

## Trade Relations between the Đại Việt Kingdom and the Song Empire in the Long Twelfth Century

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### Abstract:

This article conducts a preliminary examination of the “Long Twelfth Century” to gain a better understanding of the dynamic nature of the network and mechanism whereby trade overland and by sea was conducted in this important contact zone between China and Vietnam. Court-based tribute relations served as a focal point around which traditional Sino-Vietnamese political, economic, and cultural exchange revolved. With the shift from sea routes to overland connections in this period, it was trade issues, not tributary protocol, that would drive official Sino-Vietnamese exchanges in the early period of asserting and securing Vietnamese independence. Indeed, it was trade that stimulated relations throughout the period of the Song dynasty’s decline.

**Keywords:** trade network | Vietnam | China | overland routes | maritime trade | tribute

### Article:

#### Introduction

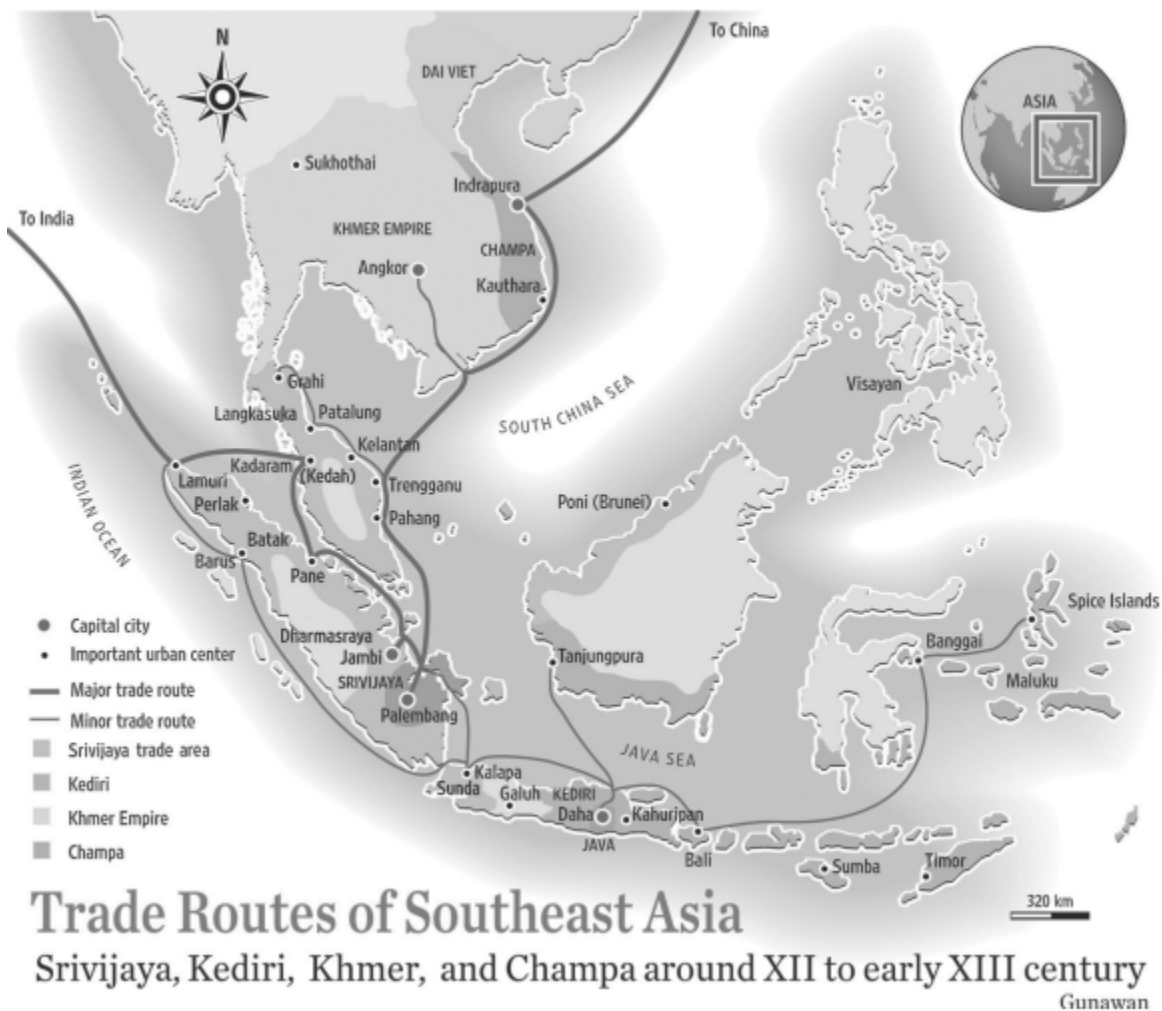
This study begins with a thirteenth-century tale that provides a clear picture of how coastal trade was conducted between the regions of present-day Vietnam and China in the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> In 1293 Mongol preparations for a fourth attempted invasion of the Đại Việt kingdom<sup>2</sup> were completed. Three unsuccessful attempts, beginning in the 1250s, to defeat the forces of the Vietnamese Trần 陳 dynasty (1225–1400) had proved costly, and the Mongol leadership was angered by the tenacity of the Trần’s resistance. In the summer of 1293, the court of Qubilai Khan (r. 1260–1294) ordered the seizure a thousand ships from the coastal communities of the Guangnan Eastern Circuit (modern-day Guangdong), known as the Dan (Tanka or Danjia 蠶家), sufficient to carry an army of 56,570 men, 350,000 piculs of food, and 700,000 pieces of equipment.<sup>3</sup> In late 1293 this force was strengthened with the addition of eight thousand former Song troops, increasing the total to nearly 65,000 soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Liu Guojie 劉國傑 (1234–1305), an earlier military defector to the Yuan cause, was made commander of the expedition, the declared purpose of which was to place the royal defector Trần Ích Tắc 陳益稷 (1254–1329) on the Đại Việt throne. However, this grand effort was ended before it could be launched. In early

1294 Qubilai Khan died, and the expedition was cancelled. In a special decree, the new Yuan emperor Temür Khan (r. 1294–1307) announced an end to the conflict with the Đại Việt kingdom, and peaceful relations were re-established.<sup>5</sup>

This short description of the Mongol's rapid mobilization of a logistical supply line through the consolidation of a coastal fleet seized from the Dan communities in this region provides a clue as to the size of the subaltern trade network that linked the economies of the Đại Việt kingdom and the Song empire in the preceding centuries.<sup>6</sup> This article provides a preliminary examination of the “Long Twelfth Century,” its aim being to acquire a better understanding of the dynamic nature of this network and the mechanism by which trade overland and by sea was conducted in this important contact zone between modern-day China and Vietnam. The roots of the modern Vietnamese and Chinese political configurations that now control the Gulf region go back centuries. As I have written elsewhere, “(if) Roman domination had allowed them to regard the ancient Mediterranean as their own sea, the Tongking Gulf by contrast had for many centuries been a region populated by competing and co-operating Mandala-style powers.”<sup>7</sup> In the Han period Giao Chi (Jiaozhi 交趾) had been an important power, but it was not the only player in this network along the coast of Mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> In this period a maritime network developed linking Indian Ocean trade with the Tongking Gulf, a network that Li Tana has called “the Jiaozhi Ocean system,” which she has explored for this early period and John Whitmore for the fifteenth century.<sup>9</sup> An independent Vietnamese state emerged in this competitive trade environment. At the new state's founding in the mid-tenth century, the immediate problem was for the Đại Cồ Việt 大瞿越 (968–1054) kingdom to find a way to co-exist with rising Song 宋 (960–1279) power to its north and Cham economic and military rivalry to its south while still pursuing its own goal of political independence and economic prosperity upon which it depended. Court-based tribute relations served as a focal point around which, as is well known, traditional Sino-Vietnamese political, economic, and cultural exchange revolved. I have argued elsewhere that it was trade issues and not tributary protocol that would drive official Sino-Vietnamese exchanges in the early period of asserting and securing Vietnamese independence. Indeed, trade animated relations between the two states throughout the period of the Song dynasty's decline.<sup>10</sup>

An important factor facilitating this Vietnamese success was the continuation of the pre-existing South China Sea/Biển Đông trade networks, which the new Chinese and Vietnamese courts had inherited and which had mostly operated outside the spheres of authority to which the two new courts laid claim. The southern ports of Guangzhou and Jiaozhou 交州 (near present-day Hanoi), or, as Li Tana contends, the port described in Chinese court sources as Rinan 日南 in Central Vietnam,<sup>11</sup> offered products that had been prized since the Han dynasty, such as “incense, drugs, elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, tortoiseshell, coral, parrots, kingfishers (and) peacocks.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the wealth that these commercial networks generated made it hard for the two emerging powers on the Gulf to avoid trying to control the peoples and exchanges that made the wealth possible. Numerous local chiefs throughout Southwestern China approached the Song shortly after the dynasty's founding because controlling trade contacts with the larger courts of the region proved to be an important aspect of their political authority. Eventually, maintaining overland borderland security, securing the co-operation of coastal trading peoples and attempting to control unsanctioned trade would remain the most significant recorded activities of court officials and personal envoys sent to the borderlands region by both the Song and Đại Việt courts. These efforts to restrict the Đại Việt state's participation in maritime trade, while channelling

commercial exchange to overland trade along the borderlands, has been noted by several scholars,<sup>13</sup> including myself.<sup>14</sup>



### Map 1

Twelfth- to Thirteenth-century Trade Routes of Southeast Asia. Map adapted by the author from a map by Gunawan Kartapranata.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southeast\\_Asia\\_trade\\_route\\_map\\_XIIcentury.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southeast_Asia_trade_route_map_XIIcentury.jpg), CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

To understand better trade between the Đại Việt state and the Song empire in this period, one needs to grasp the basic political and economic realities of the examined communities in the wider regional context. In his introduction to the general outlines of early Southeast Asian history, Craig Lockard wrote that “(many) people specialized in local, intra- or interregional commerce. In fact, extensive trade networks, both land and maritime, linked various peoples of the region from [the] earliest times.”<sup>15</sup> Trade items were collected from many littoral sites that gave access to highland commodities, but the trade markets were only located in certain large maritime ports. Sau Heng Leong notes that between 1000 BCE and 1000 CE most of the ports along the Malay Peninsula were not centres of trade, but instead were points for the collection of

highland trade items.<sup>16</sup> These trade items were moved along the so-called “Maritime Silk Road,” a complex network of sailing routes that depended on seasonal monsoon winds and along which ships carried cargoes from India and Southeast Asia to ports throughout the ancient world.<sup>17</sup> From the early Song period, maritime trade crossing the Indian Ocean trade network through the South China Sea became increasingly important. As noted in the Songshi 宋史 account, the trade partners in this network included the Arabian peninsula (Dashi 大食), Kollam (Guluo 古邏; Kerala, India), Java (Dupo 閩婆), Champa (Zhancheng 占城), Brunei (Boni 勃泥), Mindoro in the Philippines (Mayi 麻逸), and Sri Vijaya (Sanfoqi 三佛齊).<sup>18</sup> Between these maritime kingdoms and the Song traders there was a great amount of commerce, including trade in items such as gold and silver (jinyin 金銀), strings of copper cash (minqian 緡錢), tin (qianxi 鉛錫), varicoloured silk (zasebo 雜色帛), porcelain (ciqi 瓷器), medicinal herbs (shixiangyao 市香藥), rhinoceros horn and elephant tusks (xixiang 犀象), coral (shanhu 珊瑚), amber (hupo 琥珀), pearl necklaces (zhubei 珠琲), highly-forged iron (bintie 鑛鐵), sea-turtle skins (bipi 鼈皮), jade (daimao 瑋瑁), agate (manao 瑪瑙), Tridacna saltwater clam gemstones (chequ 車渠), crystals (shuijing 水精), foreign brocades (fanbu 蕃布), black elm gum (wuman 烏楠), and sappan wood (sumu 蘇木), among other commodities.<sup>19</sup> The southern sea route by way of India began either at the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf, travelling south and then east across the Indian Ocean to India and Sri Lanka, then through the Malaccan strait around the tip of Malaysia past modern-day Singapore and up the coast of Mainland Southeast Asia to several southern Chinese ports. This early trade was conducted largely by Arab, Indian, and Malay seafarers, who concealed the source of their goods and were eager to protect their lucrative trade.<sup>20</sup>

As for the sources of spices and other status commodities, the three regions of South Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and Southeast Asia remained the corner-stone of the pre-modern, long-distance exchange in luxury objects for more than a millennium.<sup>21</sup> Land-based and maritime trade routes were interlinked across the region. The spice trade connection between Island Southeast Asia and China goes back to the third century, when the Han emperor could order his courtiers to have cloves in their mouth to sweeten their breath whenever they addressed him.<sup>22</sup> However, this route did not acquire real importance until the coming of Arab mariners in the seventh century.<sup>23</sup> Arab traders maintained flourishing trade centres throughout the Indian Ocean region from the seventh to the ninth centuries CE. The main trade flow was carrying bullion from the Persian Gulf region to South Asia, to be exchanged for pepper and manufactured goods.<sup>24</sup>

The inland trade between China and Vietnam was important and would become even more so during the Song period. The upland northern borderlands of Vietnam were rich in forest products, providing valuable timber such as ironwood, mahogany, hopea siamensis (kiền 坡壘屬), kerosene, medicinal Rosa multiflora (tràng 薔薇), Siamese rosewood (trắc 黃檀屬), chickcrassy (lát 麻棟屬), other woods such as meliaceae (xoan 棟科), magnolia dandyi (vàng tâm 木蘭科) and bodhi, other forest products such as varieties of bamboo, rattan, dyeing yam or dioscorea cirrhosa (củ nâu 薯蕷), bamboo shoots, star anise and shellac (cánh kiến 蟲膠), cinnamon herbs, oil plants, and fruits.<sup>25</sup> In the forested areas of the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, one could also find abundant animal life, including tigers, leopards, bears, monkeys, long-tailed gibbons, alpine goats, deer, wild boar, pangolin, porcupine, and foxes, captured by local

inhabitants for a variety of purposes: thus musk deer were used for the medicinal use of their bones and horns.<sup>26</sup> Residents of the lowland valleys had little need for domesticated horses because lowland transportation was easier than travel in remote mountain areas occupied by Hmong, Dao, and other upland ethnic groups. In these areas, horses were raised to be used in transport and for riding. Communities that made the greatest use of horses included the Nùng Dín (Cao Bằng, Hà Giang) and the Tày in Bảo Lạc (Cao Bằng), the Hmong and Dao (Hà Giang), and the Thái, Lô, Lào and Lự ethnic groups in Lào Cai and Lai Châu.<sup>27</sup>

John Whitmore noted that by the late eleventh century the influence of traders from the Indian Ocean network would begin to wane, and trade flowing from the South China Sea would have a much greater impact:

... through the eleventh century, the trade routes connecting the international commerce and the local realms on this eastern seaboard were connected by the Vietnamese port in Nghệ An (present-day north-central Vietnam) and the ports of Champa in Amaravati (present-day Hội An) and Panduranga (farther south in Phan Rang). The Khmer empire of Angkor, generally more oriented westward, linked to these eastern routes by going either up the Mekong River and crossing the mountains (through the present Laos) to Nghệ An or down the Mekong, out to sea, and up the coast to the ports of Champa. Smaller boats carried the resulting variety of local and maritime goods up and down the eastern seaboard.<sup>28</sup>

Whitmore concluded that these three mainland Southeast Asian realms connected the east (China) to the west (India, increasingly via east Java).<sup>29</sup> Seafarers from Chinese ports with goods destined for Indian Ocean markets were naturally closely linked to Southeast Asia. As K. N. Chaudhuri writes, "...China has a monsoon pattern which does not exactly correspond to the timing in the western Indian Ocean. Ships on the way to and from Amoy (Xiamen), Canton (Guangzhou), or ports further north needed a lengthy stay in South East Asia before favourable winds set in."<sup>30</sup> Ports located from central Champa to the Angkor coast were natural points for the provisioning of fleets waiting for the right seasonal conditions to continue their voyages further into the Indian Ocean world.

Whitmore also notes that the Song court played only a small role in engineering regional trade, instead promoting official tributary exchanges and restricting private trade.<sup>31</sup> After 1090, however, perhaps under the influence of the Northern Song official Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1021–1086) activist policies, that precipitated the 1075 border war with the Vietnamese Lý court and the establishment of a rigid border between Vietnam and China, Chinese traders were encouraged to venture south, and stronger private trade relations with China's neighbours were supported. During the reign of Emperor Song Shenzong 宋神宗 (r. 1067–1085), following the border conflict with the Lý court, the Song court abandoned the goal of reunification, and relations between the two states gradually switched to a focus on economy and trade.<sup>32</sup> In 1079, in order to improve trade flows with Lianzhou 廉州 and Qinzhou 欽州, the Jiangdong postal station 江東驛 under the jurisdiction of Qinzhou replaced the Ruhong garrison 如洪寨 as the central market (boyi

chang 博易場) for the region.<sup>33</sup> The establishment of a fixed border between the Đại Việt and Song spheres of influence also distinguished this period.

By the twelfth century, long-distance overland trade in this region had declined in importance, and the China-bound maritime trade had long since bypassed the Tongking Gulf for the growing ports of Guangzhou and Quanzhou.<sup>34</sup> Regional trade continued to develop in the coastal and inland borderlands zone, but with the South Song court's desperate need for a regular supply of "Guangxi horses," to which I return below, the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands acquired regional significance. After the Zhenghe period (1111–1118), Song Huizong 宋徽宗 (1082–1135) ordered the full liberalization of the border trade in Guangxi, now including Yongzhou 邕州 (modern-day Nanning), and bilateral trade was greatly developed. By the late twelfth century the Song court had recognized the Đại Việt as an "external vassal," thus providing the polity with greater autonomy while increasing the economic interaction between the two states.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Song-guided long-distance maritime trade expanded by the second half of the twelfth century, with Song traders travelling away from the Chinese mainland to the centres of spice production across Southeast Asia, thus accelerating the decline of the maritime empire of Sri Vijaya (seventh century to 1183) as the sole source of this lucrative trade.<sup>36</sup> By the mid-thirteenth century, Chinese trade connections emanating southward from the South China Sea (Eastern Sea) would provide the maritime outposts that Mongol naval expeditions exploited in their efforts to continue the "southernization" of the Mongol empire.



**Map 2**

Tongking Gulf Borderlands, ca. 1000–1200 CE. Map created by the author

### **Coastal Borderlands Trade**

The local communities that cooperated with the long-distance maritime traders in facilitating another level of cross-border trade between the Đại Việt and Song inhabited the strip of coastal territory that extends out from both sides of the present-day Sino-Vietnamese border. On the Vietnamese side, the land formed part of the Red River delta, where many distinct prehistoric coastal settlements have been discovered, including the Hạ Long, Đa Bút, Quỳnh Vãn, Bàu Tró, and Sa Huỳnh settlements. The inhabitants of the Sa Huỳnh settlements and their culture have long been viewed as the direct ancestors of the Cham of present-day central Vietnam, who would become the principal economic rivals of the Vietnamese by the tenth century.<sup>37</sup> The coastal region north of the Red River delta has also supported habitation since the Neolithic period.<sup>38</sup> From the period of the Âu Lạc 甌貉 kingdom (257 BCE–207 BCE), Chu Diên 朱鳶, located between the southern Red River delta and the Thái Bình 太平 River, was said to provide

shelter for coastal traders.<sup>39</sup> To the north of Chu Diên the coastal prefecture called Lục Châu 陸州 during the Tang period (618–907) and Tô Mậu Châu 蘇茂州 after the tenth-century founding of the Đại Cồ Việt kingdom was also the site of trading activity.

On the Chinese side of the early Song borderlands area, several inland riverside garrisons existed close to the coast between Tô Mậu and the Song's Qinzhou prefectural seat at the mouth of the Qin River. These garrisons controlled the trade that moved from the hinterland regions out to the ports for transport north into China and south into other parts of Southeast Asia. On the Beilun River 北侖河, which reaches the sea near the present-day Dongxing–Móng Cái border zone, the sources show both a Jilin riverine settlement 吉林峒 and, further downstream, the Sibing garrison 思稟管, with the Ruxi garrison 如昔砦 closer to the coast. This military fortification was situated where it would have exercised some control over traders passing either down the Beilun or up and down the coast. The Duobu garrison 咄步砦 was also located in this region near Lingshan 靈山 Mountain. According to the demographic data included in the Songshi, by the Yuanfeng 元豐 period (1078–1086) 15,142 households had been established throughout Qinzhou prefecture.<sup>40</sup>

Further north still was the walled city of Anyuan 安遠, located near the present-day city of Qinzhou at the confluence of the Ruhong 如洪江 and Qin 欽江 Rivers, where these two rivers feed into the northernmost reaches of the Tongking Gulf. Anyuan commanded a large volume of trade from the hinterland of this region, and the city itself was protected by the Ruhong garrison to its northwest. A short distance to the east, across the top of the Gulf, was Hepu 合浦, the prefectural seat of Lianzhou, which was protected by the Sancun garrison 三村寨 to its south at the mouth of the Lian River 廉江. Since the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Hepu, itself an important source of pearls, had been an officially designated supply centre for luxury items from Jiaozhi (northern Vietnam),<sup>41</sup> and once the Song took control of the south China coastline its status as such was revived. The dynasty's founder, Song Taizu 宋太祖 (r. 960–976), appeared to be concerned that other local leaders might gain power and influence through access to these desirable commodities, which were out of reach of imperial sanction, and in 972 the court decided to ban the pearl trade in the Hepu region. Balancing the commercial potential of this trade with political stability would be the Song court's preoccupation in the Tongking Gulf after the early years of the dynasty.

Despite the 972 ban on pearling in Hepu, the Kaifeng court could not long avoid having to deal with matters on the southern coast, however reluctantly. In the summer of 974, a memorial arrived from the Guangzhou prefecture requesting the court pay greater attention to the smugglers and thieves that were plying the southern coast. Taizu replied that “the customs of those inhabiting the seaboard corner of the Empire are by nature greedy. Slipping through holes in the walls of our frontier to pillage would be commonplace behaviour for them.”<sup>42</sup> However, by the end of that same year, the emperor had issued an edict that exempted merchants trading in fresh medicinal herbs in the southern ports from having to pay any commercial taxes.<sup>43</sup> Along with medicinal plants, salt and precious metals were important items of trade from the northern Tongking Gulf coast, as the Song court's attempts to either monopolize or tax their circulations indicate.<sup>44</sup>



A gradual movement away from the Vietnamese coast by the Former Lê 黎 (980–1009) and Lý 李 (1010–1225) regimes would be in time matched by the movements of the Song authorities southwest from inland Guangdong to the coastal centres of trade. This trend is evident in the Northern Song court's granting of degrees primarily to Guangdong area candidates residing to the north of Guangzhou, the former seat of Southern Han power. By the Southern Song period (1127–1279), Confucian norms were firmly embedded in elite Guangzhou society, a shift in community values suggesting that culture flows within this coastal trade network remained a vibrant source of transmission and exchange throughout the period being examined in this article.

### **The Subaltern Trade Network**

As I have pointed out in another study, the South China Sea/Biển Đông was a zone of transitional maritime trade that forged commercial links as far north as Okinawa to the east and the Indian Ocean trade to the south. This area's maritime connections gave it a special prominence, as human settlement expanded along the coast and inland along the most active waterways.<sup>45</sup> A specific centre of exchange was established in the Tongking Gulf region, yet there also existed localized economic competition and political wrangling that circumvented the domains administered by Vietnamese or Chinese court officials. Vietnamese political leaders were shifting their attention from coastal to inland trade routes, partly to bring their interest in acquiring Chinese commodities into line with Song tributary practices, and partly, it seems to me, to reduce their responsibility for managing the fluid and uncontrollable nature of a subaltern coastal trade network. Through activity that at times escaped the attention of court chroniclers, these local peoples, sometimes in concert with locally appointed officials, sought to adapt the dictates from the region's power centres, the Song and Đại Cồ Việt authorities, to suit the shifting circumstances of their lives along the Sino-Vietnamese coastal borderlands.

The term “subaltern” derives from postcolonial studies and refers broadly to “subordinate social groups ... not represented within the terms of a dominant political system.”<sup>46</sup> I use the term to describe the various marginalized, liminal communities along the Tongking Gulf coastline.<sup>47</sup> The coastal region supported many different peoples, including those identified collectively today as the Dan, a term for marginalized trading communities living in boats along the South China coast from at least the early tenth century. The Dan of Qinzhou and nearby Hepu were pearl-fishers and primary collectors of the valuable local products on which the regional circulation of luxury goods depended. R. A. Donkin notes that in Song-period texts the Dan of this region were known as the “fish Dan”, “oyster Dan”, or “wood Dan,” depending on which local product each community harvested for trade.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the Dan, other seafaring coastal peoples in the historical records include the Luting 盧亭 and Maren 馬人, although the connection of these groups to the Dan has been difficult to ascertain from the available sources.<sup>49</sup> From an early period, another group of communities, identified in pre-modern Chinese and Vietnamese texts as the Địch Lão 狄獠, inhabited a large region, including present-day western Guizhou, southwestern Yunnan, and northern Việt Nam. The Địch Lão, also known as the Kra, were present during Han expansion into the southwest, and their communities could be found along all the major routes that made up the trading network through the Tongking Gulf region. Further inland were and the Nùng 儂 and

Tày 岱 peoples of northern Vietnam. All these ethnic groups were collectively known as “seaside peoples” or, less generously, Man 蠻 or “barbarians” in both Vietnamese and Chinese official records from the eleventh century.

From the decline of the Tang dynasty at the end of the ninth century to the rise of the Đại Cồ Việt kingdom, the coastal region was controlled by individual clan leaders and chiefs. The administrators of Guangzhou and its immediate surroundings may have claimed to represent distant imperial power, but the coastal region beyond Guangzhou was still completely in the hands of indigenous communities. These communities were connected through the coastal, river and inland trade networks that circulated valuable local products. With the founding of the Southern Han 南漢 (917–971) came the reestablishment of a local court intent on extending its authority along the coast, and on gaining control of its most lucrative products, like pearls, and its wealth-generating trade links.<sup>50</sup> Further to the southwest, during the dynastic period that followed the short-lived rule of the Đinh 丁 clan (968–980), Vietnamese rulers also made several attempts to control, or at least steer, the political and economic activities of their immediate neighbours along the region’s maritime trade routes. The former Lê court also attempted to exercise control. In 995, according to the Songshi account, more than a hundred warships from Jiaozhou attacked the Ruhong garrison, robbing a few of the residents before leaving.<sup>51</sup> Despite the imperial interpretation of former Lê court motives by the Song court chronicler, we can see that direct intervention in the existing coastal trade network was a continuing priority of Vietnamese leaders in this period.

This trend toward territorial consolidation would continue during the subsequent Lý dynasty. In 1010 Vietnamese forces sent by the former Lê military advisor and current ruler Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖 (r. 1010–28) caught thirteen persons of Địch Lão ethnicity and presented the captives to the Chinese court.<sup>52</sup> A few years later, in 1014, the new Lý ruler made another gesture of reassurance to the Song court. After subduing a native prefect, Hà Trắc Tuấn 何昞俊, his followers, and the Dali 大理 kingdom<sup>53</sup> in a battle for the Vị Long prefecture along the Việt-Dali borderlands that year; seizing their herd of horses, Lý Thái Tổ turned the entire herd over to the Song authorities.<sup>54</sup> Horses were an extremely valuable trade item, bought at considerable expense for military purposes from traders residing in the neighbouring Dali kingdom in present-day Yunnan. This was not only an appropriate sign of deference from the new Vietnamese rulers, but also a clear signal of the new Vietnamese court’s commitment to the region’s existing political and trade arrangements. It may have been local peoples who were conducting the trade, but the courts now knew how to manipulate the trading environment to their own benefit.<sup>55</sup>

### **Overland Trade near the Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands**

As I have shown in another study, changing trade networks in the Tongking Gulf region had a direct influence on the status of the coastal and especially inland indigenous elites residing between the Song and Đại Việt states. Throughout the early Song, the coastal area between Jiaozhi and Qinzhou shifted from the status of a regional trade hub to a local hub, as the primary trade route shifted eastward to Guangzhou.<sup>56</sup> In the period directly after the conclusion of this shift in trade status, the largely autonomous Huang clan of the Upper Tongking Gulf (Longzhou-Qinzhou-

Yongzhou) region became simultaneously more dependent on interactions with both Song local representatives and the Đại Việt court and more integral to the trading activities and local intelligence-gathering then being conducted in their home region. These local elites were mutually dependent on the two neighbouring authorities, but they were increasingly indispensable in the resolution of problems that plagued both the Song and Đại Việt along this section of their shared borderlands.

Although Song relations with the Đại Việt continued to improve after the violent border war of 1075, concerns that unlimited trade would threaten security arrangements continued to be debated in the Song leadership. During the reign of Emperor Song Huizong, commercial relations were tested. After extensive negotiations, in 1084 envoys from the Song and Đại Việt courts reached a consensus that “the boundary has been identified.”<sup>57</sup> After the negotiations were concluded and a borderlands region was delineated, a site for trade could be agreed upon. However, there were still reservations at the Song court about relaxing overland trade restrictions. During the beginning of the Daguan 大觀 period (1107–1110), envoys from a Đại Việt tribute mission came to Kaifeng asking to be allowed to trade for book materials, only to be confronted with Chinese officials telling them that the law did not permit this. The emperor ordered that their request be accepted and that, apart from banned books, divination texts, Daoist texts, calendar guides, numerological texts, military treatises, officer manuals, current administrative manuals, books on border installations, and geographical texts, all other books be allowed to be purchased.

In 1118, Guangnan East Circuit’s Transport Commissioner (zhuangyun shi 轉運使) Yan Ying 燕瑛 memorialized Song Huizong’s court, reporting that the Đại Việt kingdom had been acting respectfully for quite some time (since the Song-Lý border war), so Yan requested that the imperial edict blocking trade with them be lifted. Earlier the Guangnan West Circuit military commander (shuai 帥) Zeng Bu 曾布 (1036–1107) had petitioned the court, requesting that Qinzhou and Lianzhou each be permitted to established horse post stations (yi 驛), and the court ordered that Đại Việt representatives be permitted to conduct trade at these stations. After the court acknowledged his memorial, Yan Ying received the authority, along with the Guangxi Transport Deputy Commissioner (Guangxi zhuanyun fushi 廣西轉運副使) Wang Bo 王蕃, to administer trade with the Đại Việt kingdom from these locations.<sup>58</sup> This period marked the beginning of sustained trade contact as part of a regional trade network, buoyed by the pressing need to address security concerns along the northern borderlands. Those concerns would only increase with the collapse of the Northern Song court in the face of the Jurchen invasions.

### **Hengshan and the Militarization of Inland Trade**

During the Southern Song dynasty, with the northern region of the earlier Song empire under Jin control, the court at Lin’an 臨安, being under constant threat, was content to hold a smaller south-eastern portion of the empire’s original territory. To consolidate the Yangzi River line of defence against a nomadic power, the Song army required many cavalry horses. Northern courts had long depended on resupplying their cavalry with horses from the northwest, but the Southern Song were prevented by hostile northern regimes from purchasing horses from this region. Lin’an maintained strong control over the Yangtze River region, but the court still faced a shortage of cavalry and

had no choice but to turn southwest for its horses. Yongzhou (present-day Nanning) had become the central Guangxi region's centre of political and military authority with the Tang-period establishment of the Yongzhou military commission (Yongguan jinglueshi 邕管經略使).<sup>59</sup> The Dali kingdom in present-day Yunnan, had been a good source of horses that came from further west on the Tibetan Plateau. As a result the Southern Song court set up a government-run trading post (boyi chang) at the Hengshan garrison 橫山寨 in central Guangxi's Tiandong 田東 county, this garrison being responsible for the purchase of the so-called "Guangxi horses" (Guang ma 廣馬). Due to the increased trading of horses, an existing route, called locally the "Ancient Road of the Hundred Yue" (Baiyue gudao 百越古道), was improved between the Song outposts in Western Guangxi and the various upland kingdoms (the Ziqi kingdom 自杞國<sup>60</sup> and Luodian kingdom 羅殿國<sup>61</sup>) that lay between the Song and the Dali. Song trade with the Đại Việt kingdom in the twelfth century was also affected by the destabilizing factors linked to the Guangxi horse trade.

Under the jurisdiction of Yongzhou prefecture in the Guangnan West Circuit, the Hengshan garrison was located on the north bank of the Right River (Youjiang 右江) in what is today Tiandong county, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Yongzhou was seen as the critical node in the administration of the Guangnan West Circuit: "Yongzhou was the site of five administrative centres, which controlled the southwest domain of the empire (邕為五管雄,地控西南域)."<sup>62</sup> If representatives of the Dali kingdom, the Luodian kingdom, the Ziqi kingdom, the Temo Circuit 特磨道<sup>63</sup> or the Đại Việt kingdom wished to reach the Song authorities, they all needed to pass through Yongzhou, and the region had always been home to a high concentration of ethnic minorities. The Songshi geography account states, "Yongzhou controls a total of 44 jimi 羈縻 prefectures, 5 jimi counties and 11 native dong 峒 settlements."<sup>64</sup> These jimi prefectures, counties, and dong settlements were under the jurisdiction of the five garrisons of Taiping 太平, Hengshan, Yongping 永平, Guwan 古萬, and Qianlong 遷隆 respectively.

Of these garrisons, the Hengshan garrison, which commanded over sixty settlements and two counties, was the primary military installation.<sup>65</sup> Zhou Qufei 周去非 (c.1135–c.1189) wrote the following: "If those in China wish to connect with the Southwestern barbarians, they must do so through Yongzhou's Hengshan garrison."<sup>66</sup> Hengshan was established during the Renzong 仁宗 emperor's reign (1022–1063) and, as corroborated later in Shen Kuo's 沈括 (1031–1095) Mengxi bitan 夢溪筆談, and Wei Tai's 魏泰 (late eleventh–twelfth century) Dongxuan bilu 東軒筆錄, the Nùng Trí Cao (Nong Zhigao 儂智高) uprising (1052–1055) caused the overthrow of the Hengshan garrison for a period. The Hengshan garrison's foreign trade primarily consisted of the official Guangxi horse trade conducted by the Southern Song dynasty with the Dali kingdom, the Ziqi kingdom, and the Temo circuit. During the Yuanfeng 元豐 period (1078–1085), a Guangxi military commandant (shuaisi 帥司) was appointed to Yongzhou "for the single purpose of managing the purchases of horses from the native militia of the Right and Left River regions (專切提舉左、右江峒丁同措置買馬)."<sup>67</sup> After the Jin invasion of the north, the Song court relied on the three regions of Chuanqin 川秦 (including sections of present-day Sichuan and Gansu), Huaibei 淮北 (located north of the Huai river 淮河 on the adjoining borders of modern-day Anhui, Jiangsu, and Henan provinces) and Guangxi for the purchase of horses. The distance for the

transport of Guangxi horses from Jingjiang 静江 military prefecture (Guilin) River House to Lin'an was much closer than the other two regions. Therefore, the purchase of Guangxi horses was deemed essential. According to the account in Wang Yinglin's 王應麟 (1223–1296) encyclopaedic work *The Sea of Jade* (Yuhai 玉海), in the section sub-titled “The Shaoxing Horse-breeding Station” (Shaoxing zisheng ma jian 紹興孳生馬監), earlier merchants who came to sell horses at the Hengshan garrison came from the Ziqi kingdom, the Luodian kingdom, and the Temo circuit, among others: “Now more horses are coming from Luodian and Ziqi, and so from these other locations comes silk brocade available in the Dali kingdom. For generations, the horses are known as ‘Guangxi horses,’ but in fact they were from this region.”<sup>68</sup> As the horse trade caused the Ziqi kingdom to grow stronger, it increased the competition between the Ziqi and the Luodian, and even challenged Hengshan. In 1177, a chief by the name of Bi Chengzhe 必程者 “bearing his kingdom’s credentials” arrived at Yongzhou to negotiate with the local officials. At the same time, he asked that he “might use qianzhen 乾貞” as his reign period, which, in fact, was the same as asking the Southern Song court to recognize his independence.<sup>69</sup> Under these stressful conditions for Song officials, expanding regular trade with the Đại Việt kingdom was less of a priority than maintaining stable, but tribute-regulated trade relations that continued the political status quo.

The borderlands prefectures administered by the Yongzhou prefecture included Yizhou 宜州, Qinzhou, and Rongzhou 融州, the three points of trade contacts between representatives of the Song empire and the indigenous communities of the southwest borderlands region. Given earlier tensions in the regions, particularly the border war between the Đại Việt kingdom and the Song in 1075–1076, the local military presence in central Guangxi was increased after the reign of the Shenzong emperor. Fang Tie contends that, after Nùng Trí Cao’s third rebellion in 1052, the Song court came to believe that the revolt had some connection with the Đại Việt kingdom, and the reputation of the Dali kingdom was also sullied in this manner.<sup>71</sup> Subsequently, the emperor ordered Di Qing 狄青 (1008–1057), the general responsible for defeating Nùng Trí Cao’s forces, to divide up the Guangnan West Circuit so that the various jimi prefectures of Yongzhou, Yizhou, and Rongzhou would fall into separate circuits. An official assigned to the defence of these regions would simultaneously administer the circuit and act as military director-in-chief (bingma doujian 兵馬都監). In the Guizhou region, the Song court posted a military commissioner (jinglue anfu shi 經略安撫使) to unify the communities of the region.

In Yongzhou the court appointed a military governor (jiedushi 節度使) to jurisdiction over the region of the Left and Right Rivers; the Left River Command was responsible for guarding the empire against the Đại Việt kingdom, the Right River Command for guarding it against intrusions from the various southwestern peoples linked to the Dali kingdom.<sup>72</sup> Located between two rivers are more than sixty jimi dong river-valley settlements, so the court dispatched 5,000 military personnel from the north to maintain the local garrisons. It was the Song court’s plan that if there was an attack from either the Dali kingdom or the Đại Việt kingdom, the Song response had to be coordinated from Yongzhou. By the 1170s the Song official Zhou Qufei noted that the military administration of Yongzhou commanded these five thousand troops in the following configuration, with the three thousand troops stationed in the four garrisons at Hengshan, Taiping, Yongping, and Guwan, as well as in Qianlong township, while a further two thousand soldiers remained in the

prefectures to watch over the garrisons.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the Song military administrative region (shuaifu 帥府) on the Jingjiang River 靜江 (present-day Guilin) was home to 2,500 “field army (yuantun banjiang 元屯半將)” soldiers and 2,000 prefectural citadel militia (zhupo bing 駐泊兵), with an additional 500 troops ready for immediate dispatch. As Zhou Qufei wrote approvingly of Song troop strength in the region, “when there are no problems (in the countryside) these armies guarded the garrisons, and when there were issues to deal with, the troop numbers were sufficient to probe and resolve these matters (無事足以鎮撫, 有事足以調發).”<sup>74</sup>

In this militarized environment, the twelfth-century overland trade through the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, as well as the horse trade from the west, continued to be handled largely by local traders under the watchful eye of anxious authorities. These arrangements would fundamentally change with the thirteenth-century Mongol penetrations of the region.

### **Concluding Reflections**

By the twelfth century, direct trade had been re-established between the Song and the Đại Việt kingdom, but security issues received much more attention from the local chroniclers of this period. The Guangxi horse trade occupied the attention and efforts of Song administrators. With tribute missions from the Đại Việt becoming less frequent, while the titles granted to the tributary participants became more grandiose, Sino-Vietnamese relations were on strong footing and had become less of a concern for local officials, even though the increased militarization of the southern Guangxi countryside provided a hedge on the bet that peace would prevail across the borderlands. While maritime trade continued to flourish in this period, even restoring regional prominence to the now secondary port of Qinzhou, the inland trade remained very local except for luxury goods procured through tributary practices or the horse trade and other commodities exchanged in these commercial negotiations.

In the Sino-Vietnamese contact zone, a sense of interconnectedness, of the movement of peoples and commodities knitting together a trading zone or a centre of exchange where people’s lives overlapped at the local level, had appeared long before any effective boundaries could be imposed by later polities. William Zartman writes that “borderland reality is a moving machine at any moment, and it changes its movements as it moves through time, in motion both synchronically and diachronically ... Three dimensions need to be handled in the analysis (of a specific borderland region) – time, space, and activity.”<sup>75</sup> These three elements all play a role when, for the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands region, one considers the changing local influences exerted by the evolving power centres in the Song and Đại Việt courts, as well as changes in the role played by the frontier as a centre for economic production and exchange. The twelfth century marked a period when overland trade through the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands had been greatly overshadowed by maritime trade moving goods through the region, but the strategic importance of the inland trade had increased in the eyes of the Song court. Furthermore, in periods of the increased importance of trade in this region, the indigenous leaders of local communities resisted outside efforts to influence their administration of the populations under their control and the trade activities within their regions. Controlling local leaders’ activities would be a test for both the Song and Đại Việt authorities until the direct threat from the advancing Mongol armies changed the equation once again.

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