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The Tongking Gulf Through History

Edited by

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Li Tana,

and

James A. Anderson

PENN

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Preface

In 2004 Vietnam opened negotiations with China about an ambitious joint project that would make the Gulf of Tongking an important economic motor of development for both countries. The approach resulted in a joint agreement called “Two Corridors and One Rim” that was signed in October 2004. This grand project proposed to link the two land corridors of Yunnan and Guangxi with Hanoi and Hải Phòng, while a maritime rim would connect Guangxi, Guangdong, Hainan Island, northern and central Vietnam, and Laos. Work began soon after. At the moment, both countries are constructing twelve major highways plus two high-speed rail lines linking Hanoi with Yunnan and with Guangxi. From being seen as an economic backwater for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Gulf of Tongking has now suddenly emerged as a major engine of growth for both China and Vietnam.

While such intensive economic activity in the gulf region might seem new to contemporary eyes, from a historical perspective its antecedents go back well over two millennia. This emerging form of twenty-first-century regional integration, which refocused interest on the gulf and its surrounding hinterlands, has also stimulated the desire to rethink the forces that linked or separated the many peoples who have inhabited this area over the millennia. With this in mind, Li Tana approached the Australian National University and the Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences with a proposal to gather specialists in different disciplines and eras to confer about the wider Tongking Gulf region throughout history or, in the formulation of the eminent French historian Fernand Braudel, over the *longue durée*. Thanks to the support of these institutions, a number of scholars were able to gather in Nanning in 2008 to explore the interconnected economic and social history of this ancient area. To help stimulate thought and discussion, the conference organizers proposed as a starting hypothesis that the Gulf of Tongking might be considered as a mini-Mediterranean, as a place in which, as in Braudel’s Mediterranean, the age-old interactions and interconnections between its various peoples shaped a region that was united less by geography than by the movements

their social and economic power. This reading of the archaeological evidence also suggests that metallurgy and textile technology were catalysts that combined to propel these societies onto the trajectories that concern historians and laid down the basic economic foundations of the societies that would later flourish in the Tongking Gulf region.

Chapter 2

Jiaozhi (Giao Chi) in the Han Period Tongking Gulf

Li Tana

This chapter introduces early Jiaozhi, a territorial unit covering the present-day Red River plains, coastal Guangxi, and western Guangdong, and discusses its importance in the exchange system of the Gulf of Tongking and South China Sea nearly two millennia ago. Contrary to conventional scholarship, which has stressed political forces pushing from north to south that resulted in Chinese colonization of the Red River plain, this chapter examines early Jiaozhi in its own context, as a territorial expanse occupying the same horizontal line. It argues that, by eliminating the once powerful Nanyue (southern Yue) kingdom in 111 B.C.E., the Han dynasty established Jiaozhi's dominant trading position as both market and entrepôt for goods brought by land and sea. Jiaozhi's emergence as the jewel of the Han south highlights the importance of the Gulf of Tongking for the early maritime silk road, as well as revealing the mutual interdependence of the region of modern Guangxi and the Red River plain so long ago.

Guangzhou (Canton) and Jiaozhi

The Nanyue kingdom, based in present-day Guangzhou (Canton), had enjoyed a commanding position on the Tongking Gulf coast until the Han conquest in 111 B.C.E., after which the southern political and economic center of gravity moved to Jiaozhi. This change seemed to have resulted from a deliberate Han policy; but why would the dynasty want to favor Jiaozhi and suppress Guangzhou? The most

obvious answer, from a central government viewpoint, is that Jiaozhi was easier to access and control. Until the eighth century, when the Five Passes land route was opened to Guangdong, the gulf region was always better connected to central China, thanks to the Ling canal (“Smart Trench”), which had been dug between 223 and 214 B.C.E to transport Qin troops south. It linked the Yangzi with the Xiang River in Hunan, from where traffic accessed the Li River in Guangxi and the North and South Liu Rivers leading to the Hepu maritime port. This important economic corridor also formed the confluence of the two major cultures of southern China—the Chu and Yue—as is shown by the large number of Han tombs uncovered along it.¹ It was also a strategically significant route. In 40 C.E., after the Trung sisters rebelled in Jiaozhi, the forces of the “Wave-Calming General” Ma Yuan, who was ordered to put down the rebellion, took this very route to Jiaozhi.² A land route also existed, running from today’s Liuzhou via the Yu River to the Southern Pass. By both land and water, Guangxi thus held a crucial position. Jiaozhi also provided the court with easier access to Yunnan and beyond,³ by a route that went up the Red River to Yunnan before pushing on to the overland “yak road” (*maoniu dao*) in modern Sichuan.⁴

Most important, Jiaozhi was the nearest point between the Han court and the maritime silk road before it became possible to travel across the open sea in the eighth century. Sea travel favored Canton. Until then, Canton’s earlier access to Southeast Asia had necessarily passed via its contacts with Jiaozhi. All these factors worked in favor of Jiaozhi, whose prosperity it helped to sustain until the eighth century.

The Gulf of Tongking—Economic Center of the Early South China Sea Trade

Thanks in part to the factors discussed above, from the first to the tenth century, when Guangzhou and the lands to its east became the most populous in the far south of the Han Empire, the lands along the littoral rim of the extended Gulf of Tongking ruled over the South China Sea economy. In 2 C.E. Jiaozhi reported four times as many households as Guangzhou, and even the population of what is now Thanh Hóa Province (Jiuzhen, or Cửu Chân in Vietnamese) was roughly double that of Guangzhou (see Table 2.1).⁵

The disparity is equally striking in terms of household distribution along the extended Gulf of Tongking littoral rim: 34 percent in modern eastern Guangxi

Table 2.1. Households in the Han Empire’s Coastal South, 2 C.E.

<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Households</i>
Nanhai	19,613
Jiaozhi	92,440
Jiuzhen	35,743
Hepu	15,398
Cangwu	57,510

(85,323 households), 58 percent in current northern and north-central Vietnam (143,643 households), but only 8 percent in the Guangdong area (see Figure 2.1).

Jiaozhi’s population density was also remarkably higher than that of Guangdong. According to one Chinese authority on population history, the density ratio of Guangdong to Jiaozhi was 1:9.6, while coastal Guangxi and today’s Thanh Hóa Province (in central Vietnam) were about two to three times more populous than Guangdong. In fact, Jiaozhi was even more densely populated than the Chengdu area in Sichuan.⁶ As Table 2.2 shows, the average size of the households in Jiaozhi was also fairly large and, interestingly, larger than in some parts of northern China at the same time.

Two millennia ago, then, the bulk of the population of southern and more established areas was in Jiaozhi, that is, present-day Guangxi, western Guangdong, and the Vietnamese gulf shore. Jiaozhi was the cosmopolitan center of this part of Asia, flanked by Hepu and Xuwen to the north and Cửu Chân and Nhật Nam (Quảng Trị to Quảng Nam) to the south.⁸

A second significant point should be made about this populous coastal belt. All its important and documented ports—Hepu, Xuwen, and Nhật Nam—thrived by trade and trade alone. Hepu’s fortune started with locally produced pearls, which were traded both north and south, while Nhật Nam’s fortune rested on its

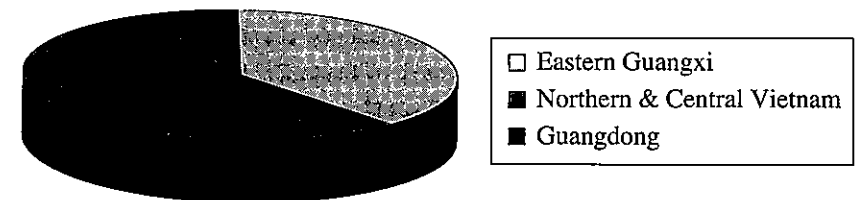


Figure 2.1. Households in Guangdong, Guangxi, and northern and central Vietnam, 2 C.E.

Table 2.2. Estimated Average Size of Households in Population Centers, 2 c.e.

<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Average no. of persons in household</i>	<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Average no. of persons in household</i>
Jiaozhi	6.37	Xuzhou	4.56
Jingzhou	5.38	Yangzhou	4.51
Yuzhou	5.18	Sili	4.4
Shuofang	4.98	Qingzhou	4.37
Duizhou	4.76	Bingzhou	4.28
Yizhou	4.67	Youzhou	4.22
Jizhou	4.57	Liangzhou	4.02

location between the Mekong Delta civilization of Oc Eo and China. None of these ports had a large population base when compared to Jiaozhi. But what was the source of the wealth and population density here in the first century c.e.? To answer this question we need to begin by considering Jiaozhi's economic relations with its neighbors.

First and most fundamental, piecing together contemporaneous sources reveals that Jiaozhi was the regional granary whose rice supplied its nearest neighbors. Of Hepu to its north it was reported that "Hepu does not produce rice but only pearls. It is next to Jiaozhi and often trades [pearls] for rice." The interdependence of the two economies helps explain why pearls had been recorded as a Jiaozhi local product since the first century c.e., although they actually originated in Hepu.⁹ Their economic symbiosis became clear when local officials in Hepu became too greedy in the mid-second century: "Traders stopped coming [to the Hepu area], and people lost their livelihood. The poor starved on the roads."¹⁰ While Hepu people went pearling, Jiaozhi's southern neighbors in Cừ Chân mainly made their living by hunting and gathering: "Customarily Cừ Chân lived on hunting and did not know about plowing with draft oxen. People often had to buy rice from Jiaozhi, and sometimes went short of it."¹¹

While the above information suggests how mutually beneficial exchanges knitted the Gulf of Tongking region together, another Jiaozhi product linked it to the more distant hinterland. A second source of early Jiaozhi's wealth apparently came from trading cowries, for which Jiaozhi was renowned long after shells were abandoned as currency in China. The *Guangzhou ji* (Records on Guangzhou) says that the most precious seashells—purple shells—came from Jiaozhou, which perhaps indicated the Gulf of Tongking but also possibly somewhere farther

south,¹² while large shells originated from today's central Vietnam. Both were "traded with traveling merchants."¹³ Hainan, on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Tongking, also produced valuable purple shells. One very early Chinese source, the *Shangshu dazhuan* (Major Tradition of Venerated Documents, 100–200 b.c.e.), mentioned that big shells came from the "South Sea," which suggests this well-known term, in one of its earliest recorded usages, originally referred to the Gulf of Tongking.¹⁴

This put the gulf region in a favorable position in exchanges with central China. As late as the Han dynasty, seashells were precious items. Under the rule of Wang Mang (9–23 c.e.), cowries were exchanged directly for copper coins. The *Hanshu* gave the exchange ratios of different sizes of shells: large shells, like those from central Vietnam, equaled 216 cash of coins, and were four times more expensive than medium-sized shells and twenty-one times more expensive than small ones.¹⁵ If, as this suggests, shells could be a form of currency, cowries must have boosted Jiaozhi's wealth greatly. Yunnan's cowry currency also possibly came through Jiaozhi, if not from Jiaozhi itself. An important link between them has just been established by a Chinese historian who argues that the Han period "silk route of the southwest," long considered as running from Sichuan and Yunnan to India, in fact went from Yunnan through Jiaozhi to the sea.¹⁶ All this explains why Zhao Tuo (Triệu Đà), the king of Nanyue (Nam Việt), included 500 purple shells among prized gifts to the Han emperor. The rest of Zhao Tuo's list of presents reveals what was considered exotic and precious from the second century b.c.e. south: "one white colored jade, ten rhinoceros horns, one jar of cinnamon bark, 1,000 kingfishers . . . two peacocks, and forty lots of kingfisher feathers."¹⁷ Interestingly, typical exotics from South and Central Asia, such as amber, crystal, and glass beads, were yet to appear, while, except for the jade, all the other presents were listed in the first-century-c.e. book *Jiaozhou yiwu zhi* (Exotic Things of Jiaozhou).

Not only were Jiaozhi and its neighbors crucial sources of natural wealth, its people were also industrious producers of highly prized handicrafts. Advanced agriculture with its stable supply of rice and foodstuffs provided the foundation for local handicraft industries whose influence radiated out to Jiaozhi's north and south. Swedish archaeologist Olov Janse, for instance, found locally produced ceramic together with stone, copper, iron, gold, silver, and jade wares in Han-style tombs that were spread widely in the old land of Jiaozhi from the coast to the mountains.¹⁸ Jiaozhi's large population and natural resources, with the comparative advantage for specialist craft production that they imply, help us better understand

the catalog of seemingly fantastical goods reportedly made here. One well-known example is sugar candy, called in Jiaozhi “stone honey” (*shimi*).¹⁹ “Fragrant paper,” made from the bark of an aromatic tree, was another: a delegation from Rome brought 30,000 pages of such paper to Nanjing in 285,²⁰ along with a fabulous fabric that could only be washed by fire (asbestos cloth, *huowan bu*).²¹ Another local paper, this one made from seaweed and called “twill paper” (*celi zhi*), became well known in the third century.² Numerous ceramic kilns existed in the modern Thanh Hóa area, which supplied everyday wares to locals and bricks, tiles, and slabs for house and tomb construction.²³ Some 5,000 Han burials have been found around Hepu (present-day Lianzhou), together with numerous ceramics kilns from the Han period. Similar pieces to those produced here have been found in Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Banten, suggesting Hepu developed its export handicraft production during the boom years of the maritime silk road.²⁴ Locally made glassware and glass beads are also abundant in old Hepu tombs, as Brigitte Borell’s chapter discusses.²⁵

Silk was also a prized commodity of the Jiaozhi region, whose relatively dense population was able to provide the security of food supply essential to the industry. Jiaozhi’s government center, Luy Lầu, derived its name from the Vietnamese word for mulberry (*dâu*); it lay on the Dâu River, where mulberry trees were grown and silk produced; and it housed the most ancient Buddhist temple in Vietnam, the Dâu Temple, whose name also derived from *dâu*.²⁶ Many important communication routes and waterways crisscrossed the region, including the routes to Phả Lại, Đông Triều, and Quảng Ninh, going as far as the modern Sino-Vietnamese frontier (presently route no. 18), and the route linking the Dâu both to the Đuống and Red Rivers and to the Lục Đầu and Thái Bình Rivers and the sea.²⁷ In the third century C.E., silk production was so well established in neighboring Nhật Nam that cocoons were produced eight times a year.²⁸

All these products became known between the second and third centuries, a time when modern archaeological excavations of contemporaneous tombs in Hepu, Jiaozhi, and Cửu Chân have revealed the wealth of local society. Vietnamese archaeologists have excavated enormous Han tombs in northern Vietnam whose diameters were twenty to thirty times those of the Later Han period. The no. 1 Han tomb in the Wangniuling site in Hepu, or modern Lianzhou,²⁹ was of a similar size.

Another important local handicraft product requires analysis here, but it was not something likely to appear in ancient Chinese catalogs of southern exotica. I refer to bronze drums, which are discussed in the next section.

Bronze Drums—Crossbred on the Sino-Vietnamese Cultural Rim

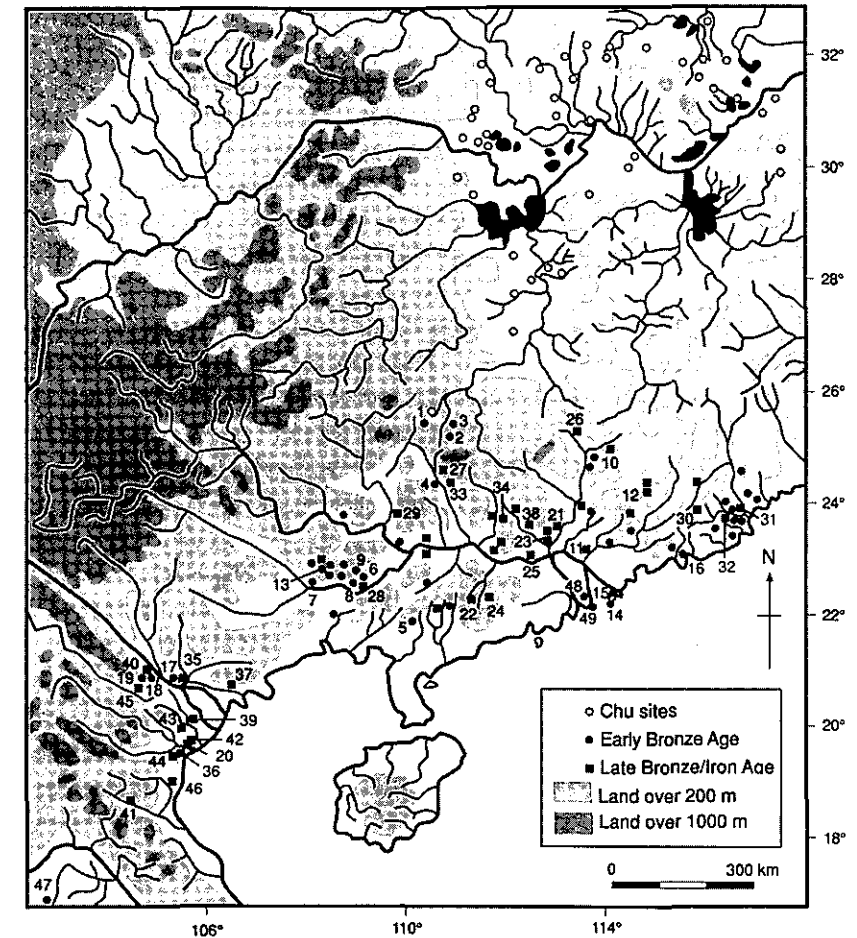
The early history of Vietnam is conventionally divided into two parts: the ages of bronze and iron. The Bronze Age was indigenous, symbolized by Đông Sơn culture and especially by bronze drums. Then the Chinese invasion disrupted local tradition by starting the Iron Age. But there is a puzzle in this: although Chinese administrations were set up here in the second century B.C.E., a large number of bronze drums—symbols of indigenous power and chiefly authority—were cast after Chinese occupation. The Ngọc Lũ bronze drum, the icon of traditional Vietnamese culture, was, according to the French colonial scholar Victor Goloubew, cast by local people in the Red River Delta during the first century C.E., that is, at least one century after Chinese rule started.³⁰ It might be argued that bronze drums were still being made by Red River Delta people, irrespective of Chinese rule; or that the drums had been cast by peoples in the surrounding hill country who were remote from Chinese rule. But an intriguing third possibility exists: that the two traditions ran parallel and intensively interacted. Archaeologists have ample evidence to show that the bronze drums resulted from intensive interactions between different peoples; but historians still tend to think that bronze drums were so sacred to the local chiefdoms that they must have been cast secretly in some mountains using some “traditional” techniques passed on unchanged for generations.³¹ Archaeologists, on the other hand, believe bronze drum casting required an open system to sustain it: because the task demanded “both artistic and technical skill of a high order,”³² artisans were shared throughout the region. Thus Magdalene von Dewall has suggested the existence of local specialist workshops whose craftsmen, although using similar techniques and common artifact forms, sought to create their own decorative motifs and styles. This would require considerable mobility of artisans and materials alike.

High levels of artistic and technical skills, let alone specialist workshops, are also expensive to support, raising the question of how local society afforded this luxury. Significantly, features of rice processing appear on two of the most famous Vietnamese drums, the Ngọc Lũ and Hoàng Hạ drums.³³ As early Chinese records quoted above suggest, both Hepu and Cửu Chân relied on Jiaozhi for rice, so these depictions of rice processing suggest the existence of a nonsubsistence or self-sustained economy, one based on exchanging rice for other commodities. In this context, it is interesting that Wang Mang-era coins (8–25 C.E.) have been excavated alongside Đông Sơn bronzes. Given that Wang Mang coins from central

China were exchanged for valuable purple shells from Jiaozhi, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that wealth generated from economic exchanges facilitated the continuation of the bronze drum tradition, and that it was these exchanges that carried bronze drums and their casting technique from Jiaozhi to the coastal Guangxi region, where Michael Churchman's chapter discusses their role and significance. Recent Chinese studies on the alloys used in bronze drums indicate that some Đông Sơn drums came from China, but that others found in Guangxi had originated in the Đông Sơn cultural zone and were brought to Guangxi later.³⁴ The authors of these studies further concluded that Guangxi's typical Lengshuichong-type bronze drums developed under the influence of Đông Sơn drums and that the golden era of bronze drum casting in Guangxi was under the Han, precisely when intensive contacts between the Guangxi coast and Jiaozhi were most evident.

At this point we should stop and ponder the political context of this bronze drum casting. There are two salient aspects to the story: if bronze drums were symbols of local power, then the 600 plus new drums that were cast from the first to the sixth centuries suggest increasing rather than decreasing numbers of local power centers; and if drum casting was tied so intimately to production, exchange, and wealth generation in the region, it is most likely to have occurred at or near the main centers of action, effectively under the noses of Chinese administrators. In fact, in 1999 a terra-cotta mold for a Đông Sơn drum was found by the Japanese archaeologist Nishimura Masanari at Luy Lâu, the earliest Chinese administrative site in Jiaozhi (from 111 B.C.E.).³⁵ He regarded the type of mold as similar to others from Shang and Zhou sites in China. Nishimura actually suggested the Đông Sơn phase belonged in the late metal age, and some other Japanese scholars argued that, contrary to the conventional belief that the Han invasion ended Đông Sơn culture, Đông Sơn artifacts, including drums, remained in use and were adopted into Han-style surroundings.³⁶

There was no reason why Chinese governors would oppose such casting, and no record suggests the casting of bronze drums was prohibited. After all, alien Han rule had been imposed from outside and, as Keith Taylor noted, "the Chinese had to adjust their habits to the local culture; they were in no position to force their way of life on the local people."³⁷ In Southeast Asia the key to a center's control over manpower was its ability to form political alliances with the locally based elite—the "big men."³⁸ The Chinese government's support for and reliance on "big men" was indicated clearly in a Tang record: "for those local chiefs who were more powerful than others because of their wealth from slaves, pearls, and elephants, the court often gave official positions in order to obtain profits from them. This practice was carried out in all the dynasties of Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen."³⁹



Map 3. Bronze Age sites. From Charles Higham, *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 92.

Rather than being a symbol of independence, bronze drums at this time might be better understood to signify adaptation by both the Chinese and the local elites. The best governors were always either those who could work with local chiefs and enjoy their support or those who were themselves "big men." The best-known cases were Shi Xie (Sĩ Nhiếp in Vietnamese) and his brothers, who ruled Nanhai, Hepu, Jiaozhi, and Cửu Chân in the second century C.E., and the Du Huidu family in the fifth century. Both families were local: the Shi rose from Cangwu in

Guangxi, and the Du from Chu Diên in Jiaozhi. Their wealth and local influence surely played a key role in their appointments.

Examining these factors—population, rice production, and important local sources of wealth—strongly indicates that it was early Jiaozhi, rather than Guangzhou, that was the regional integrating force, linking both central China to the Gulf of Tongking and Yunnan to the sea. Modern northern and north-central Vietnam thus formed the most important ancient trading partner of central China before the maritime silk road came into being. As Wang Gungwu pointed out, Jiaozhi's "very value to China lay in its overseas trade."⁴⁰ This trade became crucial to China with the decline of the Later Han and its consequent loss of control of the northwestern overland routes. The Han formally abandoned the overland silk road in 107 C.E., and thereafter connections between China and the West became concentrated on the southern coast. Indian merchants were recorded as beginning to "pay tribute" in 159 and 161, arriving via Jiaozhi, and as their trade to island Southeast Asia became more frequent it must have injected new vitality into the Nanhai trade, for which Jiaozhi was the terminus.

Jiaozhi from a Horizontal View

In previous sections I have used the term "Jiaozhi" as if it were not problematic, for convenience, as if it denoted a specific place, when in fact precisely defining "Jiaozhi" is a historical headache. When a source says "Jiaozhi" it could be referring to a district, a prefecture, or a province, depending on who said it and when.⁴¹ In the first century B.C.E. "Jiaozhi" included coastal Guangdong and Guangxi, and its administrative capital moved between Luy Lầu in the Red River Delta and Hepu (Lianzhou) and Guangxin (Wuzhou) in modern Guangxi, and Guangzhou. We are not even sure of the location of its main port. Similarly, "Rinan," or "Nhật Nam" in Vietnamese, is equally confusing. "Rinan" referred to the pivotal center that linked early imperial China with the outside world, but the location to which the name was applied moved from today's Huế-Quảng Nam area (up to the second century) north to modern Nghệ An and Thanh Hóa by the fifth century.⁴² Like Jiaozhi, there was no single port called Rinan, but several ports with the same name and status. The same is true of Hepu. Rather than there being a fixed port, one Chinese scholar has argued that when coastal peoples spontaneously organized maritime activities, any suitable location would become a port, and the ports used by official ships might only be those used relatively more often by ordinary people. "Hepu port" therefore might be a collective name designating several ports on today's Guangxi coast.⁴³

What we see here is the sharing of names of ports and overlapping territories: until the third century "Jiaozhi" might have been either modern northern Vietnam or Guangxi and the western Guangdong coast; while "Rinan" was shared between central Vietnam and Champa for a few hundred years. What this suggests to me is that such names indicated circles or clusters of trading centers rather than specific ports with a defined area and fixed territory. This reminds us of the Southeast Asian mandala pattern with local power, radiating from often comparatively short-term centers, acting to hold together systems that were increasingly unstable toward the margins. As Oliver Wolters noted, such a network of small settlements "reveals itself in historical records as a patchwork of often overlapping mandalas."⁴⁴

Talking about a "mandala pattern," or a "mini-Mediterranean," sounds strange in a context where the whole gulf region was supposedly darkened by the huge shadow of China. At first glance, the Tongking Gulf political landscape could not be farther from either pattern, both of which imply numbers of principalities operating on more or less equal terms. The overwhelming political and economic center, China, should theoretically always have prevented a situation of competing centers from emerging here. But one countervailing historical characteristic of China mitigated this effect: political and economic power in China tended to be far more concentrated in its own center than ever happened in Europe, where a post-Roman center as such was hard to identify.⁴⁵ This situation is profoundly important for our understanding of the Gulf of Tongking and, when coupled with a maritime outlook, it illuminates the gulf region at the time. Looking down from central China only reveals an annex in the Jiaozhi region; but to look northward from the southern edge of the Gulf of Tongking (from modern central Vietnam), and beyond the administrative units called provinces, prefectures, and districts, reveals a chain of principalities scattered from the coast to the hinterland, from modern Guangxi down to central Vietnam and Laos.

Casting off a China-centered view allows us to see these principalities in more equal terms rather than as a hierarchical set of provinces and prefectures. The perspective elucidates many stories of this region like, for instance, why pre-eighth-century sources are so vague about the main port of Jiaozhi. There was no main port, like we see in Guangzhou from the eighth century, but a group of ports competing against each other, stretching from central Vietnam to the Guangxi coast. Even Guangzhou was in competition with Jiaozhi as late as 774.⁴⁶ This new perspective also helps us better understand relations between the Red River Delta and the modern central Vietnam area. In written sources, Cửu Chân and Nhật Nam appear as subordinate units within the province of Jiaozhi. Chinese rule was

supposed to penetrate them through Jiaozhi's governance of the Red River Delta. However, if we peruse the sources carefully, Cửu Chân and Nhật Nam were more often mentioned as equals of Jiaozhi, not as its subordinates. Numerous records indicate Cửu Chân even attacked Jiaozhi from time to time.⁴⁷ Cửu Chân's relative autonomy shows clearly when the area of modern Hanoi was repeatedly attacked by the Nanzhao kingdom in 860 and 862, culminating in its occupation from 862 to 866. The Tang dynasty recruited armies from as far as modern Hunan and Sichuan to rescue it, but, curiously, nothing came from its "subordinate" neighbor Cửu Chân. Central Vietnam had long developed in parallel with the Red River Delta and, after Vietnamese independence in the tenth century, apparently tended to drift away from the political power of the Delta. The Former Lê dynasty fought with Châu Ái (later Nghệ An) in 989, 1006, and 1009, as did the Lý dynasty in 1011, 1012, 1029, 1031, 1035, and 1043. It required a major defeat of Champa in 1044 to end tensions between the Delta and Châu Ái, which had been rather prematurely renamed Nghệ An ("righteously pacified") in 1036.⁴⁸

Applying a mandala pattern helps to unpack the rich burden of historical records with which we are simultaneously blessed and cursed. Unlike the rest of Southeast Asia, for which limited textual evidence exists, Vietnam has a clear and often detailed chronology. While we are fortunate in this respect, our view has often been framed by that chronology, with its endless administrative details and military actions. It inevitably guides our historical understanding of the region by imposing both a top-down and a China-centered perception of events. The mandala pattern, however, helps shift the vertical view to a horizontal one, in the process revealing a more complex and nuanced early historical situation in the gulf region, one characterized by competing political and economic principalities.

Thus it seems to me that all the factors discussed above—trade and local manufacture, loose Chinese rule over a mandala-patterned region, and bronze drum casting—are most fruitfully understood as elements of the same context rather than as belonging to quite different times and places. Certainly, this period needs more careful research; but in my view recent studies now provide a workable basis from which to challenge these two essentialized traditions that exclude and oppose each other. Such narrow views "tended to detach local society and indigenous populations from the state-making process, and permitted the history of military conquest" to dominate, as Pamela Grossley and her colleagues have nicely put it.⁴⁹ Yet, as their studies on Qing China show, even when the bureaucratic machine was at its most sophisticated, Chinese rule at the imperial margins was hardly a simple process of Sinicization, if by this we mean an irrevocable assimilation in a single direction.

The Slow Demise of Jiaozhi's Trading Preeminence

The new maritime silk road stimulated the emergence of a system of minor ports. From Hepu southward there were Jiaozhi, Cửu Chân, Nhật Nam, and Linyi, and between Linyi and Oc Eo there were more than ten principalities subordinated to a larger entity called Xitu.⁵⁰ China's loss of control of the overland silk road and shift to the maritime alternative thus played a direct role in forming new principalities along the Tongking Gulf. Linyi (the northern part of what would become Champa) would benefit most from this new development, with archaeological findings over the last two decades indicating that, until the fourth century, Chinese influence predominated in the area that would later become "Hinduized" Champa.⁵¹ These significant findings turn our eyes northward and provide a more solid basis for our understanding of interactions in the Gulf of Tongking. In this new and perhaps most important round of first-millennium reorganization in the gulf region, a new competitor, known in the texts as Linyi, emerged from the former territory of Nhật Nam to challenge Jiaozhi's economic position. Its second-century rise was not accidental: Linyi was ideally located between Jiaozhi, the main port of south China, and Oc Eo, the major commercial center of the Nanhai trade through which passed most of the trade of the Nanhai and Roman Orient.⁵² Many exotic items that Cham traders offered as "tribute" in China might have come from Oc Eo. To Linyi's west was the then mighty kingdom of Ailao, from which Cham traders could access copper, iron, tin, gold, silver, and rhinoceros horn.⁵³ Linyi thus became the middleman between China and Oc Eo through which China was linked to India and the Roman Orient.

If Linyi challenged Jiaozhi's former dominance, it continued to play an important role in the Tongking Gulf until a combination of factors brought about its demise as a commercial powerhouse from the eighth century onward. The crisis that precipitated Jiaozhi's decline arose largely from external factors beyond its control, beginning in 728 when the Dayu Mountain road opened and made Guangzhou much more conveniently connected to the hinterland than Jiaozhi, meaning that goods from southern China reached Guangdong in greater abundance.⁵⁴ Another change, this time from the south, also badly affected Jiaozhi's trade. Throughout the eighth century the vast kingdom of Zhenla (or Chân Lạp in Vietnamese) was disintegrating into two states. Land Zhenla (modern northern Cambodia, southern Laos, and eastern Siam) had been one of Jiaozhi's most important trading partners; one of the key routes recorded in the Tang dynasty was from Jiaozhi to Land Zhenla, since many luxury items in demand in China, like ivory, rhinoceros horns, aromatic woods, and kingfisher feathers, had originated in the Indochinese hinterland.⁵⁵

The Zhenla civil war must have impacted badly on Jiaozhi's trade to the southwest at the same time that it benefited Champa, whose commercially oriented string of mandala-patterned polities had taken over Oc Eo's role in a Nanhai trade that would increasingly come to depend on ports in modern central Vietnam.

But by this time, even Champa was no longer the prince of the Nanhai trade. As Wang Gungwu points out, in the ninth century the main routes taken by Persian and Arab middlemen in the Nanhai trade completely bypassed Zhenla. Disorder in Zhenla had helped wreck its sea trade, while the rise of these middlemen further eclipsed it as a commercial power.⁵⁶ The Persians preferred to sail directly to Guangzhou on the open sea, with catastrophic consequences for a series of small port kingdoms such as Panpan, Langyaxiu, Dandan, and Chitu. It seems very likely that Jiaozhi had commercial contacts with many or all of these small port kingdoms: Panpan, for example, was recorded in one Chinese history as forty days' sail from Jiaozhi.⁵⁷ Their disappearance would have further undermined Jiaozhi's trading position at the same time that powerful rivals were arising farther east, not only Guangzhou but also the independent kingdom of Fujian (Min), which began to attract foreign traders at this time. So keen was Min's founder to foster commerce that he had rocks obstructing the harbor removed.⁵⁸

This was the start of a major reorganization in the South China Sea trade that saw Fujian's ports become predominant right after Vietnam became independent in the tenth century. Archaeological findings eloquently chart the slow demise of Jiaozhi from first-century queen of the Tongking Gulf to tenth-century nonentity. Appropriately, the evidence derives from the construction of local tombs: from the first to roughly the sixth centuries, tombs excavated in northern Vietnam were huge and skillfully decorated with ornate bricks; but from the Sui and Tang dynasties (seventh to tenth centuries) their size and decoration increasingly diminished until, during the Tang, they ended up as little more than cramped, plain spaces, a fraction of their former imposing size and beauty.⁵⁹

Chapter 3

Han Period Glass Vessels in the Early Tongking Gulf Region

Brigitte Borell

Archaeological investigations in Han dynasty tombs in Guangxi, China, have uncovered a small number of unusual glass vessels. The chronology of the tombs suggests that their initial production started around the middle or late Western Han period (206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.) and continued well into the Eastern Han period (25–220 C.E.). Although first thought to be imports, later chemical analyses of some of this glassware have disproved a Mediterranean or Western Asiatic origin. This chapter argues that these Han period glass vessels were in fact a local product, manufactured in the Tongking Gulf region of modern northern Vietnam and southern China.

The chapter begins by outlining the story of these glass vessels and analyzing the evidence for their local origin. It then goes on to consider how recent archaeological excavations are providing material evidence of the extensive trade relations, described so long ago in the *Hanshu*, that existed between Tongking Gulf ports and Southeast Asia and India.

Glass Vessels in Ancient Guangxi

During the last fifty years many glass artifacts have been excavated from Western and Eastern Han period tombs in Guangxi Province, southern China. Most are beads—in their thousands—and other personal ornaments that are also common elsewhere in China from contexts dating to the Han; but some artifacts are glass

Yuanhe junxian zhi 元和郡縣圖志
 Yuedaji 粵大記
 Yudi jisheng 輿地紀勝
 Yuemin xunshi jilue 粵閩巡視紀略
 Yujiaoji 馭交記
 Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑

Personal Names

Bộ Văn Dũng 卜文勇
 Chen Yaosou 陳堯叟
 Đinh Bộ Lĩnh 丁部領
 Dương Tiến Lộc 楊進錄
 Hoàng Khánh Tập 黃慶集
 Hoàng Thành Nhã 黃成雅
 Hoàng Tú Man 黃秀蠻
 Huang Chao 黃巢
 Huang Lingde 黃令德
 Lê Hoàn 黎桓
 Lê Long Đĩnh 黎龍廷
 Li Jianzhong 李建中
 Li Wenzhu 李文著
 Ling Ce 凌策
 Liu Zhang 劉鋹
 Pan Mei 潘美
 Song Taizu 宋太祖
 Taizong 太宗
 Wada Risaemon 和田理左衛門
 Wei Zhaomei 衛昭美
 Zhang Guan 張觀
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