (Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries), in Reid, ed., *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*.

especially after 1567, the Chinese -- pure or mixed - came to dominate shipping in Southeast Asia at the expense of indigenous shippers. Second, this dominance was more pronounced in long distance trade and shipping, thus pushing indigenous traders into local - short distance - trade and shipping.

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Hoi An was uniquely positioned to take advantage of the rapid increase in international trade which began in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Hoi An's strategic location along the trade route to China would, to a large extent, link its success directly or indirectly to the Chinese economy. Boosted initially by acting as a neutral trading station for the China-Japan trade, Hoi An in its early years was heavily influenced by both the Japanese and Chinese. The Portuguese and Dutch were also visible in the city as a result of their trading activities in Asia. As the 1600s wore on and Japan withdrew internationally, the Chinese became the most influential of all the foreign elements in Hoi An, reflecting the growing Chinese trade and influence throughout Southeast Asia. It has been suggested that the trade boom ended in the middle of the 1600s and did not pick up again until the middle of the 1700s, with the period in between one of crisis insofar as trade is concerned.<sup>97</sup> As we will see in Part V, although no comprehensive and reliable statistics are available, Hoi An's experience would seem to buck this pattern, as it seemingly continued to prosper throughout the period; the reason

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<sup>97</sup> Reid, *Age of Commerce*, Chapters One and Five; and Reid, "Flows and Seepages," pp. 42-8.

for Hoi An's continued prosperity likely relates to the increasing presence of the Chinese in the town after 1650 and the business activity they brought and fostered. Indeed, trade in Hoi An would peak in the 1750s, then dwindle to a virtual halt by the 1770s, just as trade in the rest of Southeast Asia was picking up again.

### PART III. A DAY IN HOI AN.

One can imagine the scene a foreign visitor to Hoi An in its golden age might see. Let's assume our visitor friend arrived during the trading season when Hoi An was most active. The trading season was determined by the monsoons; the winds from the northeast which brought Chinese and Japanese traders south to Hoi An generally blew in the beginning of the year from January to March/April; these ships would stay in port for several months until the winds from the southeast began blowing in June and July, at which time ships heading north would return home. Thus the primary trading season was in the first half of the year, and during this time the Hoi An harbor was teeming with ships from various countries, creating a fair-like atmosphere. Depending on the year, our visitor might see anywhere from 12 to 50 ships in the harbor, which may include Japanese ships, one or two Portuguese carracks or galliots, a large VOC trading ship, and perhaps even an English vessel. He would almost certainly be guaranteed the sight of numerous Chinese junks, as well as junks from various parts of Southeast Asia. There would also be a host of smaller craft in the water, such as prahus

and sampans, bringing goods from upriver waterways (an important means of transporting goods from the interior to Hoi An and from Hoi An to the interior) or plying back and forth between the larger ships and the shore.

If our visitor were lucky enough, he might be treated to the arrival of one of the big foreign trading ships. Depending on the size of the vessel, it may be towed part of the way up the river to Hoi An, which lies just a few kilometers from the South China Sea. After mooring across the river with the other ships, the captain or ship's representative would come ashore and present himself to the customs officials, perhaps - in the case of European vessels - bargaining for the price of the trade permit.<sup>98</sup> The next day the ship would be unloaded, either alongside the quay or by transferring cargo to smaller vessels. The cargo would be presented in one of the three customs houses, located next to each other in a compound approximately 100 yards wide. The middle customs house - the largest- was flanked by the two smaller house and would be filled with Vietnamese mandarins and customs officials, some of whom were Chinese. Soldiers would be standing guard watching coolies (perhaps slaves/debt bondsmen from the upland areas) bring the goods from the ship to the customs area. The goods would be carefully examined and puzzled over by the inspectors to ensure appropriate duties were paid and that goods presentable to the King would be set aside. Once cleared through customs, the buying and trading would begin.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> See Mantiene, "Indochinese Societies and European Traders," pp. 114-5, and Kirsop, "Some Account of CochinChina," p. 242.

<sup>99</sup> The description of custom houses and procedures can be found in  
(continued...)

What goods might our visitor see being bought and sold? From Japan, the primary goods were silver and copper (raw or in specie). From China, our visitor might see raw silk, a multitude of silk fabrics, other types of cloth, blue porcelain and chinaware, tutenag, white copper, copper, paper, tea, medicinal herbs and drugs, incense, clothing, shoes, writing brushes and ink sticks, needles, tables and chairs, and copperware.<sup>100</sup> Goods from Cochinchina itself included gold, calambac, eaglewood, other precious woods such as rosewood, ironwood and sappanwood, raw silk, various types of sugar (cane, white, brown), pepper, cotton, cinnamon, birdnests, ivory, areca and betel nut, indigo, cardamon, rhino horn, deer antlers, and various sea products such as sharks fin, shrimp and snail heads.<sup>101</sup> Goods found in Hoi An from other parts of Southeast Asia

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<sup>99</sup> (...continued)

Bowyear's 1695 account. See Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, pp.47-8.

<sup>100</sup> These products were noted by either Bowyear in 1695 (see Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 52), Poivre in 1750 (see "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 86), Kirsop in 1750 (see "Some Account of Cochinchina," pp. 244-5) or Le Quy Don in the mid 1770s (see "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records," *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 117, 120).

<sup>101</sup> These products were noted by either Borri in the 1620s (see *Cochinchina* in Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages*, pp.778-80), the Japanese Francisco in 1642 (see "A Japanese Resident's Account," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 28), Bowyear in 1695 (see Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 53), Poivre in 1750 (see "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 86, 93), Kirsop in 1750 (see "Some Account of Cochinchina," pp. 245-8) or Le Quy Don in the mid 1770s (see "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records," *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 117). The main products seem to have been gold, calambac and eaglewood, and then perhaps silk, sugar (which began to be exported in the 1620s, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 80) and other  
(continued...)



included saltpeter, sappanwood, lac, mother of pearl, elephants teeth, tin, rice (from Siam), gamboge (a gum), benzoin, cardamon, wax, sappanwood, buffalo hides, deer skins, elephants teeth, rhino horns (from Cambodia), silver, sandalwood, saltpeter, cotton cloth, vermilion (Batavia), and silver, brimstone, sappanwood, cowries, tobacco, and wax (Manila).<sup>102</sup>

Where were these goods destined? The main Japanese import, of course, was Chinese silk, but the Japanese also imported porcelain from China, silks, sugars, calambac, pepper, various woods, deerskins, and gold from Cochinchina, and numerous products - mostly animal skins (especially deerskins), horns, and pepper from other parts of Southeast Asia.<sup>103</sup> The Chinese products listed in the previous paragraph were

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<sup>101</sup>

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products, though there is no way to assess with any specificity the importance of any one product. Tome Pires as far back as the early 16<sup>th</sup> century noted that Champa (presumably central Vietnam) was known mostly for its calambac and to a lesser extent gold; Cochinchina (presumably he was referring to Tonkin, as he mentions silver, which is not found in Central Vietnam) was known for its gold, silver, silk and calambac. See *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, From the Red Sea to Japan. Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515, and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, (Reprinted in New Delhi, India, Asian Educational Services, 1990), Volume I, pp.12-15. The Dutch were buying pepper in Cochinchina as early as 1602 - see "The Trials of a Foreign Merchant, Letter by Jeronimus Wonderaer from Hoi An, 1602," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 6-26.

<sup>102</sup>

Cited in 1695 by Bowyear. See Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, p. 53.

<sup>103</sup>

See Innes, *Door Ajar*, pp. 64-6; Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 66 (citing Seiichi). Japan was apparently the primary overseas destination for the sugar grown in Cochinchina. See Innes, *Door Ajar*, pp. 504-18, and David Bulbeck, Anthony Reid, Lay Cheng Tan and Yiqi Wu, compilers, *Southeast Asian Exports Since the 14<sup>th</sup> Century: Cloves, Pepper, Coffee*

(continued...)

destined not only for Cochinchina but also for other parts of Southeast Asia (with Hoi An serving as a regional emporium for Southeast Asia). The Chinese imported virtually all of the products from Cochinchina and other parts of Southeast Asia listed in the previous paragraph.<sup>104</sup> As Hoi An served as a regional entrepot, we can also speculate that a number of goods from one Southeast Asian port - say Manila - ended up in another Southeast Asian country such as Cambodia. These exchanges would be effected through either barter - goods for goods- or in bullion or cash (silver and copper).

If our visitor could tear himself away from the sights of the harbor and walk down the main street which paralleled the river, he might walk through the bustling market in which local women, teeth stained red from betel nut, sold all types of vegetables, fruits and fish. He might sit at the market for a while and chew betel nut with the local traders; betel nut was often used in social occasions.<sup>105</sup> At one end of the main street he would come across the Japanese bridge; towards the other end he would find the Chinese and Japanese sections of town and the Japanese street. These sections of town, marked by brick houses and roads, would have been very different than other parts

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<sup>103</sup> (...continued)  
*and Sugar* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), pp. 107-117.

<sup>104</sup> See Poivre's 1750 account ("Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 86) and Le Quy Don's report from the mid 1770s ("Miscellaneous Nguyen Records," *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 117).

<sup>105</sup> See Borri, *Cochinchina*, in Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages*, p. 777.

of town, as most Cochinchinese and other local peoples lived in stilt houses. He might step into the Dutch trading factory or Japanese trading houses or hotels to check out the goods in storage; hotels were often rented out by the Portuguese and Japanese, with the front part used to conduct transactions and the back part used for sleeping and storage.<sup>106</sup> He might also peek into one of the many Chinese temples and assembly halls. He would likely run into numerous Chinese traders as well as Japanese and Portuguese residents of the city. He might catch an occasional glimpse of a Vietnamese mandarin with blackened teeth and long fingernails (a status symbol indicating that one did not work with his hands) or a Jesuit missionary, and he would probably see Chams and other minority groups and even some slaves from the uplands. Most of these people would be dressed in their distinctive garb and speaking their own language. If the visitor really had time on his hands, he could even visit some of the Japanese and Chinese graves scattered about the city.

#### PART V. HOI AN'S GOLDEN AGE: 1600 TO THE 1770s.

The description of Hoi An in Part IV, with a few changes here and there, could be appropriate for almost any year during the period 1600 to 1775, Hoi An's golden age. In this section, we take a closer look at Hoi An's golden years, dividing the era into three parts: the period from 1600 through the 1640s, the period from the 1650s

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<sup>106</sup> See Do Bang, "The Relations and Pattern of Trade between Hoi An and the Inland," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 149-158, p. 153.

through the 1720s, and the period from about 1730 through the 1770s. For each of these three periods, trade cycles, population estimates and descriptions of the city and its buildings and streets will be discussed. Unfortunately for the modern historian, apparently no population or shipping records kept by the local government have survived to the present. Consequently, in tracing the development of the city one is forced to rely almost entirely on accounts of the many foreign visitors to the area. Trade records maintained by the Japanese and various European trading companies are also very helpful, but there are no reliable and comprehensive records for Chinese trade activity, overall the biggest contributor to Hoi An's growth.

Before discussing the 1600-1650 period, brief mention should be made of Hoi An prior to 1600. Long before the Vietnamese began arriving in large numbers to the south in the late 1500s, Hoi An was part of the great Cham kingdom, one of the classic Indianized kingdoms of Southeast Asia. It is likely that the Cham capital of Tra Kieu (5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries) was located in the Thu Bon river system in the Hoi An area, and the capital city or another town in the Hoi An area served as one of the major Cham trading ports during this period. My-Son, one of the centers of Cham civilization, is located just a short distance from Hoi An, and many vestiges of Cham architecture and civilization have also been found in and around Hoi An. Little is known about the area after the Cham capital was forced south to Vijaya (modern Binh Dinh) in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but nevertheless the Hoi An area was no stranger to international trade when

Nguyen Hoang and his followers arrived in the area in the second half of the 1500s.<sup>107</sup>

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Hoi An seemed to awaken from its slumber and once again play a major role in trade. Recall that the Vietnamese annals in discussing the last half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century mention the abundant trade and the seaborne merchants who flocked to a city which was certainly Hoi An. Hoi An undoubtedly received a boost from the growing trade of the 'Age of Commerce', especially after 1567 when private Chinese commercial trade was authorized. We can speculate with a fair degree of certainty that there was a Chinese trading community in Hoi An by the last few decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As we have also seen, the Portuguese began trading in Hoi An as early as the 1540s and certainly by the late 1550s, and there were already a few Portuguese resident in the town by the mid-1580s. Similarly, the Japanese were already trading, and perhaps resident, in Hoi An by the 1580s/early 1590s.

In spite of this abundance of trade and contact with the outside world before 1600, the year 1600 has been chosen as our starting point for the simple reason that 1600 was the year in which Nguyen Hoang gave up his quest for the throne in the

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<sup>107</sup> Charles Wheeler has written a good account of the Cham kingdom and its relationship to the area where Hoi An is located. See Wheeler, *Cross-Cultural trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, especially Chapter Two. See also Kenneth Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press, 1985), Chapter Seven; Phan Huy Le, "Hoi An (Faifo) Past and Present," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp.17-22; and Tran Ky Phuong and Vu Huu Minh, ""Cua Dai Chiem (Port of Great Champa) in the 4th-15th Centuries," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp.77-81. See also Part VI, Section A below.

north and returned permanently to central Vietnam to concentrate on building his rule there.

**A. 1600 to 1650: Dynamism and Diversity.**

The period from 1600 to approximately 1650 was perhaps the most dynamic in Hoi An's history. Hoi An was in the middle of the lucrative Chinese silk-Japanese silver trade. There were established presences of both Japanese and Chinese in the city, and there was regular trade with both Japan and China. Portuguese vessels from Macao were regular visitors, as were the Dutch, who established and then closed two trading factories. Even as the influential Japanese population began to shrink by the end of the period, the Chinese population was rising as evidenced by the establishment of the *ming-huong-xa* (Ming village) in the late 1640s/early 1650s.

Perhaps the most famous account of Hoi An in this period was that of the Italian Jesuit Cristoforo Borri, who stayed in Cochinchina from 1618 to 1621. We have already highlighted some of Borri's comments on the trade scene in Cochinchina. In describing Hoi An itself, Borri further notes how

"The Chinefe and the Japanefe drive the chief trade of Cochinchina, which is managed at a fair held yearly at one of the ports of this kingdom, and lasting about four months. The Chinefe, in their vessels they call junks, bring the value of four or five millions in plate; and the Japanefe in their ships called fommies, an infinite quantity of very fine silk, and some other commodities of their country. The King has a vast revenue from this fair by cuftomes and imposts, and the whole country receives great profit....[t]he principal port to which all frangers report, and where the above mentioned fair is kept, is that of the province Cacchian; which has

two mouths from the sea, the one called Pulluchampello and the other of Turon, being at first three or four leagues distant from one another, but running in seven or eight leagues like two great rivers, at last join in one, where the vessels that come in both ways meet. Here the King of Cochinchina assigned the Chinese and the Japanese a convenient spot of ground to build a city for the benefit of the fair. This city is called Faifo, and is so large, that we may say there are two, one of Chinese, the other of Japanese; for they are divided from one another, each having their distinct governor, and the Chinese living according to the laws of China, as the Japanese do according to those of Japan."<sup>108</sup>

Borri goes on to note the use of silver and coins with holes in the middle (presumably Chinese) as mediums of exchange.

Alexander de Rhodes, another Jesuit missionary and the person generally credited with establishing *quoc ngu* - the modern form of written Vietnamese - lived in Cochinchina in 1625-26 and then off and on from 1640 to 1645, some of the time in Hoi An. Interestingly, Rhodes' account of his stay in Cochinchina indicates that missionaries were already occasionally banned from Cochinchina (as well as persecuted), and he had to be circumspect in his proselytizing, often able to preach at night only. He was sentenced to death in 1644 (he was held prisoner for 22 days in Hoi An, a place which he found "very convenient for Christians") but his execution was commuted and he was banished from Cochinchina in 1645. Rhodes described Faifo as a town "where much

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<sup>108</sup> See Borri's *Cochinchina*, in Pinkerton, *A General Description of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages*, pp. 795-6. It is hard to tell from the language, but Borri may have confused the Chinese and Japanese - it was the Chinese who brought silk and the Japanese who brought silver. Borri also refers to two entrances to Hoi An; one was by the Thu Bon river, which empties directly into the South China Sea, and the other was an inland waterway from Turon (modern-day Danang), some 25-30 kilometers north of Hoi An. The Danang-Hoi An waterway silted up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

trading is done by the Japanese, who have their headquarters and carry on their business there." The Japanese residents had their own Japanese governor, whom Rhodes claimed to have converted promptly. Rhodes noted the presence in Hoi An of Portuguese from Macao. He also described Cham province - likely the province encompassing Hoi An - as the site of heaviest trade with the Portuguese, Chinese and Japanese, where "anything you want can be marketed." At another point in his narrative, he referred to Faifo as "a Japanese town" and noted that several local women had married Japanese Christians.<sup>109</sup>

Yet another description of Cochinchina and Hoi An is available from a Japanese named Francisco (whom we have also encountered previously) who lived in Cochinchina for 10 years, most likely in Hoi An. Dated 1642 and prepared for use in a Dutch report, the account indicates that there were "40 to 50 Japanese in Faifo, none in the service of the king....[a]pproximately four to five thousand or more indolent Chinese, none in the king's service, reside in this country; these Chinese do not pay tribute which is the reason they stay here...." The account notes that 10 to 12 Portuguese come to Cochinchina each year and leave at the beginning of June (these were obviously traders in for the trade season who most likely stayed in Hoi An). The account goes on to describe the type of merchandise available in the country, and notes cannon from both

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<sup>109</sup> See *Rhodes of Vietnam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes in china and other Kingdoms of the Orient*, translated by Solange Hertz (Westminister, Maryland, The Newmann Press, 1966). The descriptions of Hoi An and quoted sections are found on pp. 80-2, 86, 163, and 172-3.



the Dutch and Portuguese. The Thu Bon River on which Hoi An is situated is also described in some detail.<sup>110</sup>

Another account, this one by William Verstegen, the head of the Dutch mission sent in 1651 to establish commercial relations, reported that there "are few streets in Pheij-pho; both sides of the main street which is running along the river, are flanked by fire-proof masonry houses. These houses are occupied by Chinese merchants and craftsman, except for the sixty or so which are occupied by the Japanese. Few Cochinchinese are seen in this city."<sup>111</sup>

These accounts indicate the presence of substantial communities of Japanese and Chinese living in Hoi An in the first half of the 1600s. There was enough of a population for each group to have its own quarter in town and to be the dominant players in the economy. Interestingly, each group had its own governor, who presumably kept the community in line and liaised with Vietnamese officials. Most accounts and commentary note that intermarriage between local women and Japanese and Chinese was common. Innes estimates the number of Japanese living in Hoi An (presumably before 1635) at around 300.<sup>112</sup> The drop-off to approximately 40-60 by the early 1640s described in Francisco and Verstegen's accounts is consistent with the 1635 Japanese ban

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<sup>110</sup> See "A Japanese Resident's Account," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp.27-32.

<sup>111</sup> Cited in Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> Innes, *Door Ajar*, p. 62 (citing Japanese sources).

on overseas travel. Yet despite the 1635 ban, the Rhodes account (1640-5) suggests that the Japanese were still very influential in Hoi An. Unfortunately, there are no precise numbers for the Chinese population. The Japanese resident's account described above noted that there were four to five thousand Chinese in the *country*; it would certainly be reasonable to assume that at least half of these Chinese were living in Hoi An, Hue being the only other center of Chinese population. If so, that would suggest that in terms of numbers, the Chinese population of Hoi An (say 2,500) dwarfed the Japanese population, even at the height of the Japanese population.

In spite of the large numerical superiority of the Chinese, the Japanese were very influential in the city as reflected in the various visitor accounts. The Japanese were influential enough to have cornered the silk market by the 1630s; the pricing of silk was at times determined by the movement of *shuin-sen* and the Dutch were often unable to buy silk as a result of Japanese control.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps this influence can be traced to the relative importance of Hoi An as a port to the Japanese (25% of the red seal trade from 1604-35); because Hoi An was so crucial to their trade, the Japanese presence in Hoi An may have been much more organized and deliberate than it otherwise would have been. As we have seen, Hoi An was not nearly so important to the Chinese trade as it was to the Japanese trade, and the Chinese government in Beijing overall paid little attention to foreign trade, letting traders fend for themselves. Consequently the Chinese presence in Hoi An was more individual-oriented and less organized and deliberate than the Japanese

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<sup>113</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 63 and 73.

presence. In any case, the general trend is one of decreasing Japanese influence by the end of the 1640s and increasing Chinese influence.

The presence of the Portuguese and Dutch added to the multicultural mix. Recall that the Dutch twice established trading factories in Hoi An (1636-1641, and 1651-4), short-lived as they were, and were frequent visitors until the early 1650s.

The accounts above also suggest that the Portuguese were frequent visitors, and we have already seen that there were several resident Portuguese. The European impact was increased also by the Jesuit presence, scattered as it was. Added to this mix were the traders - likely mostly Chinese but perhaps also indigenous traders - from other places in Southeast Asia.

Virtually all of the above accounts portray Hoi An as a thriving place of commerce open to practically any country. The Japanese were probably at the head of the pack of foreign traders before 1636, as Hoi An was the single most important port for the red seal trade. We saw in Part III that in the period from 1604 to 1635, 87 Japanese ships were licensed to trade in Hoi An, an average of three per year (and on top of this there was in all likelihood a number of unlicensed Japanese ships as well). Due to the Japanese ban on travel after 1635, the number of Japanese ships arriving in Hoi An thereafter shrank to almost nothing. The number of Chinese vessels visiting Hoi An during this time is unknown, but we know that out of 88 ships licensed to travel in the Nanyang in 1589, four ships per year were authorized to trade in Hoi An, a number that likely rose as the number of licensed ships reached 137 by the end of the 1590s. Added

to this were the Chinese vessels trading along the western route which stopped by Hoi An, as well as a number of unauthorized vessels (number undeterminable). A conservative estimate of Chinese vessels would be five per year; the number may have been as high as 10-12, and certainly varied from year to year.<sup>114</sup> With respect to European vessels, we saw in Part III above how the Portuguese arrivals in Hoi An averaged one to two vessels per year for most of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and how the Dutch were most active in Hoi An during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; therefore we can estimate that together the Portuguese and Dutch vessels during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century probably averaged two to three per year. Added to these numbers were vessels from Southeast Asia (including Chinese vessels based in Southeast Asia); again, no precise numbers are available, but we can reasonably estimate three to four per year (perhaps one each from Siam and Cambodia, and two from the island world).

In summing up the ship traffic for this period, one may conservatively estimate that from 13 to 21 foreign ships visited Hoi An each year during this period (three Japanese, five to ten Chinese, two to three European, three to four Southeast Asian). 13 per year is extremely conservative; it would not be surprising to find that the actual average was twice that. In addition, there was probably wide variance from year to year.

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<sup>114</sup> Reid, citing Chinese sources, says eight ships a year came (see Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change. c. 1400-1800," in *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, p. 467. Tsao claims that 17 Chinese ships were scheduled to come to Hoi An in 1622 and four in 1626, and five came in 1631 (see Tsao, "Chinese Overseas Trade," p. 444, citing various Dutch reports).

From the accounts described above, we can also get a sense of the layout of Hoi An. From the Verstegen report, we know that Hoi An's main street paralleled the river, which makes perfect sense given the role of water-based trade in Hoi An. Verstegen also notes that the main street was lined with "fire-proof masonry houses" occupied by Chinese merchants and Japanese. Presumably these houses were constructed from some sort of brick. These types of houses would naturally be occupied by Chinese, Japanese and other foreigners as the typical non-sinicized Southeast Asian usually lived in a house on stilts. There were likely a few of these stilt houses around also. Borri in his accounts notes that both the Chinese and Japanese had their own sections or quarters in the city. The location of these quarters, however, is debated.<sup>115</sup> (One wonders also how the Borri and Verstegen accounts square up: were the separate Japanese and Chinese quarters Borri described located along Verstegen's main street?) Ogura Sadao has argued that ancient Japanese scrolls dating from the period indicate there was also a Japanese street in Hoi An, which probably was what Borri meant by a Japanese section.<sup>116</sup>

There are numerous buildings and other physical markers from this period which still exist today. For example, the famous wooden Japanese Bridge (though obviously not the original) is a clear indication of the Japanese presence and dates from around 1650. There is also an extant stone steele with Japanese characters found in a

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<sup>115</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>116</sup> Ogura Sadao, "About Two Japanese Scrolls," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp.128-34.

cave near Hoi An which dates to around 1640 and suggests that Japanese ships continued to come to Hoi An after 1635. There are also two Japanese tombs dating from this period. Two Chinese temples - the *Cam-Ha* temple and the *Hai-Binh* temple - were constructed next to each other around 1626. The gate from the *Hai-Binh* temple, now known as *Ba Mu* temple, is still extant.<sup>117</sup>

#### B. 1650 to the 1720s: The Chinese Take Over.

The period from 1650 to about 1730 in Hoi An was marked by the ascendancy of the Chinese, which more than made up for the diminished presence of the Japanese. As we saw in Part III, the fall of the Ming Dynasty in China in 1644 triggered a mass exodus of Chinese from the homeland to the southern seas. So great was this migration that sometime in the late 1640s or early 1650s the *minh-huong-xa* or Ming village was established in Hoi An. Most of these Chinese were from the southern coastal areas such as Fujian, Zhejiang or Guangdong and were in some manner involved with trade.<sup>118</sup> The Chinese of the Ming village were allowed to maintain their own customs and traditions and were not forced to assimilate with the local population, though there surely was some integration.<sup>119</sup> The establishment of the Ming village was testified to by the construction of two Chinese temples, the *Quan-Thanh* temple (also known as Chua

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<sup>117</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp. 62-3, 71, and 93-4; Vu Minh Giang, "The Japanese Presence in Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p. 136.

<sup>118</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, Chapter Three.

<sup>119</sup> See Nguyen Hoi Chan, "Some Aspects of the Chinese Community," p.118.

Ong) and the *Quan Am* temple (devoted to the Buddhist goddess of mercy). A framed wooden tablet with Chinese characters found at the *Quan-Thanh* temple actually refers to *minh-huong-xa* and is dated 1653; a stone inscription found at the *Quan-Than* temple and dating from 1753 says both temples were established over 100 years previously. The *Quan Am* temple is likely the place where the Chinese monk Da Shan stayed in 1695 (see Section B below).<sup>120</sup> These temples, built side by side, can still be visited today.

The increased presence of the Chinese in Hoi An led to the involvement of a number of Chinese in local government matters. We have already seen in the Borri account how even in the period 1600-1650 the Chinese had their own governor and were self-governing; Chinese participation in government seems to have expanded beyond this governor position in the second part of the 1600s. For example, the epitaph of one Khong Thien-Nu dated 1695 indicates that he was "in charge of commanding various countries' vessels and supervising newly arrived as well as residing Chinese merchants..." The position mentioned on the epitaph was that of *cai-phu-tau*, a high ranking staff position within the government bureau responsible for customs, trade and immigration which was often held by Chinese from the Ming village or Chinese merchants residing in Hoi An. The inscription of another Chinese, Chau Ky Son, dated 1694, indicates that he held the position of not only *cai-phu-tau* but also *noi vien*, or advisor/counselor to the Nguyen rulers; this position was apparently granted to Chinese who were closely related economically to the Nguyen. Yet a third epitaph, this one dating from 1691, indicates that the deceased held the position of *cai-phu* itself, a post presumably higher

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<sup>120</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp.40-2, 59-62, 78-9.

than *cai-phu-tau*.<sup>121</sup> In addition to these official positions, Chinese - and Japanese-merchants also acted in unofficial capacities for the Nguyen by conveying correspondence from the Nguyen to Japan and to ports in Southeast Asia.<sup>122</sup>

The two primary foreign accounts of Hoi An during this period both come from 1695-6. The first is that of Thomas Bowyear, the Englishman we encountered earlier who headed a mission in 1695-6 from the British East India Company to establish commercial relations with Cochinchina. Bowyear's report, dated April 30, 1696, was actually written from Hoi An. Bowyear described Hoi An as follows:

"This Foy Foe is about three leagues from the bar, a street by the river side with two rows of houses to the number of 100 or thereabouts inhabited by the Chinese, except for four or five families of Japanners who, formerly, were the chief inhabitants and ruled the trade of this port; but they being diminished and impoverished, the trade is now driven by the Chinese, with ten or twelve junks yearly at least, viz. from Japan, Canton, Siam, Camboya, Manilha, and of late from Batavia. The Jappan junks are not constant, nor do they return directly since the prohibition of the exportation of silver by the Emperor of Jappan; but dispose their Jappan cargo in China and bring other goods with such a quantity of copper as sufficeth the market...."<sup>123</sup>

The account also notes, somewhat surprisingly, that the "Japanners" were still active in trade, particularly trade involving gold.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, pp. 47-8, 121, 123.

<sup>122</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 71.

<sup>123</sup> See Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 51.



Several things are of interest from the above account. First is the number of Chinese junks - at least 10 to 12 - which visited Hoi An each year. Second, the efforts by Japan to limit the export of silver and specie were having an impact. It is also interesting how the junks went from Japan to China and brought back copper - reflective of the increasing need for copper and specie in Cochinchina after Japan began limiting its exports. Third is the suggestion of the Japanese and Chinese populations. The Japanese, the former "chief inhabitants" and "rulers of trade," had seen their population shrink to four to five families. Surprisingly, there were only 95 or so Chinese families; there were surely more than that, and one explanation may be that these numbers (both Japanese and Chinese) were limited to those who lived on the main street. (Another note of interest, already discussed in Part III, is the origin of those vessels - Japan, Canton, Siam, Cambodia, Manila and Batavia.)

The second account is from the Chinese monk Da Shan who also visited Cochinchina in 1695. Da Shan was apparently invited to Cochinchina by the Nguyen ruler to teach Buddhism, although his real motives may have reached beyond this.<sup>125</sup> Da Shan described Hoi An as follows:

"Hoi An is a big sea port, a meeting place for merchants from many countries. The main road, three to four leagues long [1.5 to 2 kilometers], runs along the bank of the river; it is bordered on both sides by

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<sup>125</sup> Li Tana says Da Shan was there to teach Buddhism (see *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 55). Charles Wheeler suggests his reasons for coming may have been economic as well; see Charles Wheeler, "Patterns of association in the *Haiwai Jishi*: Trans-Regional Perspectives on Seventeenth Century Dang Trong," unpublished MS presented at the 2001 Conference of the American Historical Association, January 5, 2001.

closely built houses inhabited by people who came from Fujian. They wear the clothing of the previous dynasty [the Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644]. Most of the women take care of the commercial dealings. Chinese residents generally married many local women in order to facilitate their negotiations. The street ends at the Japanese bridge, in other words Cam Pho; on the other bank, at Tra Nhieu, foreign vessels [are] moored. The population density is very high; all day, people buy and sell vegetables, fish, fruits, and shell-fish. Here, one can find medications which do not exist in the capital, Thuan Hoa. The city is close to the sea on three sides - to the east, south and north; to the west, a mountainous region, a road links Tay Viet (western Vietnam) to Dong Kinh (Tonkin); a type of garrison to defend against foreigners is about ten leagues from the city...."<sup>126</sup>

The existence of the foreign merchants from many countries, the bustling market where one can obtain drugs that could not be obtained in the capital, and the population density all convey the feeling of a thriving port, similar to Borri's description some 70 years earlier and Bowyear's description the same year. Interestingly, in contrast to Bowyear's narrative, there is no mention of Japanese residents in Da Shan's account. The positioning of the garrison is also interesting; it is not located in town, which might have intimidated foreign traders, but it is not too far away either in case trouble should flare up. The account also noted that there was a rice shortage and Hoi An had to import rice from other districts.<sup>127</sup>

Both the above accounts also suggest that Hoi An was well on its way to becoming a town dominated by the Chinese by the mid 1690s. Bowyear noted how the

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<sup>126</sup> Text taken from Nguyen Dinh Dau, "The Birth and Historic Evolution of Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p. 118.

<sup>127</sup> See "A Chinese Buddhist Report, 1694-5," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 58.

Chinese were now the drivers of trade, having replaced the Japanese, and most of the ships that came from Asia to Hoi An were Chinese. Da Shan's account also suggests that the Chinese from Fujian who still wore the clothing of the Ming dynasty dominated the town. We saw in Part III above how Chinese foreign trade and immigration to Southeast Asia shot up after the rescission of the trade ban in 1684, and thus it is not surprising to find in Hoi An in the mid-1690s that the Chinese had come to dominate trade. This phenomenon is also evidenced by the epitaphs of various Chinese we examined earlier - those epitaphs, which indicate high government positions in matters of trade, also date from the early to mid 1690s. There are numerous other Chinese tombs from the 1680s and 1690s, still extant today, which also attest to the growing Chinese presence.<sup>128</sup> The Bowyear account suggests that the Japanese still retained a small presence by the end of the century; another indication of the Japanese presence earlier in the period is the construction in 1670 of a Japanese temple (*Matsumoto Dera*) in Hoi An by a resident Japanese merchant.<sup>129</sup> Yet the Chinese presence in Hoi An, fueled by the overthrow of the Ming dynasty in 1644 and then by the opening up of shipping in the early 1680s, seemed to continue to grow. The two assembly halls of *Phuc Kien Hoi Quan* (Assembly Hall for the Fujianese, 1690s) and *Trung Hoa Hoi Quan* (Assembly Hall for Maritime Commerce, c.1720) built during this time also attest to increased Chinese presence in the 1690s and into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp.122-5.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 16-7.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 63, 65, 68-70.

As with the 1600-1650 period, shipping and trade figures are difficult to determine. We know that Chinese junks based in Hoi An were fairly active in overseas trade, as they stepped into the void in the Japan-China trade left by the withdrawal of the Japanese and Portuguese vessels in the 1630s. Figures compiled by Li Tana indicate that a total of 636 Chinese junks visited Japan from ports in Southeast Asia from the period 1650 to 1720; 202 or 32% of these came from Cochinchina (presumably all from Hoi An). Siam was Hoi An's closest competitor with 138 or 22%, followed by Cambodia with 105 or 17%, Batavia with 86 or 14% and Tongking with 56 or 9%.<sup>131</sup> For Hoi An, this was an average of roughly three Chinese junks per year departing for Japan. Li Tana's figures indicate that there was a significant decrease after 1700, which one would expect given the Japanese policy changes beginning in the 1680s and culminating in the almost complete shutdown in trade in the 1710s. If we subtract the 1700s from Li Tana's calculations, we find that 182 Chinese junks from Hoi An visited Japan from 1650 to 1700, an average of 3.6 per year. Thus Hoi An remained closely linked to the Japan-China throughout the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This linkage undoubtedly was a significant contributor to Hoi An's status as an entrepot, as it likely meant a continuing influx of vessels from both China and Southeast Asia bringing goods to Hoi An to supply the Japanese market.

What about foreign vessels visiting Hoi An? The Manchu ban on Chinese shipping from the mid 1660s to the early 1680s would have limited shipping to some

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<sup>131</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 68, citing Japanese sources. Reid, in *Charting the Shape* (p.95), cites similar, though not exact, figures.

extent, although as we saw in Part III a number of vessels from the Cheng empire continued to trade with Southeast Asia during this period. We also have seen how Chinese trade in Southeast Asia took off in the mid 1680s, though again no figures are available. The Bowyear report indicated that by the mid 1690s at least 10-12 Chinese junks per year from various places came to Hoi An. Chen estimates that of those 10-12, six to seven were directly from China (the others coming from Japan and Southeast Asia), and citing reports from Chinese junks notes that in 1690 18 junks came from China, in 1697 eight junks came from China, and in 1699 only three junks came from China.<sup>132</sup>

The trade picture for the first two decades or so of the 1700s is murky, as there is neither sufficient trade data nor any foreign accounts of Hoi An. Whitmore suggests that the "commercial situation of Hoi An appears to have suffered" in the first three decades of the 1700s.<sup>133</sup> If so, part of the reason perhaps related to the drastic decline in trade with Japan, especially after 1715; on the other hand, this may also have meant an increase in Chinese vessels coming to Southeast Asia as an alternative to Japan. Another contributing factor may have been the increase in duties in the late 1600s (see

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<sup>132</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp. 24-5 (citing Chinese and Vietnamese sources).

<sup>133</sup> Whitmore, "Vietnam and the Monetary Flow," pp. 384-5. However, Cheong says Chinese trade with Cochinchina from 1715 to the 1740s "remained unimpaired, having been spared prohibition in 1718. The gold it brought attracted the interest of the Europeans in the 1720s and 1730s..." W. E. Cheong, "The Age of Suqua, 1720-1759: the Early Hong Merchants," in Karl Haellquist, ed., *Asian Trade Routes*, (London, England, Curzon Press, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1991), pp. 217-230, p. 225-6.

Part II above). Yet a third may have been the Ching bans on Chinese trade and travel from 1717-27; while Vietnam was excluded from these bans, a decrease in overall trade would certainly have hurt Hoi An's standing as an entrepot as well as a stopover point for Chinese vessels following the western route. Perhaps any decline Hoi An suffered was also due simply to the overall decline in trade from the mid 1600s to the mid 1700s as noted by Anthony Reid. However, until more information is unearthed, the trade picture for the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century will remain unclear.

Given the overall lack of data, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions regarding Hoi An's trade from the 1650s to the 1720s except in general patterns. Trade likely suffered somewhat from 1650 to the early 1680s due to the Qing trade bans. Trade with Japan, carried out by Chinese traders based in Hoi An, was robust, averaging 3.6 departures per year until 1700. Trade may have peaked in the early-to-mid 1690s; there were anywhere from eight to 18 junks arriving from China, with perhaps five to six per year from Southeast Asia. Aside from the Portuguese (one to two ships per year), trade with the Europeans was minimal for the entire 75 year period. For the early-to-mid 1690s, we can estimate that from 14 to 24 foreign vessels visited Hoi An annually, slightly higher than the 13 to 21 estimated for the period 1600-50. For the first quarter of the 1700s, trade may have leveled off or simply declined; there is not enough information to draw a firm conclusion.

**C. 1730 to the 1770s: Boom and Bust.**

The period from the 1730s to the 1770s witnessed a surge in activity for Hoi An as trade, fueled by the Chinese junk trade, reached its all-time zenith in the 1740s and 1750s. The Chinese population of Hoi An continued to soar along with the trade; by the 1740s, Hoi An was clearly a Chinese town. However, by the end of the period, trade had declined for a variety of reasons, and the disruption and destruction caused by the Tayson rebellion in the 1770s through the end of the century ensured that Hoi An would never regain her former glory.

Chingho Chen cites three reasons for the pickup in trade beginning in the 1730s and its dominance by the Chinese.<sup>134</sup> First, beginning in the early 1670s there was peace between the Trinh in the north and Nguyen Cochinchina, a peace that was to last until the mid 1770s when the Trinh again came south and took the Nguyen capital as the Nguyen were distracted by the Tayson rebellion. This peaceful period meant that neither side needed foreign assistance such as weapons provided by the Europeans and became less tolerant of the more rigid European ways, creating openings for the Chinese. (However, if this were true, would not trade have surged beginning in the years immediately after the early 1670s rather than in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?) Second, the development of the Co-Hong system of trade in Canton in the first part of the 1700s led to the concentration of the European trading companies in Canton. In the

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<sup>134</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp. 25-6.

large market in Canton the Europeans could obtain products from Vietnam (which were brought from Vietnam by Chinese junks) as well as China, thus obviating the need to make the trip south. (However, the Europeans, as we have seen, were only marginal to Hoi An's development.) Third, the drastic reductions in trade imposed by the Japanese in 1715 which limited the number of Chinese junks trading in Japan to about 30 per year forced many Chinese junks to look to Southeast Asia for trade. (This seems to be a more likely explanation.) Li Tana cites two other reasons for the trade boom: first, Cochinchina's openness to trade with China and use of Chinese as trade intermediaries and government officials, and second the relative cheapness of Chinese goods compared with western goods.<sup>135</sup> (One might also add that the Chinese goods were probably more appropriate for the Vietnamese markets than western goods, though no doubt many western traders were engaging in "country trade".) Although these factors perhaps contributed to the increase, perhaps the best explanation for the jump in Hoi An's trade during this period is that it coincided with the beginnings of the economic expansion in Southeast Asia and boom in junk trade which peaked from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century into the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For whatever reason, trade in Hoi An seemed to be booming by the 1740s, though once again our information comes mostly from foreign accounts. Pierre Poivre, a Frenchman who lived in Cochinchina in 1742-3 as a missionary, was sent back in 1749 on an official French mission to establish trade. Poivre claimed that as many as 60 junks from various Chinese ports visited Hoi An each year. J. Koffler, a foreigner

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<sup>135</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 71.



who lived in Cochinchina from 1740 to 1755 (initially as a missionary and then as physician to the king), noted that "[e]very year, there are about 80 Chinese junks coming to trade from various ports. Considering that the vessels keep coming also from Macao, Batavia and France, you may understand the prosperity of commerce in this country."<sup>136</sup> These estimates of the number of Chinese junks visiting Hoi An - from 60 to 80 annually - dwarf the estimate of 10 to 12 Chinese junks provided by Bowyear in 1695 *as well as* the previous *total* estimates of 13 to 20 ships per year for 1600-1650 and 14-24 ships per year in the 1690s. In addition to these numbers of Chinese junks, there were still European vessels that were visiting Hoi An regularly; the Portuguese were still sending one to two each year, the Dutch resumed trade in the early 1750s, and the English and French were beginning to get in the game. There would also have been the regular visitors from ports in Southeast Asia (though by the mid 1700s many of these were probably Chinese junks and likely included in the numbers for Chinese junks).

An account from one of the ship's officers on the 1749 Poivre mission noted that there were only two cities in Cochinchina: Hue, with a population of 60,000, and the second city of Hoi An. Hoi An is described as

"a port for Chinese *sommes* [junks] and local boats. Vessels from Europe can anchor in the harbor in the fine season; but when the monsoon comes, they are obliged to go and anchor in the Bay of Turon [Danang] four lieues away where they are safe. Faifo is the place in Cochinchina where most trade takes place during the season. It is the depository for all the merchandise from China and the country. This is a small city densely populated especially by Chinese who carry on a large trade....

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<sup>136</sup> Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p. 26 (citing Poivre's memoirs and Koffler).

....[Hoi An] is the entrepot shared by all these goods. It is on the banks of a large river which flows into the sea two lieues away. The Chinese junks and local boats berth easily and enjoy the convenience of loading and unloading alongside the quay. This city is the residence of Chinese agents and all merchants of the kingdom who do business there. At that time all sorts of goods from China for use by the Cochinchinese are to be found, and in addition the pick of the choice goods peculiar to the country. There is no comparison between the trading season and the other seasons of the year. As soon as it is finished, the Chinese junks leave and the merchants go home."<sup>137</sup>

In addition to a resident Portuguese trader, the account further noted that there was also an English trader living in Hoi An. The account also suggested that the missionary presence in Cochinchina was significant. Interestingly, the account noted how the Chinese "carry out the sounder part of the trade of the whole kingdom, and know the place better than the Cochinchinese do," and described how the Chinese exploited the "ignorance of the Cochinchinese, who are primitive and unable to reap the benefits which exist in their country."<sup>138</sup>

Robert Kirsop, the English trader we have previously encountered who visited Hoi An in 1750, also noted how the "Chinefe have the greateft thare of the Trade of Cochin-China...." His description of Hoi An was not especially flattering:

"The Town of Faifoe is little more than one very long narrow Street, barely leaving room for a row of Houfes, on that fide next the River, the beft, built on purpofe to let to the Chinefe Traders, are on the oppofite side, which will fetch from 200 to 500 Quans a Seafon; there are other

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<sup>137</sup> See "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 77 and 94.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 81-5, 95-6.

smaller, though commodious enough, that may be had for 8 or 12 Quans a Month."<sup>139</sup>

As for population, Koffler reported that only Chinese traders and Cochinchinese were living in Hoi An (apparently Koffler did not meet up with the Portuguese trader and the Englishman) and that there were about 30,000 Chinese in all of Cochinchina. An anonymous account written in the mid 1740s stated "[u]sually there are about 6,000 Chinese living in this town [Hoi An]. They are all wealthy merchants married to local women...." Yet another anonymous account written in the early 1780s asserts that there 10,000 "married and taxpaying Chinese" living in Hoi An in 1750.<sup>140</sup> These latter two estimates of the Chinese population in Hoi An in the mid 1700s are the first accounts which try to quantify the number of Chinese in Hoi An; none of the previous accounts cited directly addressed this question. Added to the numbers of Chinese was an expanding missionary presence (especially French) as well as foreign traders.

The increased Chinese population was of course reflected in the construction of new temples and assembly halls and the renovation of old ones. A fascinating stone memorial in Chinese was added in 1741 to the *Trung Hua Hoi Quan* (Assembly Hall for Maritime Commerce). The inscription enumerates the rules and

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<sup>139</sup> Robert Kirsop, "Some Account of Cochin China," pp. 244 and 249.

<sup>140</sup> The estimates were all cited in Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p.18. Chen claims the increase of 4,000 Chinese from the mid-1740s to 1750 was related to a series of new measures undertaken by the Nguyen ruler which presumably promoted economic development and encouraged trade, especially with China.

regulations of the assembly hall and provides a wonderful look into the life of Chinese merchants in Hoi An. The regulations stipulate that each Chinese junk visiting Hoi An should make a donation of three *ly* to the assembly hall for general use; a close accounting of the funds will be maintained. (Judging by the regulations, this money was used mostly (i) to help shipwrecked merchants and merchants who were forced to stay in Hoi An after the end of the trading season, (ii) to help the sick and pay for burial expenses, and (iii) presumably for maintenance and upkeep of the hall.) The hall will provide quarters and a food allowance for shipwrecked merchants, the food allowance limited to three months. If a merchant falls sick, he is allowed to stay indefinitely at the hall. "Rogues and imposters" who do not work but "indulge themselves in gambling, opium-taking and robbery and the like" are not allowed to stay at the hall. If a newcomer marries a local woman who becomes pregnant, the baby needs to be registered with the assembly hall (date of birth, name of father and mother, and father's native place in China should all be recorded) so that the "baby may have proof of his identity when he grows up."<sup>141</sup>

Yet this surge of trade in the 1740s and 1750s was to prove ephemeral; within a few short years after reaching these incredible heights, trade was on the decline, and within 20 or so years much of Hoi An would be destroyed. The best source of information on Hoi An and Nguyen Cochinchina in general for the 1770s is the impressive commentary produced by Le Quy Don, the Trinh scholar/official sent down

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<sup>141</sup> See Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp. 95-8 for the text of the inscription.

to the south after the Trinh occupation in 1774.<sup>142</sup> Le Quy Don was intrigued by Hoi An and the wealth it provided: quoting a Chinese trader (date uncertain), he notes that Hoi An is a place of such abundance "that seemingly nothing cannot be obtained there; it is superior to all the other ports of Southeast Asia. The goods come from Thang Hoa, Dien Ban, Quy Nhon, Quang Ngai, Binh Khang and Nha Trang, carried by ships, boats and horses, by land and by sea, and assembled in Hoi An.... The goods are so abundant here that even a hundred large ships could not carry them all away from here." As impressed with the wealth and trade of the south as he apparently was, Le Quy Don also recognized that trade at Hoi An by this time was much smaller than before, and notes that in 1771 only 16 ships came to Hoi An, in 1772 only 12 ships came, and in 1773 only six ships came.<sup>143</sup> Thus by the early 1770s trade at Hoi An had clearly suffered a precipitous decline from its height some 20 years previously, even as the junk trade in Southeast Asia was entering its peak period from about 1760 to the 1820s. We noted previously the likely reasons for this decline: royal extravaganza, monetization of the economy, a severe cash shortage, a misguided domestic coinage minting program, severe inflation, refusal of traders to use the new coins, and ill-timed increases in shipping duties all fed off each other to reduce foreign trade in dramatic fashion.

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<sup>142</sup> Le Quy Don was sent down south in 1776 to help restore the civil government. He stayed six months and wrote the *Phu Bien Tap Luc*, which is a six volume compilation describing life in the south - a sort of "historical guidebook," as Woodside suggests. See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, and Woodside, "Central Vietnam's Trading World," in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*. Woodside provides an excellent overall analysis of Le Quy Don's report.

<sup>143</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 116.

The Tayson rebellion, which broke out in the early 1770s, provided the proverbial nail in the coffin for both Nguyen Cochinchina and Hoi An. Much of Hoi An, along with the rest of the country, was destroyed during the course of the outbreak. Charles Chapman headed a British mission sent to Vietnam in 1778 to investigate the Tayson rebellion and resulting war and determine if the British could use the war for both political and commercial gain. His description of Hoi An reflects the devastation which so quickly befell the town:

"On arriving at Faifo we were surprised to find the recent ruins of a large city; the streets laid out on a regular plan paved with flat stone and well built brick houses on each side. But alas, there was not little more remaining than the outward walls within which, in a few places, you might behold a wretch who formerly was the possessor of a palace sheltering himself from the weather in a miserable hut of straw and bamboos. Of the few edifices left standing was a wooden bridge built upon piles over a narrow arm of the river with a tiled roof. The temples and their wooden gods were no further molested than in being robbed of their bells which I understand the present usurper had seized for the purposes of coining them into money."<sup>144</sup>

The surviving bridge referred to was most certainly Hoi An's famous Japanese bridge. The account also indicated that there was a continuing shortage in coinage, as temple bells were melted into coins.

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<sup>144</sup> See Lamb, *Mandarin Road to Old Hue*, Part II; quote from p.105. Chapman indicated that Danang would be the best place to set up a trading factory (pp.134, 136).

## **PART VI. HOI AN IN THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT.**

Thus far we have examined Hoi An in its role as an international entrepot. We have seen how Hoi An during its golden age was the product of the two converging forces of a surge in international trade and a newly established state searching for an economic means of survival. In this Part VI, we examine more closely Hoi An's role in the context of Vietnam and Nguyen Cochinchina. We first look at Hoi An's function as a center of local trade. We then look at Hoi An's role in the fostering of economic development within Nguyen Cochinchina, and we conclude with a discussion of the political importance of Hoi An.

### **A. Center of Local Trade.**

We have seen how merchants from a variety of places - China, Japan, Europe, and Southeast Asia - came to Hoi An to exchange their goods with each other as well as with the Vietnamese. Another lure for these traders, especially for those whose ultimate destination was China or Japan, was the availability of local products, because Hoi An, in addition to and as part of its role as an international entrepot, also served as a local trade entrepot, attracting goods from all over Cochinchina, the highland areas of modern Laos and Cambodia, and the Trinh-ruled north Vietnam. These goods were channeled down through Hoi An and eventually made their way to various overseas destinations. We can also speculate that many of these goods were 'consumed' internally on their way to Hoi An. For example, it is quite likely that a variety of products

which came from the mountain areas such as eaglewood and aromatic woods were used by the Cochinchinese themselves before reaching Hoi An.

Hoi An's role as a local center of trade was made clear in a number of accounts from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First, as the account from the Poivre mission of 1749-50 noted:

"the Cochinchinese come down from the mountains bringing choice goods like silks, raw silk and eaglewood, in girdles or rattan baskets tied to both ends of a flexible and pliant bamboo cane which they put over their shoulders and the weight of which they distribute evenly to make the load easier to carry. The village and aldeas [areas?] located along the coast or within reach of rivers convey the bulky goods such as rice, sugar, pepper, iron, etc., by water. *The city of Faifo in the province of Thiam is the entrepot shared by all these goods* [italics added]."<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, as we saw in Part V, Le Quy Don's *Phu Bien Tap Luc* some 25 years later quoted a Chinese trader who noted that

"such an abundance of goods can be carried from Quang Nam that seemingly nothing cannot be obtained there....*goods come from Thang Hoa, Dien Ban, Quy Non, Quang Ngai, Binh Khang and Nha Trang* [all areas or ports in Cochinchina], *carried by ships, boats and horses, by land and sea, and assembled in Hoi An* [italics added]. That is why the Chinese like to come and buy goods to carry back. The goods are so abundant here that even a hundred large ships could not carry them all away from here."<sup>146</sup>

It may be useful to review the types of local goods traded in Hoi An as a prelude to discussing how these goods actually came to Hoi An. The various accounts

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<sup>145</sup> See "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 94.

<sup>146</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p.116.



of trade in Hoi An indicate that there was a wide variety of local goods available in the town which can be divided into roughly three groups. First, there were the goods from the forest and highland/mountain areas, such as calambac, eaglewood, other precious woods such as rosewood and ironwood, skins and horns, and other forest products. Second, there were cultivated goods such as silk, pepper, sugar and cotton, which presumably came for the most part from the settled lowland areas under Nguyen control (see B below for more on this). The third broad category of goods were marine products, such as sharks fin, shrimp, and birdnests (which obviously came from the coastal areas or islands).

Given the types of goods available as well as the various descriptions we have of internal commerce, it appears that these goods arrived in Hoi An through three primary means: first, via the sea along Vietnam's long coastline, second, by river, and lastly, to a much lesser extent, overland.<sup>147</sup> Each of these means is considered below. The use of water routes - river and sea- is particularly important due to the nature of central Vietnam's geography, which is characterized by a fairly narrow coastal strip, with the South China Sea to the east and mountains running north-south to the west. These mountains, which are difficult to traverse by land, are crisscrossed by numerous rivers (most of which empty into the sea), which provide the primary means of east-west

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<sup>147</sup> Although I was quite aware of the importance of the coast and river as a means of conveying goods, I acknowledge Charles Wheeler's discussion of these three routes in *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks* pp. 55-60. Wheeler's coinage of the term 'Vietnamese coastal highway' seems particularly appropriate. He also highlighted the importance of overland routes, which given Vietnam's geography would seem to be much less important than the water routes.

transport and communication. As rivers allow for east-west intercourse, the South China Sea allows for north-south intercourse. As many historians have noted, the features of central Vietnam - the geographical dominance of difficult-to-traverse land, of the numerous crisscrossing river systems, and of the sea itself - are similar to the geography of the Malay part of Southeast Asia, notably Sumatra.<sup>148</sup>

From the Poivre and Le Quy Don accounts we can get a sense of the importance of the coast and the sea in delivering local products to Hoi An. The Poivre account noted how the villages and areas along the coast were critical to the conveyance of goods to Hoi An; Le Quy Don's description highlighted how goods came to Hoi An by sea from various coastal areas and seaports along the coast. It is evident that the coast and sea were vital to the conveyance of the three types of goods in three distinct ways. First, the 'coastal highway' (to use Wheeler's term) was a critical link for goods from the upland areas which were first transported along river systems to points along the coast (more on this below) and then were transported up or down the coast to Hoi An. Second, the coastal highway allowed for goods from the various areas along the coast, as well as goods from North Vietnam, to reach Hoi An.<sup>149</sup> Third, the sea was the source

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<sup>148</sup> See Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, pp. 41-5, for a good discussion of the geography of Central Vietnam. See also Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development*, pp. 12-15 and Chapter Seven, for more on river systems and central and south Vietnam.

<sup>149</sup> For more on the trade between the Trinh North Vietnam and Cochinchina, see Do Bang, "Relations between the Port Cities in Dang Trong and Pho Hien in the 17th-18th Centuries," in *Pho Hien: The Center of International Commerce in the XVII-XVIII Centuries*, (Hanoi, Vietnam, Gioi Publishers, 1994), pp.195-203.

of the marine goods sold in Hoi An's market. Indicative of the importance of the coast and sea to Cochinchina was the size of the merchant fleet of Cochinchina which plied the coast in 1768 - 447 vessels.<sup>150</sup>

River systems were another critical means of transport of goods to Hoi An. We can distinguish between two categories of river systems with respect to Hoi An's trade. First, as suggested above, river systems both to the north and south of Hoi An were critical because they provided the means by which forest products such as calambac reached the coastal areas from the mountains. Le Quy Don once again provided an interesting description of this trade in *Phu Bien Tap Luc*. He noted how the Cam Lo River, located north of Hue in today's Quang Binh Prefecture, served as a major trade link between Vietnam and various places in Laos (which in turn were linked to places in Thailand): "Cam Lo village of Dang Xuong county was upstream of Dieu [Ao] Giang [today's Cam Lo River], which leads to Cua Viet [Viet Harbor] downstream and upstream to Ai Lao [Laos], so all the barbarians went upstream to the kingdoms of Lac Hon [Savannakhet] and Van Tuong [Vientienne], and to the prefectures of Tran Ninh [on the Laotian border of modern Nge An province] and Quy Non [Nge An province]." (Place names provided by translator). He also noted the numerous tollgates and taxes payable on goods passing through the river. He then described the trade which took place along the river - the traders from other places (presumably Vietnamese from the coast) who brought salt, fish sauce, dried fish, ironware, copper pots, silver hairpins and

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<sup>150</sup> See Do Bang, "The Relations and Pattern of Trade between Hoi An and the Inland," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An* (pp. 149-158), p.150.

bracelets in exchange for miller, chickens, ox, hemp, wax rattan, mulberry bark, cloth, curtains, and rice from the 'barbarian people' (presumably the people living in the area and/or highlanders).<sup>151</sup> Another important river system, this one south of Hoi An, was the Ba River, with the town of An Khe serving as a key trading center along the river; this system connected Cambodia and the trans-Mekong basin to the Vietnamese coast at Quy Non and was a primary conduit for calambac and other luxury goods as well as non-luxury goods such as betel nut.<sup>152</sup>

The second 'category' of river system is the Thu Bon itself, the system along which Hoi An is located. The Thu Bon system was the primary river system of Central Vietnam and had the largest water capacity of any river system in Central Vietnam. Thus the Thu Bon penetrated deeply into the mountains of Central Vietnam and provided a direct link from the uplands to Hoi An; it also spread throughout Quangnam. Hoi An was located close to the sea, not far from two major river crossings of Ban Thach and Cua Dai. These and other river crossings in turn linked Hoi An to a number of waterways which ran close to or parallel to the coast and linked Hoi An to other important ports such as Danang. As Wheeler describes, by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was an extensive system of taxation along the Thu Bon system, and the focal point of the *riverine trade* was not Hoi An but Cho Cui, about 10 kilometers

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<sup>151</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp. 110-2.

<sup>152</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 122-3.

upriver from Hoi An.<sup>153</sup> Thus, goods from the mountains and other places upriver were gathered at Cho Cui and then sent along down river to Hoi An; in return, goods from overseas and other parts of Vietnam were collected in Hoi An and sent upstream.

The above description of the Thu Bon and other river systems in Central Vietnam closely resembles Bennet Bronson's model of riverine-based polities in the Malay world.<sup>154</sup> Bronson describes a riverine polity whose center is a port located near the mouth of a large river system. By virtue of its strategic location, the port is able to control movement of people and goods along the river, which is the prime means of transportation for this type of geographical area. The polity's ability to act as a gatekeeper of riverine traffic for the entire system as well as a middleman (between the hinterlands and foreign traders) keeps the polity's finances running smoothly and provides economic benefits to those upstream who provide the critical trade goods (such

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<sup>153</sup> See Vu Van Phai and Dang Van Bao, "Geomorphical Features of Hoi An and its Neighborhood," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p.57, Tran Ky Phuong and Vu Huu Minh, "Cua Dai Chiem (Port of Great Champa) in the 4th-15th Centuries," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p.80, Tranh Quoc Vuong, "Geo-Historical Position and Geo-Cultural Identity of Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p. 35-6, and Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, pp. 57-8. Wheeler provides the most complete description of the Thu Bon system.

<sup>154</sup> See Bennett Bronson, "Exchange at the Upstream and Downstream Ends: Toward a Functional Model of the Coastal State in Southeast Asia," in *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Prehistory, History and Ethnography*, Karl Hutterer, ed., Michigan Papers on Southeast Asia, 13 (Ann Arbor, 1978), pp. 39-52. See also Jan Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: A Consideration of the Theories and the Data," in *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde* 151, 2 (1995), pp. 235-287, especially 269-72.

as forest products) so sought after by foreign traders. This flow of wealth not only maintains loyalties and security but also ensures the continual flow of trade goods from the hinterlands to the port. As the more distant upstream areas were the source of these goods, relations with the more distant upstream areas are more egalitarian and less coercive than might be thought (conversely, the closer upriver another area is, particular river junctures which serve as trading points, the more likely it is for coercion to be featured in the relationship). Indeed, trade - both with upstream areas as well as with other river systems and internationally - is critical to the survival of the polity, since it has few agricultural or other resources under its direct control. This type of polity obviously requires the existence of an overseas center, or foreign traders, to purchase the goods sourced from upstream. The natural rival of this type of polity is its neighboring river system, as both are competing for trade revenue. Expansion beyond the river system is accomplished

"by subordinating (through a combination of force and inducement) - but not absorbing- their neighbors, forming hierarchies of ports under a dominant ruling family. The major threats to the stability of these states were the defection of outlying areas under the leadership of local datu or ambitious younger sons of the dominant ruling family, instability of relations within the court, and economic weakness caused by a decline in trade or smuggling. The size and complexity of port states of this type depended to a large degree upon the wealth passing through the hands of the ruler, since this wealth was normally converted directly into political power through generosity to clients and the maintenance of personal armies."<sup>155</sup>

Kenneth Hall has convincingly applied this model to central Vietnam in his description of the various Cham polities and their economic and political relations

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<sup>155</sup> Wisseman Christie, "State Formation," p. 271.

with other entities in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>156</sup> Recall also that the Cham capital from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (as well as a major trading port - possibly the same city) was in the Thu Bon River system in the Hoi An area. The Hoi An of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries has many of the same characteristics as the polities described in the Bronson/Hall model, suggesting that Hoi An was one of a long line of riverine polities based in central Vietnam along the Thu Bon river. Perhaps the most glaring difference between Hoi An of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and these previous riverine/port centers is that Hoi An never served as the political capital of the polity (see Section C below).

Returning to our discussion of transport of goods, the Poivre and Le Quy Don descriptions also indicate that another means of transport was overland, sometimes even by road. Overland routes likely were used where water routes were not available, at least in the upland areas. Certainly goods had to be carried overland to the various rivers before they could be sent via river downstream to the sea. We can perhaps speculate that overland routes were more likely to be used for shorter distances, whereas water routes were more likely to be used for longer distances. Roads also paralleled some of the river systems as well as the coastline<sup>157</sup>, and we can also speculate that roads were located - and used - far more in the settled, lowland areas than in the upland areas.

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<sup>156</sup> See Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development*, Chapter 7.

<sup>157</sup> Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, pp. 58-60. Wheeler provides the best description of overland routes that I have found.

Who exactly were the merchants involved in this local trade? The primary accounts and secondary literature do not provide much information on this point, but we can speculate that it was likely a combination of highland peoples, local peoples, Chams, Vietnamese, and later, as the period wore on, the Chinese.<sup>158</sup> If we think of local trade from a spacial or geographic perspective, we can posit two general suppositions. First, with respect to trade involving the highlands (east-west trade), the closer to the coastal areas and Hoi An the trade occurred, the more likely that the trade was carried out by Vietnamese; conversely, the closer to the highland areas the trade was, the more likely that it was carried out by highlanders, locals and Chams. This makes sense given the overall Vietnamese inability (or reluctance) to penetrate the mountain areas, which largely remained the preserve of highland peoples. We saw from Le Quy Don's description of trade with uplanders that apparently Vietnamese were trading directly with the "barbarians"; presumably the extent of Vietnamese traders' penetration westward into the highlands varied according to the river system. Li Tana has suggested that the Chams played the crucial role of middlemen in trade between Vietnamese and uplanders,

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<sup>158</sup> This discussion risks a protracted and ill-advised venture into the definitions of 'Vietnamese', uplanders, locals and Chams. Indeed, as noted in Part II, many historians have suggested that a new identity of 'being Vietnamese' was being created as part of the *nam tien*, an identity which mixed many of these groups. I hope to keep the discussion sufficiently abstract to avoid delving into this tricky area. In addition, the following discussion neglects the role of women in local trade. See Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, pp. 142-9 for a discussion of the role of women in both local and international trade.



especially trade involving calambac; this role can be attributed in part to the long and close relationships between the Chams and uplanders.<sup>159</sup>

The second supposition is with respect to north-south trade along the coast. We saw earlier how the Hoi An area had long been involved in international trade, even before the Vietnamese began arriving in great numbers around the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This meant that the Chams and other local peoples were well versed in trade matters, and we can expect to see significant involvement in trade by Chams and other locals at the beginning of the 1600s. We can also speculate that as more Vietnamese came south over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the more likely it was that Cham and other local traders were displaced. As the Vietnamese push westward was limited by the mountains and thus *nam tien* was directed southward along the coasts and into the Mekong Delta area, we can further speculate that Vietnamese displacement of Cham and other local traders was much greater along the coasts and southward than was Vietnamese displacement of local traders in the highlands.

Another consideration with respect to local trade is the role of the Chinese. We can suppose that as the period wore on and the Chinese presence in Cochinchina continued to expand, the Vietnamese traders themselves were to some extent- but not entirely - replaced by the Chinese. Chinese penetration into local trade

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<sup>159</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 123-5. Interestingly, Li Tana notes that one of the three brothers who led the Tayson rebellion was a betel nut trader in the An Khe area (the gateway between the Quy Nhon commercial region (south of Hoi An) and the trans-Mekong basin region) who traded primarily with uplanders.

is a natural extension of the Chinese dominance in international trade. We can further speculate that Chinese displacement of Vietnamese traders was more likely to occur along the coast and lowland areas. The extent over time and space of the Chinese penetration of local trade and the displacement of Vietnamese traders, however, will likely remain an open question due to the lack of data. One piece of evidence we do have comes from the 1750 account of the Poivre mission, which in passing notes that "there are many of them [Chinese] in the interior of the country and as far as Cambodia, Champa and Laos... the Chinese consequently carry out the sounder part of the trade of the whole kingdom, and know the place better than the Cochinchinese do."<sup>160</sup> Chinese penetration and domination of local trade markets in central and especially south Vietnam would be virtually complete one hundred years later.

On the other hand, perhaps one indication of limited Chinese involvement in local trade was the apparent lack of any revenue farms awarded to Chinese in Cochinchina during this period. Revenue farming was a common feature of other parts of Southeast Asia during this time, both in areas under indigenous control such as Thailand and parts of Java, but also in areas under colonial control such as Dutch Java.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 85.

<sup>161</sup> See Blusse, *Strange Company*, Chapter Five; Leonard Andaya, "Interactions with the Outside World and Adaptation in Southeast Asian Society, 1500-1800," in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume I*, Nicholas Tarling, ed. (Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, 1994) pp. 347-8; Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c. 1400-1800," in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume I*, p. 497.

Awards of revenue farms are intricately linked to knowledge of and involvement in local trade, as there is no reason to award someone a revenue farm if the person has no knowledge of the local system. Although we know the Chinese held some important positions in government relating to trade and likely controlled much of the international trade out of Hoi An, there is no mention of revenue farming (opium farming, tax collection farming, etc.) in any of the literature relating to Cochinchina during this period with respect to the Chinese or any other group (it was common after 1802 and under the French, with most of the awards going to the Chinese).<sup>162</sup>

#### **B. Role in Economic Development.**

It is clear that the trade fostered by Hoi An resulted in great economic growth and development in Cochinchina. Demand from the international entrepot trade spurred the production of local agricultural products, the collection of forest and marine products, and even the production of small-scale manufactured goods, from all over Cochinchina. Trade also fostered the growth of services supporting trade, such as the construction of houses, hotels and rest houses, ship maintenance and repair facilities, to name but a few, both in Hoi An and along key trading points which fed into Hoi An. This section explores some of the ways in which Hoi An as a major trade entrepot contributed to the economic development of Cochinchina.

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<sup>162</sup> Wheeler does suggest that some of the royal monopolies were farmed out to relatives and local traders, but does not provide enough information to determine if this type of farming approximates the revenue farming with which we are concerned. See footnote 16 above.

We can begin this closer examination by again focusing on one of the types of local goods sold in Hoi An - cultivated agricultural products such as silk (and also silk products, which require silk cultivation), sugar and pepper, each of which were cultivated throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These crops all require a certain amount of land and care to grow. Although the actual acreage of land planted and the tonnage of crop produced will never be known, the amounts were significant enough so that we can say with certainty that trade forces did foster commercial crop production.<sup>163</sup> Thuan Hoa - the area of Central Vietnam which today is roughly Quang Binh and Quang Tri - was a major source of pepper.<sup>164</sup> Mulberry trees were grown and silkworms raised in the area stretching from Hoi An south to Qui Nonh (in today's Binh Dinh province), which along with Quang Ngai was a well-known as a silk producing area; many mulberry trees were grown along rivers. Similarly, sugar was grown in the same general area, and Quang Ngai in particular was well-known for its sugar.<sup>165</sup> Thus, in all of these areas, land

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<sup>163</sup> For example, Li Tana has estimated that foreign (primarily Japanese) demand for sugar resulted in at least a doubling of black sugar production in Cochinchina from the early 1640s to the early 1660s. Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>164</sup> According to the report of Jeronimus Wondaer, the Dutch merchant searching for pepper in Cochinchina in 1602, Thuan Hoa was the source for most of the pepper he attempted to buy. See "Trials of a Foreign Merchant," *in passim*, in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*. Le Quy Don in 1776 also noted that pepper - but practically nothing else - was available in Thuan Hoa. See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 116.

<sup>165</sup> See Phan Dai Doan, "Hoi An and Dang Trong," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 160-70; see also "Description of Cochinchina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 90, and "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam*

(continued...)

was settled and cultivated so crops could be grown. This naturally gave rise to new villages and hamlets to house the cultivators of these lands.

Production of these crops also resulted in economic specialization. For example, production of silk requires not only the growing of mulberry trees but also the growing and nurturing of silkworms. Production of silk (and cotton) fabrics requires further specialization such as spinning and weaving. Le Quy Don noted that numerous villages specialized in silk weaving:

"There was a settlement called Thai Van southeast of Phu Xuan River, between the three villages of Son Dien, Duong Xuan and Van Xuan. This settlement was divided into three hamlets, and each hamlet consisted of ten households, each of which had fifteen weavers. It was said that a remote ancestor of these families came from the prefecture of Thang Hoa, Quang Nam. He learnt weaving from the Chinese and the skill was passed on from generation to generation. They could weave coloured silk, gauze, damask silk, brocade and all kinds of beautiful silks."<sup>166</sup>

He goes on to note how many of these silk producing areas actually paid taxes in the form of silk bolts. Similarly, Li Tana has described the specialization necessary in the production of sugar. Different households were involved in growing the sugar cane, processing the cane into juice, and refining the juice into white sugar. In addition, because sugar was stored in urns, the increased sugar production also stimulated the

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<sup>165</sup> (...continued)  
*under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 121.

<sup>166</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 121.

growth of the urn industry.<sup>167</sup> We can imagine that similar economic specialization and growth took place with respect to virtually every product that was marketed in Hoi An.

Economic growth and development must also have occurred not only with respect to the goods traded but also with respect to trade-related activities. The shipbuilding industry provides a good example. Waterborne vessels are required for two reasons: first, to venture to the sea to collect and transport to Hoi An the marine products sold in the market, and second to transport via river and sea various products from the mountains and other parts of Cochinchina to Hoi An. As noted in Section A above, river and sea transport were critical to the movement of goods to Hoi An, and the shipbuilding industry must have grown tremendously as trade grew (recall that in 1768 there were 447 vessels in Cochinchina's merchant fleet). Hoi An itself was a center of barge construction and has long been known for its particular wooden sailing barge with Cham and Malay features; there are villages around Hoi An which specialize in the making of this barge.<sup>168</sup>

Another example of trade-related development was the growth of various local trading points along rivers and the coast which fed into Hoi An such as Tam Ky and Nuoc Man.<sup>169</sup> As these towns grew and became local centers of trade, trade-related

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<sup>167</sup> Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 84.

<sup>168</sup> See Nguyen Boi Lien, Tran Van An and Nguyen Van Phi, "Hoi An-Quang Region's Wooden Barges," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 86-9.

<sup>169</sup> See Phan Dai Doan, "Hoi An and Dang Trong," in *Ancient Town of Hoi*  
(continued...)

activities such as inns, guesthouses, food supply, and boat repair and maintenance must also have developed. We can speculate that the number of smaller settlements along the rivers and coast which supported trade activities was for all intents and purpose innumerable. Similar to what we saw above with respect to trade leading to the clearing and settlement of new lands for agricultural production, in this case trade led to the growth of small towns which served to support trade.

One unfortunate side effect of this growth in commerce and increasing economic specialization may have been diversion of labor away from rice production in central Vietnam to more lucrative crops. This, and perhaps to a certain extent a shortage of land suitable for rice cultivation, resulted in central Vietnam's being forced to rely on rice imports from Cambodia and Siam in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Mekong Delta area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>170</sup> This dependence led to a number of crises and shortages of rice, such as when Cambodia limited rice exports in 1636. In addition, when in the 18<sup>th</sup> century rice production began to take off in the Mekong delta area and central Vietnam became dependent on it for rice, the Nguyen rulers were forced to become more involved in the southern region, which was not yet under their firm control. Transport of rice to central Vietnam became a major concern, and demands by the government on provinces in central Vietnam - notably Quy Nhon - to address this problem may have been too high and contributed to the Tayson rebellion.

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<sup>169</sup> (...continued)  
*An*, p. 172.

<sup>170</sup> See Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp. 84 and 144-48. This discussion of the rice trade is taken from her account.

Commercial crop production, the spiderweb of activity resulting from increased crop production, the increased gathering of forest and marine products, the trade-related activities described above necessary to support increased trade, and even the allocation of labor resources away from rice production and into more wealth-generating crops, were all "pull" factors drawing Vietnamese south into Nguyen Cochinchina from the northern heartland. That is, the economic opportunity generated by these activities surely must have attracted settlers to the new lands of the south. Though no data are available, we can speculate that it was largely Vietnamese immigrants from the north who fulfilled these jobs, although certainly Chams, other locals and Chinese also rushed to supply the demand.<sup>171</sup> One is almost reminded of the attraction the American west had for Americans in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even if there was no single dramatic, precipitating event such as the gold rush.

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<sup>171</sup> Bulbeck, Reid, et al. claim that it was Chinese immigrants who began to develop cultivation of sugar around the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in central Vietnam and indeed grew or managed production of sugar thereafter. See Bulbeck, Reid, et al, *Southeast Asian Exports Since the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, pp. 107, 111. Unfortunately, no sources are cited for this claim. Indeed this seems difficult to believe, given the limited numbers of Chinese in Cochinchina (four to five thousand in the early 1640s according to Francisco), most of whom were engaged in trade. Surely Vietnamese labor was used extensively, and it seems more likely that the Chinese were 'managing' rather than actually cultivating. No other sources I found mentioned such a large role in commercial crop production for the Chinese in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and to my knowledge even commercial crop production in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (with the exception of pepper) was left in Vietnamese hands, even if Chinese controlled the trade in the crop (such as rice). Nevertheless, this does not detract from concept of economic opportunity acting as a magnet and drawing Vietnamese south.



Another likely impact of the trade fostered by Hoi An was monetization. Although hard to prove, it is quite likely that money and coinage were increasingly used in economic exchanges instead of trade in kind. We saw in Part II how the Nguyen were - initially by choice - dependent on Japanese and Chinese coinage but became increasingly desperate for cash as the Japanese and Chinese supplies dried up; it was this desperation which led to the Nguyen to mint their own currency in the 1740s, which in turn led to such high inflation and economic ruin. One reason for this increasing need for cash was perhaps the increasing monetization of Cochinchina which was fostered by the growth in trade. Moreover, as people became more familiar with the concept of 'money', it was perhaps more difficult to revert to trade-in-kind. How deeply did monetization penetrate, and what percentage of transactions were carried out in cash rather than in kind? Again, this is extremely difficult to ascertain. Le Quy Don's account of trade with highlanders notes that there were various trade tollgates along rivers with fixed taxes of varying amounts of quan, presumably payable in cash (but he does not specify this). He also notes the price and tax on various goods traded by the highlanders as well as a personal tax on highlanders; these are quoted in *quan* or other measures of cash, which suggests that cash was commonly used in Vietnamese-highlander economic transactions (he does not mention in-kind transactions, but absent a specific comment on the non-existence of in-kind transactions this possibility should not be rejected).<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, pp.110-113.

Did the increasing economic development and resulting prosperity filter down to the common man? Li Tana suggests that another look at the types of items sold in the Hoi An markets may address this question. The abundance of trade goods, and in particular the abundance of goods of everyday consumption such as medicine, clothing, copperware, tea, foods, and objects of personal adornment, indicate that there was a trickle down effect. She also points to visitors accounts of Cochinchina.<sup>173</sup> Le Quy Don, in particular, was effusive in his description of the standard of living in Cochinchina: "both officials and the common people were wealthy and accustomed to fancy things. Their lifestyles tended to be even fancier during the Nguyen Phuc period [1738-1765]. Because he himself liked luxury, his subjects all followed him and luxury became the norm for them." He goes on to describe the types of goods that officials, commoners, soldiers and women were accustomed to: satin shirts with flowers and damask trousers as everyday garb for commoners (wearing cotton was considered a disgrace), and women were all dressed in gauze, ramie and silk, with embroidered collars. "People here looked upon gold and silver as sand, millet and rice as mud; their lives could not be more extravagant."<sup>174</sup> While Le Quy Don may have been exaggerating<sup>175</sup>, he was clearly impressed by the wealth of Cochinchina. This relatively high standard of living was certainly another pull factor drawing Vietnamese south to Cochinchina.

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<sup>173</sup> See Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, pp.85-87.

<sup>174</sup> See "Miscellaneous Nguyen Records Seized in 1775-6," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p.124.

<sup>175</sup> Both Li Tana and Woodside believe that Le Quy Don, for a number of reasons, may have exaggerated his description of the wealth of the south. See Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina*, p. 85-6, and Alexander Woodside, "Central Vietnam's Trading World," p. 166.

### C. Political Importance.

We have seen how foreign trade was instrumental to the Nguyen rulers of Cochinchina. In addition to stimulating local economic development, trade provided much-needed revenue to the Nguyen as well as weaponry to hold off the Trinh. Hoi An was the center of trade in Cochinchina, and indeed served as the economic center of Cochinchina; it would be logical for the Nguyen to establish their capital in Hoi An in order to control this economic center which was such a vital component of the Nguyen regime. In other parts of maritime Southeast Asia, important ports which functioned as primary economic centers typically also functioned as the political centers of the polity (e.g., Srivijaya, Banten, Aceh, Makassar, Ayutthaya). The Bronson riverine model we discussed in Section A above would also suggest that these economic centers along the river or coast would also serve as centers of political power.<sup>176</sup> Such was not the case

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<sup>176</sup> Although Wolters in his formulation of the 'mandala' theory of traditional Southeast Asian polities does not discuss the economic foundations of the mandala, it seems to me that the shape and center of Wolters' mandala must be driven in part by economic power. Thus I would suggest that the center of Wolter's mandala is invariably where the economic power of the mandala is concentrated. The mandala features "overlapping circles of kings" within which one king claims "universal authority" and "personal hegemony over the other rulers in his mandala who in theory were his obedient allies and vassals...In practice, the mandala...represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security. The mandalas would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals." O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (revised edition, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 27-8. The Hoi An area during the Cham period certainly had some of these  
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with respect to Cochinchina, however. The capital always remained north of the Hai Van pass, the highest and most important pass along the land route south: until 1636, the capital was located around modern-day Quang Tri, and after 1636 the capital was located around the Hue area.<sup>177</sup>

Why, then, was Hoi An never the residence of the Nguyen rulers? What allowed - or required - the Nguyen to separate business from politics? Keith Taylor has suggested that the location of the capital north of Hoi An, at least during the early Nguyen rule, may have been a reflection of the continued preoccupation of the Nguyen rulers with the Trinh in the north. That is, the Nguyen still had designs on ruling the north and wanted to remain in an area with closer access to the north, and "Hoi An was a source of enrichment and nothing more."<sup>178</sup> (One also wonders whether the Hai Van pass served as a geographical and symbolic hurdle to the south which the Nguyen were unable to overcome, which may explain why the capital always remained north of the

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<sup>176</sup> (...continued)  
features.

<sup>177</sup> See Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, pp. 8-9, for more on the location of the capital. John Whitmore in a personal communication made the observation regarding the location north of the Hai Van pass. One might argue that because there was a trading center outside of Hue, Hue falls into the category of political centers located in economic centers of maritime Southeast Asia. However, the Hue trading community was far smaller than Hoi An, and Hoi An was undisputably the economic center of Cochinchina.

<sup>178</sup> Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and Vietnam's Southward Expansion," pp. 50, 63-4. Taylor notes how an important garrison was established in 1602 about some 15-20 kilometers upriver from Hoi An, a place "admirably located to supervise the port - without being dominated by it."

pass.) Surely this attitude changed somewhat as time wore on and the independence of the south was established, yet Hoi An never became the capital.

A more concrete explanation offered by a number of Vietnamese historians is security. The Nguyen rulers were afraid of the power of foreign traders, who under some circumstances might be able to challenge the political authority of the Nguyen rulers, and consequently these traders were confined to a port distant from the capital area. Likewise the rulers may have been afraid of disruptions in social order caused by the presence of foreign traders. Thus, it was most likely fear of foreign domination which resulted in a separation of the political and economic centers. This bifurcation was also a feature of Trinh North Vietnam, with its capital at Thang Long (modern Hanoi) and foreign trade center of Pho Hien located down river closer to the sea.<sup>179</sup>

Whatever the explanation for this division between political and economic centers, we can assume that the Nguyen rulers in Quang Tri and Hue kept a very close eye on their Hoi An breadbasket. The Nguyen were clearly aware of the importance of

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<sup>179</sup> See Do Bang, "Relations and Pattern of Trade between Hoi an and the Inland," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p.150; Nguyen Dinh Dau, "The Birth and the Historic Evolution of Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, p.117; Truong Huu Quynh, "The Birth and Development of Pho Hien," in *Pho Hien: The Center of International Commerce in the XVII-XVIII Centuries*, p.34; and Tranh Thi Vinh, "Thang Long - Pho Hien Commercial Relations in the 17th-18th Centuries," in *Pho Hien: The Center of International Commerce in the XVII-XVIII Centuries*, p. 205. John Whitmore in a personal communication noted that although the Trinh did separate the capital city from the commercial center, over the centuries the commercial center moved closer and closer to the capital.

Hoi An, and they probably allowed only members of the royal family or their most trusted associates to govern the town and the surrounding region. Given the Chinese dominance of trade in Hoi An after the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the increased role the Chinese played in the local government as well as the Nguyen government, we can surmise that there was a close relationship, perhaps even alliance, between the Nguyen and the Chinese with respect to Hoi An. An interesting question for future research may be exploring the degree to which Hoi An was used as a political tool by those challenging the Nguyen.

#### PART IV. CONCLUSION: HOI AN TODAY.

We saw previously how, even before the Tayson rebellion broke out in the early 1770s, trade at Hoi An had declined steeply for primarily internal reasons. The destruction of Hoi An during the Tayson rebellion marked a clear severance for Hoi An between its glorious past and its future. With the establishment of the Nguyen dynasty in 1802, peace returned to Vietnam and Hoi An began to recover from the devastation of the previous 30 years. However, the town would not regain the stature it held from 1600 to the 1770s.

One reason why Hoi An failed to regain its past glory was the silting up of the Thu Bon River, a process that began as early as the middle 1700s and quickly

accelerated in the early 1800s, making it impossible for large ships to navigate the river.<sup>180</sup> The silting up of the Thu Bon resulted in part in the development of Touran or today's Danang. Danang's harbor had always been much deeper and more protected than Hoi An's and often was the place where many larger European ships anchored before proceeding to Hoi An. The two towns were for many years linked by a waterway which dried up in the mid 1800s; Danang and the peninsula south of it actually formed a large and narrow island.<sup>181</sup> It was from Danang via this "inland" waterway that many ships entered the Hoi An area. Given the fine attributes of the Danang harbor, it is somewhat surprising that Hoi An did as well as it did.<sup>182</sup> In 1835 the Nguyen ruler decreed that all western ships trading in Vietnam had to stop in Danang, indicating that the authorities realized the importance of the harbor.<sup>183</sup> By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, if not before, Danang

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<sup>180</sup> See Vu Van Phai and Dang Van Bao, "Geomorphological Features of Hoi An and its Neighborhood," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp.62-3; Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p.30; Wheeler, *Cross-Cultural and Trans-Regional Networks*, Chapter Five. Wheeler also suggests that the prevalence of deeper-hulled trading vessels in the 1800s exacerbated the silt problem. Kirsop in 1750 already noted that the river had become shallower, able to accommodate vessels of 80 tons only. See Kirsop, "Some Account of CochinChina," p. 241.

<sup>181</sup> See Duong Trung Quoc, "Relationship Between Hoi An and Danang," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp.184-9.

<sup>182</sup> The French realized the value of Danang as early as the mid 1700s; the 1749 account from Poivre mission suggested that Danang would be the best spot for a French trading factory. See "Description of CochinChina," in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on Economic History*, p. 95.

<sup>183</sup> See Duong Trung Quoc, "Relationship Between Hoi An and Danang ," p. 188.

had clearly replaced Hoi An as the center for hinterland and coastal trade in central Vietnam.<sup>184</sup>

Even if the Thu Bon had not silted up, the different circumstances of Vietnam in the early 1800s would likely have limited Hoi An's ability to recapture its trading past. By the first part of the nineteenth century, south Vietnam - the area around the Mekong delta - had become a major economic center, surpassing central Vietnam. The "southern expansion" had indeed reached as far south as geography permitted by the first half of the 1800s, and Vietnamese as well as Chinese continued to pour into the area. Reflecting this shift was the rise of Saigon as the primary trading entrepot in Vietnam. Saigon had received a boost in 1778 as a number of Chinese, fleeing the Tayson, settled at Cholon, about five kilometers away. Though Cholon was sacked and many Chinese killed in 1782 during the Tayson, the city recovered quickly and received a further boost when Nguyen Anh - the future Gia Long - made it his capital in 1788. Nguyen Anh promoted trade and development, and many Chinese left central Vietnam and headed south.<sup>185</sup> Shipping figures confirm this rise of Saigon as a major trading center: it has been estimated that three hundred Chinese junks were calling at Saigon in the early nineteenth century, five to six times the peak numbers of vessels which visited

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<sup>184</sup> Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, p. 214.

<sup>185</sup> See Clifton Barton, *Credit and Commercial Control: Strategies and Methods of Chinese Businessmen in South Vietnam*, (PHD Dissertation, Cornell University, 1977), pp. 40; Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, pp. 206-210; Chen, *Historical Notes on Hoi An*, p. 28.



Hoi An in the 1740s and 50s.<sup>186</sup> By 1820 at the latest, Saigon as an economic center had clearly surpassed Hoi An.<sup>187</sup>

Thus, the circumstances of the early 1800s were quite different from those of 1600. Hoi An had risen at the turn of the 1600s primarily as a response to the needs of the new kingdom to find a means of support in its struggle for survival; facing a hostile neighbor to the north in the Trinh, Nguyen Cochinchina needed a jumpstart and found it in international trade, with Hoi An serving as the nexus. The 1835 decree making Danang the primary destination for western ships was, if anything, indicative that the new Nguyen dynasty in the early 1800s did not need Hoi An the way Nguyen Hoang needed it back in 1600. Vietnam of the early 1800s - now unified in its modern-day form from north to south for the first time in its history- was economically and politically very different from the Vietnam of 1600.

Despite these factors, Hoi An was rebuilt in the 1800s and seemed to grow at a steady if slow pace, supporting a fair amount of trade until the river silted up.

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<sup>186</sup> Anthony Reid, "A New Phase of Commercial Expansion," p.70. Reid cites a paper presented by Li Tana as the source for this astoundingly high figure. John Crawfurd, in recounting his mission to Siam and Cochinchina in 1821-22, notes the number of Chinese vessels visiting Vietnamese ports as follows (he says these are 'common' annual figures, though they may have been just for 1820 or 1821): close to 40 per year in north Vietnam, about 30-35 per year in Saigon, 16 to Hoi An, and 12 to Hue. See John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochinchina*, (Singapore, Oxford University Press, reprinted in 1987 and 1967 from the 1828 first edition), pp.510-13.

<sup>187</sup> Wheeler, *Cross Cultural Trade and Trans-Regional Networks*, p. 209.

However, Hoi An was much more prominent in local trade than in international trade. Many Chinese did return to the town, and it was during the middle to late 1800s that a tremendous amount of Chinese shophouses, assembly halls, village halls, altar houses and temples, many of which can be visited today, were built.<sup>188</sup> Hoi An also expanded into several streets which together with the original street along the river form today's "ancient quarter." Set against the backdrop of its former glory, however, Hoi An seemed to fade quietly into the past as time wore on.

In 1985, the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, recognizing the value of many of the old buildings and quarters in Hoi An, declared the ancient street quarter of Hoi An an historic district. Since then, preservation efforts have begun, and many of the 700 or so architectural "vestiges" have been classified.<sup>189</sup> The government is also heavily promoting Hoi An as a tourist destination. There were a number of tourists present when this author visited the town in December 1997, but Hoi An nevertheless managed to retain its pleasant, sleepy charm.

A stroll through Hoi An today provides a tantalizing glimpse into its fascinating past. The modern visitor can wander along the quay and look out on the river, still crowded with hundreds of boats, albeit much smaller than the junks of

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<sup>188</sup> See Chen, *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, Chapter Four, for more on these 19<sup>th</sup> century structures. My own visit to Hoi An in 1997 confirmed that many of its present day buildings were 19<sup>th</sup> century structures.

<sup>189</sup> See Hoang Dao Kinh, Hoang Minh Ngoc, Vu Huu Minh and Nguyen Hong Kien, "Some Suggestions on the Preservation and Utilization of Vestiges in Hoi An," in *Ancient Town of Hoi An*, pp. 222-29.

yesteryear. Many of the boats have the Hoi An "eyes" (the yin/yang symbols painted on boats that resemble eyes and are actually found all over Hoi An today) which seem to follow the visitor around. It takes only the smallest bit of imagination to visualize the crowded harbor of three hundred years ago, teeming with Chinese junks, European trading ships and Southeast Asian prahus. It is also easy to imagine the wide variety of people - Japanese, Chinese, Chams, northern Vietnamese, other Southeast Asians, Portuguese, Dutch, English and Jesuits - walking the streets of Hoi An and bartering in the market. The rich architecture of the town remains a wonderful treasure trove of classic Chinese shophouses (all narrow but deep), heavily ornamented temples, and assembly and communal halls with numerous inscriptions, all interspersed among the narrow streets of the town's ancient quarter. And of course there is the Japanese bridge, a present-day reminder of the once influential Japanese presence. Few other trading ports of pre-modern Southeast Asia - only Malacca and perhaps old town Batavia come to mind - today evoke the desire to examine the past that Hoi An inspires. Indeed, Hoi An's story practically jumps out at the visitor, begging to be told.

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