

# **Water Works Trans-regionally: Southeast Asian Networks of Migration, Culture, and Trade in the History of the South China Sea**

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## **Water Works Trans-regionally: Southeast Asian Networks of Migration, Culture, and Trade in the History of the South China Sea**

This article examines the history of the South China Sea in the context of migration, culture, and trade. Throughout the history of East Asia and Southeast Asia, portions of the sea have been hotly contested during the early modern period, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and through to the era of World War II and the Vietnam War, leading to the contemporary competing claims by ASEAN members and China over the symbolic Paracel and Spratly Islands. However, the deeper history of the lands along the shores of Southeast Asian history emphasizes a different narrative. Inspired by arguments presented by the great historian Fernand Braudel in his 1949 classic *The Mediterranean*, this article argues that the South China Sea is not a single sea dominated by nationalist competitions, but rather an oceanic space comprised of cultural networks that have dictated the major movements of history through trade and economic exchange.

**Keywords:** migration, culture, trade, South China Sea, the Mediterranean

# Water Works Trans-regionally: Southeast Asian Networks of Migration, Culture, and Trade in the History of the South China Sea

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## Introduction

The current territorial dispute over the South China Sea is predominantly staged by terms of contestation among China, Taiwan, and members of the ASEAN, namely the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Of all of these disputes, the dispute between Vietnam and China has perhaps received disproportionate attention. Whether this is due to a perceived history of eternal tension between Vietnamese and Chinese culture, or is simply encouraged through the frameworks of certain politicians (particularly in the United States) is up for debate. Meanwhile, taking a historical perspective on the oceanic realm of the South China Sea as a connecting force between East Asia and Southeast Asia makes it clear that migrations, cultural flows, and trade have rather been the dominating trends of this region, even if periods of history have been punctuated with substantial conflicts. Let us begin by choosing the vantage point of observing the South China Sea from an alternative lens: the south central coast of Vietnam.

A refreshing perspective on history can be gained from taking the south central coast of Vietnam as the central vantage point of this

examination. The South China Sea suddenly becomes the “Eastern Sea” (Biển Đông), whereas in the local Cham language, it is simply known as “the sea”—*tathik* (or “tasik” in written Cham). The water networks of the sea stretch southward, wrapping around the Mekong Delta, mixing with the Gulf of Thailand. They further spread outward off over the eastern and southern horizons to mix with the waters of the seas of Sulu, the Celebes, Java, Banda, and Timor before linking with the Andaman Sea and the Philippines Sea. These waters extend inward then as well into the highlands of mainland Southeast Asia, through the alluvial plains of Sumatra, Java, upward along the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam, through the Mekong of southern Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and eventually southern China. They also extend northward toward the ports of Macau and Hong Kong, through the East China Sea to the ports of Korea and Japan. Toward the west, they head past the Bay of Bengal and the Laccadive Sea, and penetrate as far as the “Arabian World” of the Hadramat and the Hijez before turning south to Madagascar and East Africa. Finally, they unfold deeply eastward and outward through Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia, then southeast to Australia and again through the Hawaiian Islands to the ports of California and Latin America. Such is the perspective of certain elements from *The Mediterranean* applied to the South China Sea.<sup>1</sup> It is a spatial turn

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar discussion specifically regarding Southeast Asia, see Heather Sutherland, “Southeast Asian History and the Mediterranean Analogy,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (February 2003): 1-20. In this article Sutherland (2003) appropriately points out that, in fact, while the majority of historical evidence weigh our attention to the South China Sea, in reality the Bay of Bengal has been just as important throughout the history of the region. In this piece, Sutherland begins with the Mediterranean metaphor, but then seems to drift into the discussion of the nature of area studies programs and the larger problems of teaching about Southeast Asia in a global context, particularly those scholars of the region face in academic institutions. Hence, Sutherland’s article presents an excellent sweep of the literature on Southeast Asia from this perspective. Meanwhile, drawing inspiration from Sutherlands and more deeply, Fernand Braudel’s *The Mediterranean* as an analogy for the South China Sea this article seeks to capture the winds of this discussion and sail further. As Sutherland writes, ‘The Mediterranean is thus typified by a dynamic balance between interaction and separation, in which a fundamental and

influenced by geographers that has shaped the perspective of historians ever since Fernand Braudel first composed his classic history of the Mediterranean world, written from the experience of a historian imprisoned by conflict. Inspired by the classic work of *The Mediterranean*, the South China Sea can be considered not as a bound region, but by nature a nebulous space that flows into the nebulous space of others. Yet, like the nature of the sea, it is also electric, stimulating the movements of history. The questions we then strive to answer are: How can this vision of the South China Sea reshape our understanding of East Asian and Southeast Asian history? How did these connections shape cultural flows? How did they connect classical Vietnamese, Cham, Philippine, Funanese, and Chen La cultures to others? How do we see the sea as a force that even shaped connections to Angkor in Cambodia and Lan Xang in Laos? And why is it helpful to view the history of the South China Sea through this particular lens?

Upon beginning to think about how to answer the above questions, there are at least four well-thought-out publications that are especially useful, along with a website named “History of the World in 100 Objects” by the BBC and the British Museum.<sup>2</sup> What is noticeable in this fascinating, invaluable collection of publications and website is that there are relatively few objects from locations around the South China Sea. From the perspective of global history, only the shadow puppet of Bima, a representation of the Javanese adaptations of the classical Indian “Mahabharata” stories, and a Borobudur Buddha head that is also from the island of Java “make it” into the consideration of “world history.”

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almost unchanging character is overlaid by a kaleidoscope of movement and variegation.’ See *ibid.*, 12. Braudel himself made very controversial statements. Nevertheless, the aim of this paper is not to repeat those mistakes, but rather to use the potentially beneficial framework that he provided, since for much of history in Southeast Asia and even arguably up until the present, access to water has been more important than access to land.

<sup>2</sup> BBC. “A History of the World in 100 Objects.” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/about/british-museum-objects/>

Using such a collection as a reference point, it can be said that the history of the South China Sea is generally ignored from a global perspective. For example, it is fitting that the head of a Buddha is the main feature of Borobudur, but what about the small relief of sailors that appears on the very same monument?<sup>3</sup> The relief of the sailors highlights that without the sea there would never have been a Buddha head in Borobudur. Utilizing frequently ignored details of a frequently ignored region has been the task of scholars of Southeast Asia for some time. Yet, throughout this task, few have forgotten that the sea has been a critical connecting force throughout human history. In the words of Barbara Watson Andaya, it has been a “medium for connecting peoples of quite distant regions through the exchange of people, goods and ideas.”<sup>4</sup>

The framework presented by Andaya in combination with Braudel can be used to newly examine the South China Sea from the perspective of a historian of Southeast Asia. This paper relies on four, critical, well-composed, scholarly works that deal with the study of the sea and the region. In loose chronological order, the first is *The Cham of Vietnam*, which covers the rise of the early classical civilization of the Cham along the Vietnamese coast and the rest of the sea.<sup>5</sup> This book can lead well into *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, which is really more of an examination of the interactions between South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian cultures with a special emphasis on water networks and trade.<sup>6</sup> This work’s study can then be followed by *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, which can be used to re-emphasize the fact that the South China Sea did not stand alone throughout history, alike the connections to East

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 673.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 672.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce M. Lockhart and Trần Kỳ Phương, eds., *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen, eds., *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010).

Asia always having been coupled with open trade routes through the straits of Malacca and onward to the Indian Ocean.<sup>7</sup> Using these studies and combining other evidence, the history of the South China Sea and its extended networks can be divided into three periods: 1) Pre-historical to the late-classical, 2) Early Modern to High Colonial, and 3) High Colonial to the modern, or contemporary present. In each of these periods, this paper will argue for exactly three themes: migration, cultural flows, and trade that dominated human concerns and interactions, even in certain times of intense conflict.

By asserting such a frame, this paper intends to contest the notions presented in an otherwise phenomenally well-grounded entry into the theoretical points behind the *maritime disputes of East Asia* by Min Gyo Koo.<sup>8</sup> As Koo describes that “in contrast to other East Asian island disputes, military action has been a viable option to resolve the sovereignty issue in the South China Sea,” sovereignty is still discussed in reality, and will continue to be discussed, despite three military clashes in 1974, 1978-1979, and 1987-1988. Rather, such military clashes seem to have simply escalated future debates instead of having resolved sovereignty issues. Hence, in conjunction with Koo’s notion that militarization has not aided East Asia, this trend has also not aided Southeast Asia and East Asian relations. Additionally, it should be argued that Koo’s study through its “temporal limitations” prevents us from examining the *longue durée* of human history and from seeing that the concept of “maritime possession” is not new, but is taking on new forms in the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> The essential problem with Koo’s approach, specifically regarding the South China Sea, appears to be that he did not

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<sup>7</sup> R. Michael Feener, Patrick Daly, and Anthony Reid, eds., *Mapping the Acehnese Past* (Leiden, The Netherlands: KITLV Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Min Gyo Koo, *Island Disputes and Maritime Regime Building in East Asia: Between a Rock and A Hard Place*, PDF e-book (New York: Springer, 2010), 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

consider multi-lateral claimants and solutions in relation to the overall framework of his work, despite mentioning the 2002 ASEAN summit.<sup>10</sup> Yet, it must be said that ultimately, such a framework agrees with Koo's conclusions that "the burgeoning efforts to form regional agreements ..." are the only means to smooth the "bumpy road."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Koo's study also presents a good review of the contemporary conflict in that the lack of trade relations between Vietnam and China, which counts for less than 1% of China's total trade, was cited as a pre-cursor to China's conflict with Vietnam in 1974 in the Paracel Islands.<sup>12</sup> Hence, in the spirit of placing that "bridge over troubled waters" to which Koo refers, let us begin with an examination of the pre-historical to the late-classical trends of migration, cultural flows and trade.<sup>13</sup>

## **I. Pre-historical to the Late-classical: Migration, Cultural Flows, and Trade**

From the earliest periods of the history of East Asia and Southeast Asia, it is possible to trace migrations that moved explicitly around the waters of the South China Sea, perhaps beginning with the Austronesian migration out of Taiwan. As waves of land and water migrations began to populate the greater areas of mainland and islands in Southeast Asia, trade relationships among the early polities that stretched across the South China, Sulu, and Java seas can be found in archaeological records and early historical accounts as well as the epigraphic tradition that so long fascinated the colonial scholars of the *École française d'Extrême-Orient*.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 15. "The process of Sino-Vietnamese territorial rapprochement culminated at the 2002 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit where the ten member-states of ASEAN and China signed a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, with the aim of preventing conflict and promoting cooperation in the region."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 137-166.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 163.

However, Chinese influence was not the only one in the waves: the cultural flows of Indic tradition blended with Chinese culture in the formation of “mandala” polities. From the earliest days of these polities, identity was nebulous and ever changing. Hence, although it is important to recognize that many would make a clear distinction between Vietnam and Chinese peoples in the pre-historic and early historical periods, others such as Liam Kelley would assert that there was not such a clear boundary between the two during certain early historical period.<sup>14</sup> Anderson, Cooke, and Li have recently demonstrated that the space of the Gulf of Tonkin has been rather integrated and interconnected throughout history.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, such assertions of Southeast Asian polities as powerful independent participants in global trading networks would eventually become apparent, although it is arguable that this did not forcefully occur until the late classical period or the early modern period. However, before entering this discussion, let us begin with a more detailed exploration of the ecology and geography that shaped the historical flow of the South China Sea from the pre-historical period to the late classical period.

The ecology and geography of the lands surrounding the South China Sea combine to form one of the most unique and diverse landscapes on the surface of the world. The region is well known for active volcanoes, which produced the island chains of Malaysia and Indonesia as well as the 7,000 islands of the Philippines. Soil enriched by volcanic nutrients is critical to many of the alluvial plains that surround the South China Sea. Furthermore, the role of rice agriculture is central to the lands that surround the sea. In fact, rice agriculture may have originated in Southeast Asia before China and today’s Laos, connected to the South China Sea vis-à-vis the Mekong River, holding the greatest

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<sup>14</sup> Liam C. Kelley, “The Bronze Pillars,” in *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 5-36.

<sup>15</sup> James A. Anderson, Nola Cooke, and Tana Li, eds., *The Tongking Gulf through History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

genetic diversity of rice with at least 54 known varieties. Rice is indeed crucial, and many Southeast Asian societies describe themselves in relation to rice. For example, Vietnam is popularly described as two rice baskets, the Mekong River and the Red River deltas, strung on a pole. According to the tradition of the Austronesian Cham peoples—one of the earliest civilizations to touch the waves of the sea, perhaps as early as the second century CE—it was the goddess Po Inâ Nâgar who taught them rice agriculture.<sup>16</sup> Early accounts of traveling the South China Sea and connected water networks consequentially tend to focus on the variance between dry and wet seasons, punctuated by moments of flash flooding, typhoons, and the occasional tsunami—a theme that resonates even to this day in light of the tragic events in the Philippines as well as the coast of Vietnam in just this past year of 2013. Meanwhile, other portions of the region along the northern shores of the South China Sea tend to have four seasons with climates comparable to the southern and central Appalachian Mountains in the United States or northern portions of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, long-term climate change has most likely been the culprit in the production of several incredibly arid regions in the Ninh Thuận and Bình Thuận provinces in Vietnam, which would be in direct contact with the shores of the sea throughout history, and in the upper flood plains of the Irrawaddy in Burma. Given the diversity of climate, it is no surprise that the peopling of the shores surrounding the South China Sea has produced substantial ethno-linguistic diversity, as well.

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<sup>16</sup> Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar. As has been cited by Andaya, the “Austronesian” socio-political metaphor has historical included a reference to boats. Examples include the “barangay” of the Philippines and the “perahu” of the Malays. See Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 676. Incidentally, the Cham are one of the few Austronesian peoples who do not see their socio-political structure as a boat, in accordance with the trend noted by Coedès and cited by Barbara Watson Andaya, but rather in terms of a “tree.” Nevertheless, the importance of water to the metaphor of an Austronesian social political society cannot be underestimated. See George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968); Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*.

The earliest human migrations along the shores of the South China Sea date back to the migrations of *Homo erectus* that entered the region as early as one million years ago. The populations of *Homo erectus* are popularly known as “the Hobbit” and “Java Man” and may be found on the island of Java. However, the greatest number of *Homo erectus* samples in the region may be found today in northern Vietnam. From *Homo erectus* dominant migrations, *Homo sapiens* entered the region by 40,000 BCE, becoming the dominant species of the genus *Homo* along the shores of the South China Sea some 20,000 years before *Homo sapiens* became the dominant species of Europe. The next major wave of migration was the Austronesian expansion, initially a movement of Austronesian speaking peoples out of Taiwan, southward along the Philippine islands, across the Malay islands, and then upward along the coast of Vietnam. Occasionally, and perhaps incorrectly, this migration has been labeled as “diaspora” with the implication that the Austronesians must have been fleeing some condition of strife on the mainland of Asia. Regardless, the Austronesian languages would be the widest dispersed in the world by the end of the late classical period (roughly the fifteenth century), with Austronesian speakers living along all of the shores of the South China Sea throughout Southeast Asia, stretching deeply into the regions of the South Pacific and throughout the Indian Ocean and finally touching the shores of Madagascar. It was Austronesians that founded the earliest trading centers and religious polities on the shores of the South China Sea, dating to the first centuries of the Common Era. Among these earliest centers were the mandalas of Funan (Cham), Srivijaya (Malay), and Majapahit (Javanese).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thomaz seems to distinguish Funan from Champa, but nevertheless notes that trade, rather than agriculture, was critical for the economies of “Funan, Champa and Srivijaya.” See Luis Filipe Ferreira Reis Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka,” in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 70. Sutherland notes that the classical kingdoms are “Pagan, Sukhotai, Angkor, Dai Viet, Srivijaya and Majapahit.” See Sutherland, “Southeast Asian History and the Mediterranean Analogy,” 9.

An important function of the Austronesian migrations was that they put these proto-urbanized trading and religious centers along the shores of the South China Sea in greater connection to the coasts of southern China (and eventually East Asia and Northeast Asia), as well as south India and East Africa, eventually establishing a trading network formed from the Middle East to Japan. Colonial era and mid-twentieth century historiographical tradition may have suggested that South Asian populations may have approached the region with a military and even explicitly “colonial perspective.” More recent interpretations have suggested that it is more likely for Austronesian peoples to have “borrowed” from various traditions, consistently blending and re-blending elements of Chinese, Indic, and Austronesian culture. An example of this can be seen through the adaptation of the southern Brahmi and later Pallava-Grantha families of Indic scripts among the wealth of Cham, Khmer, and Javanese inscriptions. Meanwhile, Geoff Wade (1993) has even suggested that the flows of cultural trade across

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See Shiro Momoki, “Mandala Champa’ Seen from Chinese Sources,” in *The Cham of Vietnam*: ed. Lockhart and Trần, 120-137. Momoki notes that the northern proto-Champa polity of Lin Yi likely emerged in the region of Quảng Nam province today, rising primarily through tributary relations with the “Six Dynasties” (221-589) and the Sui-Tang (589-907). Archaeological evidence of roof tiles seems to confirm Sino-Cham relations. Perhaps it was due to geographical proximity, but Lin Yi sent the most tribute to northern courts out of any Southeast Asian polity during these times. Although the Sui eventually sacked and directly administered Lin Yi for a short time in the seventh century, the independence of Lin Yi was likely regained through the Tang dynasty in the seventh century. It was at this time that the term *Campadesa* first appeared, during the reign of King Cambhuvarma (r.-629 CE) and there was then a deliberate “self-Indianization” of the Champa civilization. See also Peter Bellwood, “Southeast Asia Before History: The Late Neolithic and Early Metal Phases in the Austronesian World,” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, vol. 1, pt. 1, From early times to c. 1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 126-135; Anthony Reid, “Introduction: The Lands below the Winds,” in *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 1-10; William Henry Scott, “The Beyer Wave Migration Theory,” in *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Manila, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1997), 10-12; Peter Bellwood and Marc Oxenham, “The Expansions of Farming Societies and the Role of the Neolithic Demographic Transition,” in *The Neolithic Demographic Transition and Its Consequences*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bocquet-Appel and Ofer Bar-Yosef (Cambridge, MA: Springer, 2008), 13-34.

the South China Sea led to the Tagalog adaptation of Old Cham adaptations of the Pallava-Grantha family in order to form the now lost pre-colonial Tagalog script.<sup>18</sup>

## 1. Historical Records

Since the nineteenth century, a primary focus of scholars of Southeast Asia has been on studying written historical records. Justifiably then, studies of epigraphy and paleography have continued through to the present. The evidence gathered from these studies can provide precious glimpses into the history of the lands along the shores of the South China Sea up to the seventeenth century, although the records are punctuated at best and frequently present conflicting narrative accounts. So, to balance studies of epigraphy and paleography, studies of archaeology have been used to fill the gaps between lines of worn stone. Based upon archaeological finds, it has become possible to suggest the spread of trade networks of pottery, early metallurgy, beads, and other luxury items that extended well into the Visayas region of the Philippines, along the Gulf of Thailand and up the coast of what is now Vietnam. By the end of the first millennia of the common era, such networks further extended to the trading centers of Srivijaya (Palembang), Muaro Jambi, Majapahit, and Funan, and later, Water and Mountain Chen La, the Cham Negara of Indrapura and Amaravati and the Vietnamese upriver trading center of Thăng Long. In the Philippines, proto-“barangay” societies would have also developed by then, as well as the early trading centers of the Burmese on the Irrawaddy. As time progressed, the polities of Water and Mountain Chen La moved their centers further upstream and eventually became the civilization of Angkor on the northern banks of the Tonlé Sap, while

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<sup>18</sup> Geoff Wade, “On the Possible Cham Origin of the Philippine Scripts,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 24, no. 1 (March 1993): 44-87.

ceramics began to rise as a critical trade material.<sup>19</sup>

Besides epigraphy, paleography, and archaeology, early Chinese language maps and accounts of travel and trade provide the best details of individual polities around the shores of the South China Sea. Recorded as Lin Yi (Cham), Bo Ni (Borneo), and Bu Tuan (the Philippines), many of the southern centers, including those of Srivijaya, Majapahit, and, later, the Sultanate of Melaka, were recorded through the “northern-civilized” versus “southern-barbarous” dichotomy. At the same time, these centers became critical contributors of trade from the Han dynasty through to the Tang dynasty and beyond. In this network of exchange, however, materials were not the only products that were exchanged. Wade, for example, convincingly argued for the potential influence of Cham scripts on the pre-colonial Tagalog script, while E. D. Edwards and C. O. Blagden made their own arguments for the existence of substantial Chinese loanwords amongst the Cham language.<sup>20</sup> Other studies in historical linguistics have led to the assertions that there are linkages between the Cham, Malay, Javanese, Minangkabau, Tagalog, and Acehnese languages in which their divergence appears to pre-date available historical records.

Even with the linkages between languages that seem to have

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Higham, *The Civilization of Angkor* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 1-142; Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 678; Eric Tagliacozzo, “Export Ceramics in Philippine Societies: Historical and Ethnographic Perspectives,” in *Clio/Anthropos: Exploring the Boundaries between History and Anthropology*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo and Andrew Willford (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 78-79; Roxanna M. Brown, “A Ming Gap? Data from Southeast Asian Shipwreck Cargoes,” in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Wade and Laichen, 359-378; Miriam T. Stark, “From Funan to Angkor: Collapse and Regeneration in Ancient Cambodia,” in *After Collapse: The Regeneration of Complex Societies* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 144-167. See also Ian Glover and Kim Dung Nguyễn, “Excavations at Gò Cẩm, Quảng Nam, 2000-2003: Lin Yi and the Emergence of the Cham Kingdoms,” in *The Cham of Vietnam*, ed. Lockhart and Trần, 54-81.

<sup>20</sup> Wade, “On the Possible Cham Origin of the Philippine Scripts”; E. D. Edwards and C. O. Blagden, “A Chinese Vocabulary of Cham Words and Phrases,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 10, no. 1 (January 1939): 53-91.

existed along the shores of the South China Sea, source material in Chinese records from the second through the fifteenth century remains unmatched. Among the most revealing of Chinese accounts are the *Zhufan Zhi* by Zhao Rugua around 1225, the *Song Huiyao Jigao*, the *Daoyi zhilue*, and the *Ming Shilu*. The majority of these texts have already been made available to non-Chinese scholars for centuries. However, it seems that certain texts such as the *Song Huiyao Jigao* were not available to twentieth-century French scholars such as Georges Maspéro (1928).<sup>21</sup> Increased reading of these source materials has greatly improved our understanding of the region. The *Daoyi zhilue* records that the Champa polities were only “eight days away” with a “tailwind” from the northern court. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, a family name of “Pu”—thought to be the Cham “Po” or influenced by the Arabic “Abu”—was in control of trade from “Zhancheng (Indrapura), Sanfoqi (Srivijaya) and Java.”<sup>22</sup> The *Song Huiyao Jigao* recorded the Cham practice of buffalo slaughter during which a medium would utter the phrase “A-luo-he-ji-ba.” Scholars seem to agree that this is likely a record of the Cham Bani, an Islamic-influenced practice, where a Po Acar invokes “Allahu akhbar” before slitting the throat of the buffalo. The same source notes that the dress of people in this region “resembled the lands of Da-Shi” (Arabia). Hence, Arabic and Islamic cultural traditions are thought to have already spread to this region by the twelfth century, while Kublai Khan stressed the importance of placing a *xingsheng* “mobile secretariat” in the vicinity of Đông Dương (negara Indrapura) to control trade from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean.<sup>23</sup> A final figure that has fascinated many academics would be the

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<sup>21</sup> Geoff Wade, “The ‘Account of Champa’ in the Song Huiyao Jigao,” in *The Cham of Vietnam*, ed. Lockhart and Trần, 138-167.

<sup>22</sup> Momoki, “‘Mandala Champa’ Seen from Chinese Sources,” 127.

<sup>23</sup> Wade, “The ‘Account of Champa’ in the Song Huiyao Jigao,” 143; Momoki, “‘Mandala Champa’ Seen from Chinese Sources,” 127.

fifteenth century Chinese eunuch Muslim Admiral Zheng He (or Chang Ho). Zheng He has received great recent popular recognition in both the Arab world and in China for proving the greatness of these respective cultures, although certain historians have been critical toward an over-emphasis on the importance of Zheng He.<sup>24</sup>

The figure Zheng He is, however, merely symbolic of the historical importance of the Ming dynasty's impact on the lands that surround the shores of the South China Sea.<sup>25</sup> There is a sort of mantra amongst historians of Vietnam that goes, "When China was weak, Vietnam was strong," and, by extension, when the Ming were strong, the kingdom of Đại Việt was weak. However, this pushing and pulling relationship seems to have opened doors for other regional trade centers: the Cham negara of Vijaya at Quy Nhon and the Sultanate of Melaka, as well as port towns in the southern Philippines. Nevertheless, written accounts by the Chinese regarding the Philippines are relatively sparse, forcing a reliance on archaeological records from much later periods. Based on this evidence, the first trading polity of Bu Tuan began to disperse in favor of the centers of Sulu and Maguindanao with the rise of Ming China. Archaeological evidence from these locations suggests they were involved in long-distance Ming porcelain trade. Digs from Cebu dating back to the same period suggest that not only Ming wares, but also Thai and Vietnamese wares were being exchanged in the Philippines during this time as well.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For a good map of Zheng He's route see: "Tracing Zheng He" from the National Geographic (2005) at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0507/feature2/map.html>

<sup>25</sup> The role of the Ming Dynasty in symbolically creating Southeast Asia is often not given enough attention. Barbara Watson Andaya places the importance on the creation of a "symbolic sea" that separated Ming China from Southeast Asia on a Ming Dynasty map. See Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 673.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Lee Junker, "The Long Distance Porcelain Trade," in *Raiding, Trading and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 183-220.

## 2. The Rise of Melaka and Its Contemporaries

The strength of Ming China would be directly tied to the rise of Melaka during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the Sultanate of Melaka replaced the Indo-Buddhist mandala of Majapahit as the keeper of the gates between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. The former peripheries of Malay Patani (now in southern Thailand) and Ryukyu also began to appear in Chinese documents at this time, as Andaya drew upon the work of many others to suggest that the “Austronesian world” spread as far as from the Philippines to Taiwan, Ryukyu, and northward to Japan by the sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup> For example, a Ryukyu anthology of 1531 includes a passage where a priestess makes mention of the sea spirits of “Japan, China, Java and the *Southern Seas*” during a chant.<sup>28</sup> These spirits of the southern seas were soon to become very real figures with the rise of the Malay Sultanates as trading polities and cultural religious centers, beginning with the Sultanate of Melaka.<sup>29</sup>

The rise of the trade port center of the Sultanate of Melaka in the Straits of Malacca during the fourteenth century had long term impacts on the shape of the water networks of the South China Sea for the centuries that followed. The work of Luis Filipe F. R. Thomaz provides a rather standard reading of Melaka’s history, focused only on the state.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, Hall (1999) and Taylor (1999) emphasize the continuities

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<sup>27</sup> Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 675.

<sup>29</sup> Geoff Wade, “The Patani Region in Chinese Texts from the 6th to the 19th Centuries,” in *International Conference the Phantasm in Southern Thailand: Historical Writings on Patani and the Islamic World*, ed. Patric Jory and Jirawat Saengthong (Bangkok, Thailand: Walailak University, 2009); Sun Laichen, “Assessing the Ming Role in China’s Southern Expansion,” in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Wade and Laichen, 44-82; Anthony Reid, “Hybrid Identities in the Fifteenth Century Straits,” in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Wade and Laichen, 307-327.

<sup>30</sup> Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka.”

between Melaka and previous Hindu-Buddhist mandala of Srivijaya.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the work of Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya demonstrates an up-to-date succinct and well nuanced reading of the importance of Melaka as a regional entrepôt and the impact this port had on the greater trade networks of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond.<sup>32</sup>

As the successor to the Hindu-Buddhist Empire of Srivijaya, the Malay Sultanate of Melaka owes its lineage to a local ruler from Palembang who broke away from the Javanese mandala of Majapahit with the support of Ming China. The empire of Srivijaya (670-1025) had been recorded in the accounts of the early Chinese pilgrim I Ching. In this account, the lord of Srivijaya was recorded as the ruler of the mountains and “the lord of the isles” able to commune with the “spirit of the waters of the sea.”<sup>33</sup> The unity between the upland regions and the water networks of the sea was thus very real for the rulers of Srivijaya.<sup>34</sup> At this time, Palembang was not technically subordinate to Srivijaya, but rather a vassal of the Javanese mandala of Majapahit. In the 1390s, Paramesvara appeared from Palembang and moved to Tumasik (now Singapore) before he was forced to move by the expansion of the Thai mandala of Ayutthaya to Melaka. While Srivijaya sent tribute to Song China at this time, Melaka formed a formal relationship with Ming China in 1411, according to I Ching. Paramesvara’s lineage became famous for their contestation against the Thai, particularly under Tuan Perak.

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<sup>31</sup> Kenneth R. Hall, “Economic History of Early Southeast Asia: Champa’s Plunder Based Political-Economy,” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, vol. 1, pt. 1, From early times to c. 1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 252-260; Keith W. Taylor, “The Early Kingdoms,” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, vol. 1, From Early Times to c. 1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 173-176.

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Hall, “Economic History of Early Southeast Asia: Champa’s Plunder Based Political-Economy,” 197.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, “The Early Kingdoms,” 175.

However, a relative shift came with the introduction of Islam. As evident from the neglect in the *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay Annals) of pre-Islamic history, the conversion of the sultanate represents a certain rupture to social order as Islam represented a new form of social organization to history, religious structures, and even trade agreements.<sup>35</sup> Thomaz has noted that a detailed account of the *Sejarah Melayu* combined with the accounts of the Portuguese, in particular, Tomé Pires, provide a better understanding of Melaka than almost any other fifteenth to sixteenth century Sultanate in the region.<sup>36</sup>

The geography of the straits was undoubtedly a factor in Melaka's rise to prominence. The port was situated with great access to the Indian Ocean, guarding the Straits of Malacca and, most importantly, gave access northward through the South China Sea. Just upriver from Melaka was where Paramesvara (Seri Teri Buana in the *Sejarah Melayu*) built his residence at Bertam. This protected residence facilitated the rise of the *orang kaya* Malay trading elite protected by the *orang laut* (boat people) who were enlisted to patrol the straits and the archipelago outward to the island of Borneo.<sup>37</sup> Seasonal monsoon winds dictated traders who arrived from the Indian Ocean, Java, and the South China Sea to rest in Melaka before the winds would change so that they could return to their home ports. Hence, the *orang kaya* built a complex local administrative law called the *undang-undang Melaka* held in place by four *syahbandar* harbor masters, governed by a *bendahara* principle minister and a system of *temenggung* overseers of import and export duties, controlling trade throughout the region.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Thomaz, "The Malay Sultanate of Melaka," 69.

<sup>37</sup> Later these *orang laut* became a minority that was nominally protected, but in reality marginalized by the states of Malaysia and Indonesia. However, while the repression of *orang laut* peoples was very old in coastal Vietnam and China, in the Straits of Malacca they were highly revered during the early modern period. See Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 670-671.

<sup>38</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 51.

With the rise of Melaka, the Malay language now spoken in the three states of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Sultanate of Brunei became the lingua franca of the waters of the region. During this time, the larger language group of Austronesian became the most widely spoken in the world. Thomaz (1993) estimated that the port had a total population of 100,000 to 200,000—several times the population estimates of any comparable ports on the shores of the South China Sea at the time.<sup>39</sup> An estimated 90-95% of income for this population was generated solely through taxes on goods traded through the straits. Yet, the comparable rates of exchange were incredibly low. In his *Suma Oriental que trata do Mar Roxo até aos Chins* (Summa of the East, from the Red Sea up to the Chinese), Tomé Pires noted that up to 84 languages were spoken in the city in a day. According to the *Sejarah Melayu*, there was once one *bendahara* who was “so clever in his handling of foreigners and skilled in the conciliation of the good will of the populace” that the master of ships bound for Melaka would invoke a prayer before weighing anchor that concluded “may we reach Melaka safely and see Pisang Jeram—the stream of Bukit China and the Bendera Sri Maharaja.”<sup>40</sup>

The expansion of the Sultanate of Melaka’s power continued throughout the fifteenth century until Melaka had subdued most of the key ports and choke points in the archipelago and along the southern waters of the South China Sea. This power allowed Melaka to reject both the Ayutthaya (central Thai) and Majapahit (Javanese) mandalas, even though they still recognized the distant authority of the Middle Kingdom, China. Nevertheless, the territory (*tanah*) of Melaka was never as large as Srivijaya, and many northern Malay polities considered Ayutthaya

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<sup>39</sup> Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka.”

<sup>40</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 51; Kenneth R. Hall, “Economic History of Early Southeast Asia: Early Economic Development, The Age of the Srivijayan Maritime Empire (670-1025),” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, vol. 1, pt. 1, From early times to c. 1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 196-201; Taylor, “The Early Kingdoms”; Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka.”

more of a regional authority. Through an apparent allegiance with Chinese Muslims and the Rom (Turkish) “Shadow of God upon earth,” Melaka became a “yardstick of Islam” in the region as the customary rule of Malaya-Muslim *adat law* became the dominant stems of governance. Melaka became the conduit for Islam into the region, an influence that extended into the societies of the Cham (now Vietnam) and Cambodia, as well as the Philippines and lasted until the present.<sup>41</sup>

The Portuguese conquest of Melaka in 1511 was no doubt devastating and the memory of this conquest would impact the constructions of later concepts of history in the straits. However, it is somewhat overemphasized, given that the port of Melaka itself remained the major entrepôt in the region and predominantly populated by Southeast Asians themselves throughout the sixteenth century until an alliance between the Dutch East India Company (the VOC) and Melaka’s successor sultanate of Johor led to the defeat of the Portuguese in 1641. The motivations of the Portuguese were influenced solely by the claims of the explorer Vasco de Gama, who argued to the King of Portugal that through the conquest of Melaka, the spice trade could be diverted out of Malay (read: Muslim) hands and around the Cape of Good Hope (read: into Christian hands). Afonso de Albuquerque, the “principle architect” of the mission, had no less than two conquests under his belt, Goa (1510) and Homuz (1515) before Melaka (August 10, 1511) as the Portuguese forced open a trade network at the barrel of a gun that stretched from the Maluku islands to the eastern Indonesian archipelago and again to Portugal. This conquest may have marked “the end” for Melaka in European eyes. However, it also opened the stage for a series of “successor sultanates” such as Brunei, Perak, and Aceh (Chamic, not Malayic).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 39-71; Hall, “Economic History of Early Southeast Asia”; Taylor, “The Early Kingdoms”; Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka.”

<sup>42</sup> Hall, “Economic History of Early Southeast Asia”; Taylor, “The Early Kingdoms”; Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka.”

By the fifteenth century, the port of the contemporary Sultanate of Brunei had already been recognized as an entrepôt under the Chinese toponym “P’o-Ni.” A gift of imperial regalia came from the Sultanate of Johor in the sixteenth century, although contestations between Christians and Muslims created another fault line at the southern reaches of the waters of the South China Sea. The Spanish founded its own outpost in Cebu as of 1565, conquered Muslim Manila in 1571, and expanded again to Brunei in 1578, although this expansion would result in the independence of the Sulu Sultanate from Brunei. Meanwhile, at Perak, a region well-known for rich alluvial tin deposits, the Sultanate of Johor was cited as the link of authority from the Sultanate of Melaka. However, both of these centers would remain relatively small when compared to the rise of the Sultanate of Aceh in the seventeenth century. Although the Sultanate of Aceh attempted to play the Dutch and the Portuguese against each other, the Sultanate of Aceh remained quite powerful, particularly after the collapse of Johor. Although Johor had the rightful claim of the Lakshmana family as descended from Melaka and the advantage of a Dutch East India Company (VOC) trading alliance, regicide in 1699 plunged the Sultanate into disorder. The fall of Johor and the rise of Aceh would then have a long-standing impact on the straits and the trade that flowed through them up until the present, contesting previous interpretations that British rule erased the memory of Melaka while memories of the *orang kaya*, the systems of *daulut* and *adat* customary law, remained in place.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. A Glance at Early Sino-Vietnamese Relations

Paralleling the above examination of the straits of Melaka and the role of the Chinese and the relationship between later European colonialists as

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<sup>43</sup> Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 39-71.

well as their attempts to control the waters and the goods that flowed along them are quite similar to the case of the Vietnamese and the Chinese relationship along the shores of the South China Sea. There are deep roots to this historical relationship, continuities, ruptures and it is these trends that inform relations up until the present. Much like Chinese history, a historical trope in Vietnamese history is the “long history of the Vietnamese people.” In the case of the Vietnamese, this is phrased as a “long history of independence” in both popular and scholarly venues. During the late classical period, the northern court attracted trade tribute from all corners of the world and the Vietnamese kingdom centered at Thăng Long was not to be left out. Nevertheless, in Vietnamese history, the “1,000 years of Chinese domination” and the independence of the Vietnamese through the 938 CE victory of the Lê dynasty is generally seen as the critical first in a series of victories that would include those over the French in 1854, the Americans in 1973, the Republic of South Vietnam (seen as an arm of Western Imperialism) in 1975 and the Chinese (again) in 1979. This trope can be found as informing the works of such critical historians as Keith Taylor and Nguyễn Khắc Viện.<sup>44</sup>

The history of Vietnam is generally critically memorialized by the “first history”: Ngô Sĩ Liên’s *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*, a fifteenth-century work that was later used to argue for the link between the south-central Nguyễn Vietnamese dynasty and the historically northern Lê. However, the work gives great credit to the Vietnamese mythos that there were once 100 eggs that became the 100 tribes of the Yueh (Việt) peoples. Many scholars have recorded the Yueh as purely Chinese peoples. However, it might be best to adapt the position that the Yueh were neither Vietnamese nor Chinese, but rather a nebulous population out of which emerged the Vietnamese and other Yueh groups in southern

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<sup>44</sup> Keith W. Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983); Khắc Viện Nguyễn, *Vietnam: A Long History* (Hanoi, Vietnam: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1987).

China today, while also acknowledging that the Yueh became Chinese as well in a sense over time. In *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese relationship*, Liam Kelley has argued that the conception of borders between Vietnamese and Chinese society during the classical periods was not always as clear as it is today. By the fifteenth century, it is possible to assert that the declining Ming presence, combined with a whole range of other immeasurable factors allowed for a positioning that increased Lê power. Meanwhile, Alexander Woodside has argued for the strong application of Chinese models of governance among the nineteenth century Nguyễn dynasty, which would include manifestations of how they would interact with individuals from “beyond their shores,” even though the arms trade, trade of technology, cultural imaginings and medical traditions continued to link Vietnamese society to the north well into the late nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Nguyen and Ching Civil Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Kelley, “The Bronze Pillars”; Insun Yu, “Lê Văn Hưu and Ngô Sĩ Liên: A Comparison of Their Perception of Vietnamese History,” in *Việt Nam: Borderless Histories*, ed. Anthony Reid and Nhung Tuyết Trần (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 45-71. Lê Văn Hưu is the compiler of the *Đại Việt Sử Ký* and Ngô Sĩ Liên is the compiler of the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*. The first book was supposedly 33 volumes and finished in 1272. However, since the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* was only 15 volumes and finished in 1479, many scholars believe the initial work was shorter. Ultimately, both were modelled after Chinese histories and absorbed notions of Chinese Confucian ethics and Buddhist morality seen through a Vietnamese lens to uphold history as a lesson in morality. Keith W. Taylor, “Surface Orientations in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 4 (November 1998): 949-978. In this article Taylor also demonstrates the “spatial turn” to Vietnamese history, looking at the “surfaces that people inhabit rather than seeing them as teleologically unified.” He chooses six conflicts to rethink Vietnamese history: those of Lê-Mạc in the fifteenth century, the Trịnh-Nguyễn wars of the seventeenth century, the Tây Sơn-Nguyễn in the eighteenth, Nguyễn Ánh Gia Long’s formation of the Nguyễn dynasty at the turn of the nineteenth, and the French conquest. Even in the northern perspective, Đông Kinh and Thanh Nghệ were still heavily dependent on coastal trade with their populations consolidated predominantly along rivers that fed toward the coast (957). In this article, he identifies the interconnectedness and regionality of Vietnamese geography. In particular, he points out how coastal regions such as Bình Định were centers that allowed for networks reaching into the highlands, in this case An Khê, Pây Ku and across the mountains to Stung Treng and the Mekong by the seventeenth century as there were also overland routes that connected Quy Nhơn to Ayutthaya (now Thailand) (964). See also Tana Li, “The Ming

## II. Early Modern to High Colonial Migrations, Cultural Flows, and Trade

In light of the assertions of Vietnamese, Cham, Malay, and Filipino local sovereignty dating from the late Ming dynasty through the high colonial period, it is important not to overemphasize the role that Ming China or Europeans would have had on the waves of the South China Sea and the oceanic space beyond. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that, just like Ming China and even increasingly so throughout the colonial period, moves upon the waves would be characterized increasingly by the dynamics of land-based authorities that sought to control oceanic space. In each port and harbor, there was always room for contestation, particularly between smaller trading cites. However, the dominant trend remained to establish recognized trading relationships, even if the largest of these relationships were no longer in Southeast Asian hands. The beginning of this transition is well seen through a series of critical events and the watershed proposed in Anthony Reid's work *The Age of Commerce*: 1) the decline of Ming China and 2) the rise of early-modern Southeast Asian trading centers such as the Thai at Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya from 1350 to 1767, a Thai polity later reorganized further down-river as "Siam," and Nguyễn Đàng Trong Cochinchina, the Vietnamese kingdom that emerged from the sixteenth century and rose to empire status in the nineteenth century before it was incorporated into the French colonies of Indochina as the territories of Annam and Cochinchina.

Although the Vietnamese and Thai "alternatives to the Middle Kingdom" arose during slightly different periods, they produced a unique

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Factor and the Emergence of the Việt in the Fifteenth Century," in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Wade and Laichen, 83-96; John K. Whitmore, "Paperwork: The Rise of the New Literati and Ministerial Power and the Effort toward Legibility in Đại Việt," in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Wade and Laichen, 104-122.

series of products, local porcelain in particular. Their trade centers were centered on moral authorities: Theravada Buddhism for Ayutthaya and Mahayana Buddhism/Confucianism in Nguyễn Cochinchina. Within each location, the dramatic increase in maritime connections also benefited from an increase in trade from Japanese vessels that travelled across the South China Sea and locally produced luxury items. Nevertheless, “autonomous” Southeast Asian polities would come into contestation with new powers by the Early Modern period. The gradual rise of Europeans in the region brought a critical shift. After the Portuguese defeat of the Sultanate of Melaka in 1511, the Sultanate that had controlled the trade of the Straits of Melaka, the gateway to the South China Sea for nearly a century, divided the keepers of the straits into the sultanates of Perak and Johor. After the introduction of the Spanish in the Philippines and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) as a Dutch trading power centered upon the port of Batavia (Jakarta), it appeared that Europeans would dominate commerce in the region.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Anthony Reid saw the decline of the “Age of Commerce” as the result of combined environmental and political shifts that linked to or potentially resulted in an economic crisis. In the end, these crises would eventually lead to the increased presence of European vessels on the waves of the South China Sea. At the same time, the presence of Europeans brought on an interest in local literatures. By the mid-twentieth century, scholars had finally accepted that these literatures were acceptable “historical” or at least “historicizable” accounts. Thus, the early modern period was also critical to the rise of the accounts of genealogies (and king-lists), silsilah, genealogies linking individuals back to the prophet Mohammed, and *hikayat* (Malay “stories”), all of which may be used to provide additional accounts of the South China

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<sup>46</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya notes that at the time of the introduction of the Spanish into the Philippines (1521), boats were still the pre-dominant form of transportation. See Andaya, *The Flaming Womb*, 677.

Sea from the early modern period through to the modern period.<sup>47</sup> By this time, the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea would combine to provide a critical conduit for the flow of literary traditions as well as trade. However, literature would not be the only cultural product to move across the waves. Religion and creolization of cultures would become critical factors on the shores of the South China Sea and the oceanic space beyond by the nineteenth century.

Traditional basic historical views of the European encounter with the lands along the shores of the South China Sea have portrayed a direct continuity between missionization on the part of the Europeans and later colonial efforts. Such a narrative has its own merits, as it was adapted by many Southeast Asian historians themselves during the twentieth-century efforts to throw off colonialism. However, more recent scholarship has begun to re-emphasize the interconnectedness of cultures and that many Southeast Asians themselves were critical as personal relationships between Southeast Asians and Europeans formed in Southeast Asian courts. Through the efforts of the early French missions, Jean Marie Despiau eventually became a respected physician in the court of the Vietnamese Nguyễn dynasty. His narrative suggests that missionization was not purely a religious phenomenon. The Nguyễn dynasty had actually been quite wary of Europeans, particularly the French in light of efforts to spread Christianity. However, as the threat of smallpox spread to the upper courts, the first Nguyễn Emperor Gia Long sought a treatment. Despiau on the other hand would have travelled just over a year from France across the Indian Ocean, through the Straits of Malacca, probably with a stopover in Malacca itself, before he reached Nguyễn Vietnam. However, by the time he reached Vietnam, the vaccine

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<sup>47</sup> Teuku Iskandar, "Aceh as a Crucible of Muslim Malay Literature," in *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, ed. Feener, Daly, and Reid, 39-64; Amirul Hadi, "Exploring Acehnese Understandings of Jihad: A Study of Hikayat Prang Sabi," in *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, ed. Feener, Daly, and Reid, 183-198.

for smallpox had not yet been officially released in France. Therefore, he could not have had knowledge of the vaccine before receiving an order from Gia Long's successor Minh Mạng to travel to Macau in 1820. Despiau's voyages then became dictated by a balance of available vaccines and trade winds, as he became the primary medical caretaker of the Nguyễn by his 40s and 50s without a medical degree due to his ability to secure reliable supplies of the smallpox vaccine at Macau.<sup>48</sup> Such interpersonal relationships could also be traced to the sharing of language traditions between Europeans and locals.

As personal relationships were formed during the early modern period on the shores along the South China Sea, a blend of language traditions tended to aid efforts to spread Christianity, some in ways that had not necessarily been expected. In the early Spanish rule of the Philippines, the Chinese language, not Spanish, became the major means of transmission for a series of critically Christian influenced texts.<sup>49</sup> In both the Philippines and Vietnam, many individuals who were important early Christian converts had been learned members of Buddhist society before their conversion. This helps to explain why early Christian literature in Vietnam demonstrates a strong preference for Hán Nôm demotic Vietnamese script based upon classical Chinese characters and *só* character phrases that are considered to possess supernatural potency. Nevertheless, the early Maiorica texts also seem to preserve an oratory style that is indicative of the texts being a written form of catechism lectures structured to produce conversion.<sup>50</sup> In the end, the climate

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<sup>48</sup> C. Michele Thompson, "Jean Marie Despiau: The Unjustly Maligned Physician in the Medical Service of the Nguyễn," in *Vietnam and the West: New Approaches*, ed. Wynn Wilcox (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 41-70.

<sup>49</sup> Lucille Chia, "Chinese Books and Printing in the Early Spanish Philippines," in *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 259-282.

<sup>50</sup> Brian Ostrowski, "The Rise of Christian Nôm Literature in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Fusing European Content and Local Expression," in *Vietnam and the West*, ed. Wilcox, 19-40.

eventually produced was not Southeast Asian or European, but rather a creolization of intellectual and religious traditions appearing to be unique to the lands along the shores of the South China Sea where figures such as the Vietnamese missionary Philippe Binh (1759-1832) were becoming increasingly prominent.<sup>51</sup>

To say there were missionaries who fit in between the boundaries does not mean that there were not European missionaries who tended to create very slanted views of Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, these accounts can occasionally be used to give historians a good early picture of the way of life on the shores surrounding the South China Sea. The Spanish mission of Gabriel Quiroga de San Antonio (1604), for example, produced one of the most clear travel accounts for a missionary of his time. His work was considered so important that it was translated into French by the civil servant and scholar Antoine Cabaton in 1914, even though his view was one of “Pax-Castillas,” contesting French influence and advocating for the rise of Iberian Catholic Christian tradition over local religions as well as the perception of a rising Islamic influence along the waves. This is the very same climate that the well-known French missionary Alexandre de Rhodes would arrive in, as well. In addition to being the senior editor of the Vietnamese-Latin dictionary project, de Rhodes produced one of the most common observations on the Vietnamese coastline of it resembling an “S” and made an important “Early Western Map of Tonkin.”<sup>52</sup> From these early beginnings, many foreign missions became teachers and activists in the region, particularly during the mid-twentieth century. The scholar missionaries Gerard Moussay and William Henry (W. H.) Scott both became exemplary

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<sup>51</sup> George Dutton, “Crossing Oceans, Crossing Boundaries: The Remarkable Life of Philipê Binh (1759-1832),” in *Việt Nam*, ed. Reid and Trần, 219-255.

<sup>52</sup> Alexandre de Rhodes, *Rhodes of Viet Nam: The Travels and Missions of Father Alexander de Rhodes in China and Other Kingdoms of the Orient*, trans. Solange Hertz (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1966).

figures of this trend. While Moussay was noted for his contributions to the studies of Austronesian languages Minangkabau and Cham, Scott became one of the first missionaries to spend an extended period of time living and working among rural Filipino populations free of the shades Darwinist assumptions had placed on previous scholars and missionaries. He made his way upriver, teaching English and becoming an expert on Filipino history in general and of the Igorot highland peoples in particular. He then made a consistent effort to advocate for the place of the Igorot in the history of the Philippines, including advocating for their important role in anti-colonial revolts.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, works such as his tied the understanding of the highland and hinterland regions of Southeast Asia into relationships with the coast.

As missionaries and colonial efforts were rising on the shores along the waves of the South China Sea and the oceanic space beyond, new political centers rose, combined with decreased reliance on trade with northern Chinese courts and an increased emphasis on long distance trade with northern East Asia (Korea and Japan) and the Indian Ocean network (the subcontinent, east Africa, and Arabia). The central Thai authority shifted from Ayutthaya southward along the Chao Phraya, eventually settling at Bangkok and the Vietnamese authority shifted southward as well, from Thăng Long on the Red River to Gia Định and Sài Gòn on the Mekong River, before moving northward again to the central coastal region of Huế. Upstream Hội An became a particularly important trading outpost even as Cham cultural presence remained in the region throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>54</sup> The second half of the eighteenth century proved to be a challenge for both the Thai and the Vietnamese centers of authority, with the Burmese

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<sup>53</sup> Erlyn Ruth E. Alcantara, "Biographical Note," in *Of Igorots and Independence: Two Essays* (Baguio City, Philippines: ERA Press, 1993), 73-83.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Wheeler, "One Region, Two Histories: Cham Precedents in the History of the Hội An Region," in *Việt Nam*, ed. Reid and Trần, 163-193.

destruction of Ayutthaya in 1767 and the outbreak of the Tây Sơn rebellion along the Vietnamese coastline in 1776. Nevertheless, both the Thai and the Vietnamese central authorities managed to solidify a capitalization upon long distance trade by the early decades of the nineteenth century. They also re-imagined their political identities with the rise of Sino-Southeast Asian concepts of governance and a new wave of Mahayana Buddhist influence that touched across the region. In Ayutthaya, the rise of the Thai authority also brought new forms of international trade embassies as did the rise of the Sultanate of Malacca in the straits of Malacca centuries earlier. The increased establishment of Persian and Indian Muslim trade in particular aided the Thai trade expansion.<sup>55</sup> Luxury items continued to be imported from China, although with arguably less direct political impact during the Thonburi and Early Rattanakosin periods (1767-1854), aiding the eventual solidification of the early Bangkok authority as trading in coins and currency became a major force in local trade centers.<sup>56</sup> Hence, while centers in the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam ascended and the proto-states of Southeast Asia became more clear centers, other older centers became hotly contested battlegrounds. For example, the central Khmer authority spent most of the nineteenth century attempting to maintain a

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<sup>55</sup> Yoko Nagazumi, "Ayutthaya and Japan: Embassies and Trade in the Seventeenth Century," in *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's Maritime Relations with Asia*, ed. Kennon Breazeale (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation, 1999), 89-103; Leonard Y. Andaya, "Ayutthaya and the Persian and Indian Muslim Connection," in *From Japan to Arabia*, ed. Breazeale, 119-137. Recommended films regarding Ayutthaya are the popular Naresaun series and Nan Nak—both of which are Thai film productions.

<sup>56</sup> Masuda Erika, "Import of Prosperity: Luxurious Items Imported from China to Siam during the Thonburi and Early Rattanakosin Periods (1767-1854)," in *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 149-171; Tana Li, "Cochinchinese Coin Casting and Circulating in Eighteenth Century Southeast Asia," in *Chinese Circulations*, ed. Tagliacozzo (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 130-148; Tana Li, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 1st ed (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 126-162.

precious balance between Siamese Thai and Nguyễn Vietnamese authority as the Trans-Mekong trading network became a critical key to trade at the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond.<sup>57</sup>

Although autonomous Southeast Asian polities had become increasingly present along the shores of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, the arrival of European authority and its deep disastrous impact was undeniable by the end of the nineteenth century. It is arguable that in each center, in Nguyễn Đăng Trong Vietnam, the various Thai-Lao *ban* and *muong* centers, the Burmese mandala, the Malay sultanates, and the “supra-barangay” societies of the Philippines, local authorities never completely lost power, and that colonialism, for all its efforts, was never complete. Additionally, scholarship has traditionally seen a shift from the maritime empires of the Portuguese and Spanish toward the companies of the Dutch, English, and French, before the Dutch, English, and French each attempted to establish more land-based complete colonies. However, the oft forgotten importance of the Ottoman Empire was also critical to maintaining relative independence for the Sultanate of Aceh, while many other local authorities remained in place. By the end of the nineteenth century, this mix of influences was further complicated by the emergence of a (predominantly southern) Chinese diaspora that moved across the waves of the South China Sea to all portions of Southeast Asia and beyond.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Puangthong Rungswasdisab, “Siam and the Contest for Control of the Trans-Mekong Trading Networks from the Late Eighteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region: 1750-1880*, ed. Tana Li and Nola Cooke (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 101-114.

<sup>58</sup> Anthony Reid, “The Age of Commerce, 1400-1650,” in *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, vol. 2, Expansion and Crisis (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 1-61; Anthony Reid, “Economic and Social Change, C. 1400-1800: Eighteenth-Century Transitions,” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, vol. 1, pt. 2, From c. 1500 to c. 1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 156-159; Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 232-261, 234-239,

One of the difficulties that contemporary scholars have settled upon in reading Chinese influence into the eighteenth and nineteenth century waters of the South China Sea is that, in a sense, this reading substantially “upstreams” or reads backward into history contemporary ideas about Chinese identity which were not necessarily solidified at the time, particularly in southern China where the majority of migrants were flowing out of China. On occasion, these communities eventually rose as virtually independent trading centers as was the case with Bantaey Maes.

Bantaey Maes is the Khmer name for a region as well as a port-city town that eventually became known to the Vietnamese as Hà Tiên and is situated today nearby the border of Cambodia and Vietnam. As was the case with Dutch New Guinea, Java, and Siam during the Thonburi and Rattanakosin periods, this port rose through the support of long distance trade that stretched across the oceanic networks of the South China Sea and beyond. Meanwhile, a massive increase in the construction of Chinese junks and combined with the arrival of Chinese fleeing an economic crisis in southern China from the eighteenth century established new flows of commodity such as rice, cotton, and fish. At the same time in the Philippines, the Spanish use of the old half Native American, half Spanish term *mestizo* was reapplied to the rise of a half-Chinese trading elite in Manila. The French adapted the term to refer to a half-Chinese *metisage* through “Indochine” (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia). Sino-Thai, Sino-Khmer, and Sino-Malay communities began to rise across the region. The Thai historian Sarasin Viraphol famously described these phenomena in very charged terms, referring to the “Nanyang Chinese” (southern Chinese) as the “Jews of the Orient,” although his point that there were longstanding prejudices against these communities has stood the test of time. Among the many paranoid fears

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252-261; İsmail Hakkı Göksoy, “Ottoman-Aceh Relations as Documented in Turkish Sources,” in *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, ed. Feener, Daly, and Reid, 65-96.

that were prevalent concerning this overseas community was that they owed an eternal alliance to the land they fled, a view commonplace among colonial administrators by the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries.<sup>59</sup>

### III. High Colonial to Modern: Building the Borders, Violence, Crossing the Line, and the Disaster of Racialized Politics and the State

Constructing colonial authority, attempting to build borders or a monopoly on violence, and curbing border crossing activities were critical to the events that took place around the shores of the South China Sea from the turn of the nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century. It was only by this time the concept of maritime boundaries could truly be solidified. However, this process was not simply a creation of European powers such as the Dutch, the British, the French, the Spanish, and the Americans. It rather arose out of a process of interaction between authorities from Southeast Asia and foreign authorities seeking to control Southeast Asian access to the waters of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond. Advances in mapping technology, policing, and communications technology were combined to consolidate authority over

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<sup>59</sup> Sarasin Viraphol, *The Nanyang Chinese* (Bangkok, Thailand: Chulalongkorn University, 1972); Tana Li, "Ships and Shipbuilding in the Mekong Delta, C. 1750-1840," in *Water Frontier*, ed. Li and Cooke, 119-136. Leonard Blussé, "Junks to Java: Chinese Shipping to the Nanyang in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," in *Chinese Circulations*, ed. Tagliacozzo, 221-258; Anthony Reid, "Chinese Trade and Southeast Asian Economic Expansion in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: An Overview," in *Water Frontier*, ed. Li and Cooke, 21-32; James Kong Chin, "The Junk Trade between South China and Nguyen Vietnam in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," in *Water Frontier*, ed. Li and Cooke, 53-64; Yumio Sakurai, "Eighteenth-Century Chinese Pioneers on the Water Frontier of Indochina," in *Water Frontier*, ed. Li and Cooke, 33-52; Hui Kian Kwee, "The End of the 'Age of Commerce'?: Javanese Cotton Trade Industry from the Seventeenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in *Chinese Circulations*, ed. Tagliacozzo, 283-304; Yumio Sakurai and Takako Kitagawa, "Ayutthaya and the Persian and Indian Muslim Connection," in *From Japan to Arabia*, ed. Breazeale, 150-217.

the waves. Yet, while authorities were mostly concentrated on curbing low-level violence, they appear to have been ignorant to the fact that their strategies of insisting upon control and watchfulness were actually institutionalizations of violence instigating regional conflict and deepening internal divisions.

Through expanding attempts by colonial powers to control commodity flows over the waves of the South China Sea, new commodities began to be emphasized: tin, rubber, cane sugar, salt, tobacco, alcohol, and even opium became increasingly popular as taxed commodities.<sup>60</sup> Although in many cases, such as the case of the tin supplies in Peninsular Malaysia, which had been popular since the days of the Sultanate of Melaka, many of these resources were merely shifting in the scale of their extraction and usage. Hence, with the turn towards moral consumption strategies, colonial authorities had little impact on actual consumption of opiates, tobacco, and alcohol. The policing of territories and borderlands recently also increasingly turned toward the notion of water frontiers as state authorities began taking more distinct strategies toward policing borders (VN: *biên, cương*, Cham: *cam*). This process, however, began with a project of mapping the boundaries between the British, French, Spanish, Siamese, and Dutch authorities as intermediaries for local control.

The project of mapping the boundaries that came to represent the contemporary states of Southeast Asia did not really come into complete recognition until the mid- to late nineteenth century. First, cartographers mapped the islands and their inland portions, as well as the mainland. However, complaints began to arise about the loss of cargoes, particularly in the case of contested ports such as Batavia. Hence, hydrography became increasingly popular in order to gain a better understanding of shipping lanes and preventing shipwrecks. These two

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<sup>60</sup> Thomaz, "The Malay Sultanate of Melaka," 76.

mapping strategies were combined with seeing-like-a-state impositions of state authority upon local relationships and the establishment of local institutions in order to govern and manage newly mapped regions.

In the case of the Netherlands East Indies, many territories still managed to remain non-incorporated with respect to the colonial framework. Meanwhile, other territories opted to enter into relatively friendly negotiations and collaborative relationships with the Dutch. However, tax tributary relations were often imposed, as was the case with Batavia since it enforced cooperation with local officials. Policing was another issue. Initial forces were ragged and ineffective, plagued by the climate until several advances in technology occurred during the fifty-year period between 1865 and 1915. Medical advances also were importantly introduced during this time to treat diseases from beriberi to malaria. Improvements were made in uniforms, as clothing was adapted to the climate. The introduction of aluminum weapons technology made for lighter arms. Major improvements in communication networks were introduced with staged patrol towers and light-houses along the coast. Zeppelins were even considered as a potential patrol vehicle due to their increased range of visibility and travel, although their cost and the danger of losing individual vessels eventually caused this strategy to be abandoned. Hence, both the land, and more importantly, the maritime borders between British Malaya, French Indochina, Siam, British Burma, the Spanish (and later, the American) Philippines, and the Netherlands East Indies became increasingly solidified between 1865 and 1915. The construction of railroads and roads was also critical to this process, linking port towns and cities together. The establishment of the telegraph system was another important factor. The Dutch had initially relied upon English telegraph lines, but advances in Dutch technology allowed for the construction of their own lines. Maritime frontiers nevertheless remained relatively permeable. In cases such as the Spanish involvement in the Sulu Sea and the Dutch involvement in the Straits of Malacca during the Aceh War in the 1870s, the use of naval blockades were more

thoroughly introduced with mild successes. Nevertheless, the appearance of lighthouses was likely more critical. By simply lighting maritime frontiers, Dutch, British, French, and American authorities dramatically increased their ability for maritime policing actions, an ability that would have a great impact on Southeast Asian states in the post-colonial era, as well. By simply adding lighthouses, policing authorities doubled their abilities to watch borders. These advances were then combined with what Eric Tagliacozzo termed “the human factor”: a teaming supply of new missionaries, anthropologists, administrators, and policing personnel who worked together (and against each other) in the solidification of borderland spaces.<sup>61</sup> Through their participation and interactions with peripheries and their communications back to the metropole, they were equally a product of these motions to control space and trade.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, it was these efforts that began to spur the disputes that would characterize much of the twentieth century.

From the earliest encounters of traders along the shores of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond recorded in Chinese texts, the issue of piracy stood above and beyond as one of the fears that affected trade. The southern territories of what became later known to scholars as “the civilization of Champa” were frequently characterized as pirates that were threatening Chinese vessels, particularly from the seventh through the twelfth centuries. In fact, the characterization of “pirates on the waves” came to be used throughout history.<sup>63</sup> Whether Siamese, Cham, Chinese, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Malay, Buginese, Makassarese, French, Japanese, or Americans, people of any origin could

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<sup>61</sup> Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 27-106; Nicolas Weber, “Securing and Developing the Southwestern Region: The Role of the Cham and Malay Colonies in Vietnam (18th-19th Centuries),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54, no. 5 (2011): 739-772.

<sup>63</sup> Hall, “Economic History of Early Southeast Asia: Champa’s Plunder Based Political-Economy.”

be considered pirates so long as they had maritime tendencies (highland people were rarely considered pirates; they were rather “raiders” or “robbers”). However, there were certain groups that became particularly strongly associated with piracy, such as the Buginese or Makassarese through their association with the Sulu Sultanate and the notorious waters of the Sulu Sea. There were also famous ports and locations that became associated with piracy: Jolo, for instance, and Gi ng Binh in the waters between Vietnam and China as well as others. One of the effects of the intrusions of colonial powers and the increase in shipbuilding technology was that pirates also became increasingly active. Even as the colonial police states expanded their concerns over low-level violence along the borderlands of British Malaysia and the Dutch East Indies, active piracy continued. Despite initial reports that borderlands were sites of relative peace and harmony, as defined by the regents that were put in place to observe them, Chinese mining communities, resistance fighters in Aceh, *hulu* (upriver) Jambi peoples on the island of Sumatra, Dayak peoples, and on occasion *orang asli* raiders left their marks as perpetrators of violence in the eyes of Batavia and Singapore. However, as policing networks expanded, reports of rebellion and piracy tended to decrease to reports of petty theft, minor personal attacks, and charges of disorderly conduct. Even though the colonial states of the lands around the shores of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond them were rapidly expanding their control throughout the late nineteenth century, increasingly becoming paranoid about the presence of “foreign Asians,” colonial governance also never fully completed its conquest of local polities. Many regions of Southeast Asia remained semi-independent, as was the case for the Sultanate of Idi. They were allies in name during points when it was convenient. However, they could also be the source of small raiding polities sent to capture arms, trade goods, or other supplies before these raiders slipped back upriver into the protective estuaries of islands and hinterlands. As was the case with Dayak populations, these upriver moving peoples were often under the

governance of Malay *orang kaya* (trading class elites) who by proxy encouraged them to revolt. As such, local revolts pervaded throughout the period of high colonialism. The Dutch tried to incorporate these peoples into the system of colonial governance through the charges of the Outer Island Political Reports, the codification of new legal systems combined with the recognition and codification of local *adat* customary law. However, these efforts could never fully accommodate the moves of local and transnational populations of hajis, nomads, the Minangkabau *rantau*, and others, which caused colonial authorities to remain paranoid.<sup>64</sup>

The paranoia of colonial authorities in the lands surrounding the shores of the South China Sea and the oceanic space beyond continued to instigate violence as these authorities desperately made attempts at new cross-border trade. As the intensity of regulation on trade grew, smuggling became an increasingly lucrative means of producing income. The trade of narcotics, counterfeit monies, and human cargoes dominated these cross-oceanic networks. Smuggling of narcotics along the water networks was not limited to opium, although this has been a fascination of many scholars. It also included the scheduled substances of cocaine and marijuana as well as the commercially scheduled substances of alcohol and tobacco. Nevertheless, opium trade was by far the most lucrative and violent drug trade to touch the water networks of the South China Sea. In addition to shipping narcotics across the frontier, the trade of counterfeit money also became prominent throughout the region. Markets of counterfeiting stretched from Southern China to the Indian Ocean at the very least. Cases levied against counterfeit traders peaked in

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<sup>64</sup> Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders*, 108-127, 160-184; James Warren, "The Port of Jolo: International Trade and Slave Raiding," in *Pirates, Ports, and Coasts in Asia: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. John Kleinen and Manon Osseweijer (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 178-199; Robert J. Anthony, "Giàng Binh: Pirate Haven and Black Market on the Sino-Vietnamese Frontier, 1780-1802," in *Pirates, Ports, and Coasts in Asia*, ed. Kleinen and Osseweijer, 31-51.

the Straits of Malacca in 1894 with an annual total of 351 cases. They peaked again at the vicinity of the Java Sea in 1897 with a total of 519 cases levied. Overall, illegal coins made up a range of between one-sixth and one-twelfth of the market value of total coinage in the year 1899. In addition to counterfeiters and drug smugglers, smugglers in human cargo reached a relative peak during the high colonial period, although this traffic was often criticized by the colonial centers of Singapore and Batavia for its blatant disregard for the civilizing mission. Even so, the trade of prostitutes, slaves, and movements of undocumented laborers was persistent throughout the region. It became clear that the movement across boundaries was an increasing boon to the colonial state. A report of brothels in Singapore in 1877 recorded 40 brothels on a total of 17 streets, a point suggesting illicit human cargoes were concentrated only in certain parts of urban areas out of sight and, hence, out of mind for the moral authority, which also frequented them. Still, attempts were made to curb the trade of illicit human cargoes throughout the colonial period and the trade of human bodies continued to vary greatly with police presence.<sup>65</sup>

As much as the potential threat of piracy in the colonial state seemed to decline with the expansion of the police state and awareness of geo-politics, a certain paranoia of “Foreign Asians” pervaded throughout the lands along the shores of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond from the end of the nineteenth century into the middle of the twentieth century. Anti-Chinese, anti-Japanese, and anti-Arab sentiments were particularly fierce. Although the Chinese communities were by far the most numerous and perhaps the most politically and

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<sup>65</sup> Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders*, 185-259; Alfred W. McCoy, “Opium for the Natives,” in *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, 2nd rev. ed (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2003), 77-126; Anthony Reid, “Economic and Social Change, C. 1400-1800: The Trade in Narcotics,” in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, vol. 1, pt. 2, From c. 1500 to c. 1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 154-155; Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 343-346.

socially influential, they were also a diaspora community that had resulted predominantly out of European-encouraged outmigration along with the Qing dynasty's collapse. By comparison, the Japanese were less numerous and theoretically had at least a more peaceful and cooperative longstanding relationship with the Dutch in particular. However, the general perception of the Japanese in this region shifted dramatically over the course of these years, as they were more consistently viewed through their links to the emphatically rising imperial power of Japan after the Meiji Restoration began in 1868 and what has been often deemed as a surprising victory over the Russian empire in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. Of the many topics to discuss in the formations of the history of the South China Sea is the role mid-level Chinese trading families played in the formation of new social classes. In the Philippines, these classes had become famously known as *mestizos* and formed the basis of the mid-century modern political elite. Other Sino-Southeast Asian groups were particularly prominent in Thailand, Cambodia, and Singapore. Meanwhile, boundaries that were imposed as racial categories became stricter, and as decades of conflict enveloped the region, racial tensions took on new forms. Reflecting backward, certain scholars have argued that labels of nationality, ethnicity, and the understanding that individual humans belong to specific groups are essentially useless, their usage fueled by fear and hatred. Meanwhile, the adaptation and constant re-adaptations of traditions and cultures could be witnessed throughout the region.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders*, 128-160; Li and Cooke, eds., *Water Frontier*, 5-8; Byung Wook Choi, "The Nguyen Dynasty's Policy toward Chinese on the Water Frontier in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Water Frontier*, ed. Li and Cooke, 85-97; Shawn McHale, "Understanding the Fanatic Mind? The Việt Minh and Race Hatred in the First Indochina War (1945-1954)," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (October 2009): 98-138; Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "The Historical Development of Thai-Speaking Muslim Communities in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia," in *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, ed. Andrew Turton (London: Curzon Press, 2000), 162-179; Ryoko Nishii, "Emergence and Transformation of Peripheral Ethnicity: Sam Sam on the Thai-Malaysian Border," in *Civility*

## Conclusion

This article began with the question of how to use the conception of the South China Sea as a singular oceanic space with networks that stretched outward and beyond into the oceans of the globe and how this would allow us to reshape notions of the history of this space. Using Braudel's *The Mediterranean* as an inspiration, this article then looked at this oceanic space from the very earliest points in human history, moving quickly in a survey fashion, up through the twentieth century. By using this model to reflect upon this history, it has become clear that in writing about the history of the oceanic space, one has to focus predominantly upon the shores and small collections of land along with the meager attempts by humans to control such a space. Nevertheless, this article has demonstrated that attempts to control the space are by no means new, but that they rather stretch back to the days of the classical states of Southeast Asia. With this in mind, it is possible to note that the conception of current East Asian and Southeast Asian states to focus upon military or state intervention as a potential means to solve conflict has not been a successful long-term preventative measure. Rather, increased policing and militarization has always met with a deepening of local divisions and conflicts over resources. Meanwhile, taking the long history as a model, the establishment of trade relations has been a long-term strategy that has proven successful for periods of time in preventing conflict and establishing new trade centers. Given the climate of the region of the waters of the South China Sea and the oceanic networks beyond, it is unlikely that any state will even be able to control these waters. Meanwhile, the introduction of multiple local authorities is also unlikely to decrease the sense of competition. *How, then, does one de-emphasize conflict and re-emphasize trade in the region?*

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*and Savagery*, ed. Turton, 180-198.

In order to accomplish the above aims, it seems that the protectionist attitude of government and international officials will have to be abandoned or at least be put more mildly. There should also be an emphasis on increasing faith in the ability of ASEAN member states to find their own peaceful trade solutions. In light of these considerations, the easiest way for this process to continue seems to be foremost a decreased emphasis on Chinese military and governmental presence in the region, followed by continued negotiations between ASEAN members to increase trade corporations. There is no doubt that this process will be slow. Certain member states such as Champa during classical times and Cambodia during the twentieth century have traditionally relied upon Chinese support as a counter balance to secure their own place in the region. Meanwhile, American presence has traditionally been used for balancing the security of member states such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, and more recently Vietnam. Hence, it will also be important for American presence in the region to de-emphasize military negotiations, while re-emphasizing trade cooperation. These trade agreements, however, must be approached with an awareness of their connotations. The potential American support of nuclear projects in Vietnam today is an ill-conceived, poorly researched plan, which fails to take into account the potential impacts such an agreement would have for Southeast Asian peoples themselves, the environment of the region, and potential alternative energy sources.<sup>67</sup> Continuing to support trade agreements will be critical. However, it should also be ensured that such trade agreements confine to the wishes of local authorities at all levels from the village up, not simply at the level of international authority. It is only from this perspective that we may begin to gain a better sense of the history of the lands along the

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<sup>67</sup> Mary Beth D. Nikitin, Mark Holt, and Mark E. Manyin, *U.S.-Vietnam Nuclear Cooperation Agreement: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 13, 2014).

shores of the South China Sea.

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