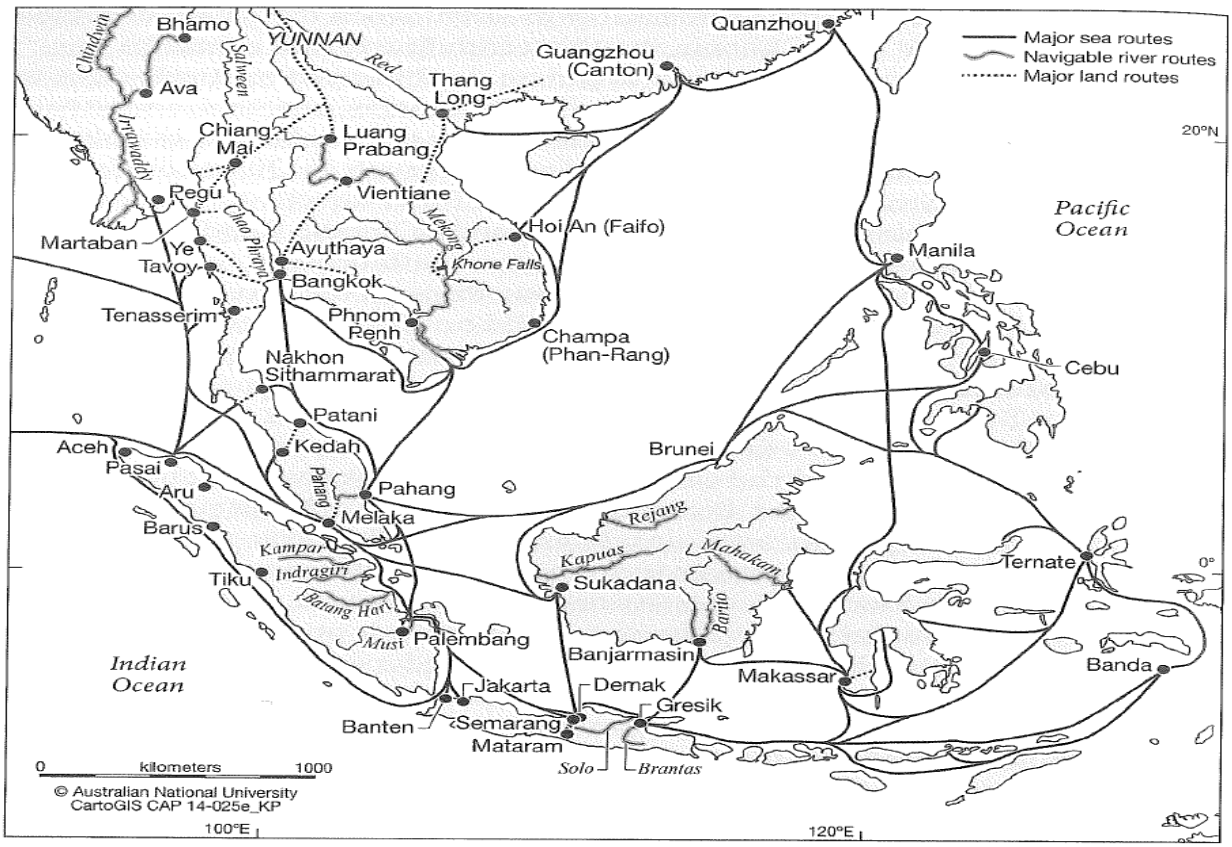
Introduction

That it's difficult to find resources in the United States about Southeast Asia's history should not be surprising. It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that a scholar undertook the monumental task of researching and writing a narrative of the region as a whole, paying particular attention to the role of maritime commerce and trade throughout Southeast Asia. The outcome, a two-volume treatise that manages to be very approachable despite its length, is still one of the best known and widely accepted interpretations of the political, social, and economic factors that shaped Southeast Asian history from the 15th to 17th centuries. Before Anthony Reid's *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988, 1993), scholars were specialists on one of the eleven countries that make up the region. Reid, however, was the first to closely scrutinize the historical trends that bound many of the distinct polities together.



Map 3.1 Trade routes, by sea, river, and land.

Unifying Themes of Southeast Asian History from 1500-1700

Fortunately, another scholar has condensed Reid's main thesis, providing a convenient outline in a few paragraphs rather than 500 pages. Reid used the term **"Age of Commerce" to describe an expansion of Indian Ocean and Chinese demand in the early 15th century** that:

> encouraged throughout Southeast Asia a novel prosperity, together with a cultural cosmopolitanism and a trend toward centralized polities, all of which was reversed by the global economic downturn of the mid-17th century. So marked was urban growth that by 1650 some 5 percent of the region's people lived in large cities, a percentage Reid claimed was greater than in contemporary northern Europe. A significant portion of the population came to depend on international trade for their livelihood.
>
> The political impact of maritime expansion was particularly impressive, as increasing royal revenues joined with foreign-style firearms and naval craft to promote political systems throughout the region that were more absolutist, centralized, and bureaucratic. Moreover, in the archipelago, new cities and market connections created a grid for the dissemination of Islam and Christianity, indeed, for a religious revolution. [T]he new faiths imposed more precise religious boundaries, universal texts, and a predictable moral universe.
>
> Finally, Reid borrowed the concept of a 17th century crisis from European historiography to explain what he claimed was a reversal of these trends. He identified a series of constraints on Southeast Asian prosperity arising in the early 17th century and peaking in the 1680s: deteriorating climate, falling profit margins, Chinese and European navigational advances with which Southeast Asians had difficulty competing, and–most critical for the archipelago—unprecedented assaults by the Dutch East India Company. In combination, these forces compelled Southeast Asians to retreat from cash-cropping to subsistence agriculture and to disengage from the international economy. Indigenous cities declined, to be replaced in some places by European enclaves culturally divorced from their hinterlands.
>
> More dramatic yet was the political transformation, as once-powerful kingdoms fragmented. … [I]n virtually every case institutions of central control built during the 'time of absolutism' failed to survive the loss of commercial income, as shown by severe political crises in the late 17th and 18th centuries.[1]

[1] Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830: Volume I: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 16-17.

Expanding Beyond the Early Modern Period and the Region

Once Reid paved the way for looking holistically at the historical trends occurring throughout the region during one particular era, other scholars began a similar analysis of other periods and even a comparison of trends in Europe at the time. The latter resulted in a two-volume treatise that created another revolution in the field: Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830: Volume I: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) and *Volume II: Mainland Mirrors, Europe, China, South Asia, and the Islands* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Lieberman's most important contribution to the current state of knowledge was his detection of historical, developmental parallels between far-flung points on the globe. "What were the principal long-term trends in precolonial Southeast Asian political, cultural, and economic history? How did that history relate to the rest of the world?"[2] This is important because you are already teaching World History.

If trends in Southeast Asia parallel events already included in your curricula, then integrating a particular case study or discussing wider regional comparisons will increase impact for your students without requiring the creation of separate units.

Lieberman perceived four "roughly synchronized cycles" of political consolidation, repeating over the last millennium, that can be discerned in large swaths of Europe and Asia:

> The first synchronized consolidation, which saw extremely rapid demographic and commercial growth across much of Europe and Southeast Asia, began in the 10th or 11th centuries and concluded with a generalized political and social crisis extending from the late 13th to the late 14th or early 15th centuries. Political integration resumed in the mid- or late 1400s, but between c. 1540 and 1610 new states in Burma, Siam, Vietnam, France, as well as Russia again succumbed, this time to a combination of novel cultural and political tensions, overly rapid territorial extension, and/or renewed ecological strains. Reforms in the early to mid-1600s inaugurated a third phase of consolidation – ending with the late 18th century collapse, the dramatic revivals, and … raging continental wars.[3]
>
> Why during the course of the second millennium did local societies in mainland Southeast Asia as well as Europe become more politically and culturally integrated? Whereas Europe as a whole in 1450 had some 500 political units, by

[2] Ibid., p. xix.
[3] Ibid., p. 2.

the late 19th century the number was closer to 30. Between 1340 and 1820 some 23 independent Southeast Asian kingdoms collapsed into three. Each 19th-century survivor was more effectively centralized than any local predecessor. At the same time across much of western Europe, northeastern Europe, and mainland Southeast Asia alike—in a pattern that was both symptom and cause of political integration—the dialect, religions, social conventions, and ethnicity of elites in each capital entered into more sustained dialogue with provincial and popular traditions. Everywhere literacy grew more widespread, vernacular literatures more profuse; cultural as well as commercial circuits denser, more inclusive, and more specialized. In varying degrees in Burma, Siam, Vietnam, France, and Russia alike, centrally-defined cultural norms became a marker of political inclusion.[4]

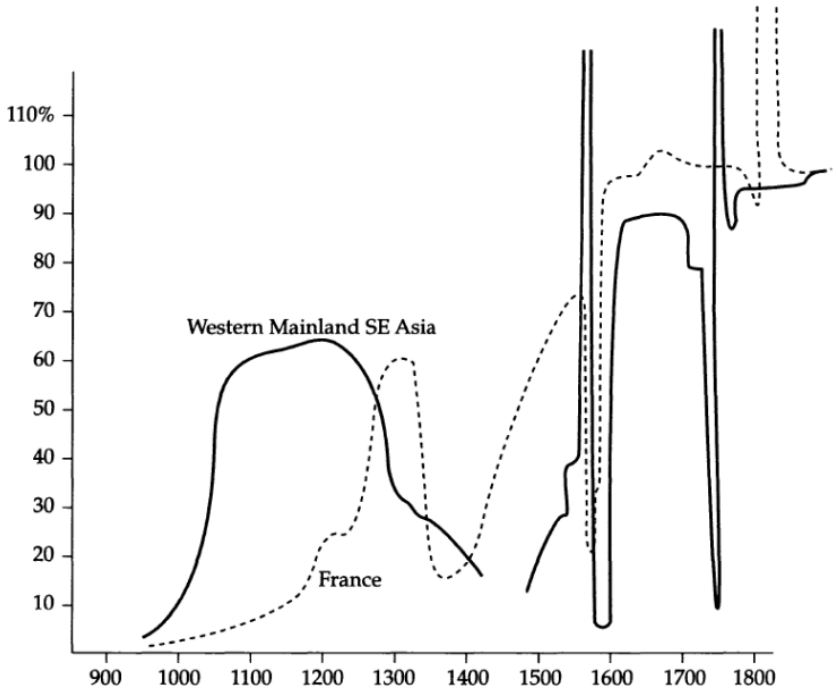


Figure 1.2. Territorial consolidation in Western mainland Southeast Asia and in France. This figure employs the same format as Figure 1.1, with lands held by the chief regional power in 1825 defining the 100-percent level on the vertical axis and with pre-1825 formations presented as a proportion of that 1825 figure.

Perhaps in part to respond to Lieberman's chronological expansion on his "Age of Commerce" thesis, in 2015 Anthony Reid published a new work, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015) which is highly recommended as a resource due to its clear style and breadth of coverage.

[4] Ibid., pp.3-5 (map, p. 4).

To take the second millennium as a starting point, an expansionary phase in Southeast Asian civilizations coincided with China's Song Dynasty (960-1127). Technological innovations to kilns during the preceding Tang Dynasty resulted in advancement of the ceramic industry as output and quality significantly increased. **These advances were "possibly as significant for the Chinese ceramic industry as the introduction of steam-powered machines were to be for the English cotton industry a millennium later."**[5] China's first centers of mass production for ceramics developed south of the Yangtze with the bulk of the output produced for the international market. Chinese trade was disrupted at the fall of the Tang Dynasty, but with these advances it rebounded quickly under the Song and Indian ocean trade increased.

> An Arab source, the *Muruj al-Dhahab*, written by Mas'udi in AD 956, states the following (after Guy 1990: 13):
>
> The ships from Basra, Siraf, Oman, India, the islands of Zabaj and Sanf came to the mouth of the river of Khanfu [Guangzhou, old Canton, China] with their merchandise and their cargo [before AD 877–8]. Then [the trader] went to sea to the land of Killah [Kedah] which is approximately half way to China. Today this town is the terminus for Muslim ships from Siraf and Oman, where they meet the ships which come down from China, but it was not so once. . . . This trader then embarked at the city of Killah on a Chinese ship in order to go to the port of Khanfu.

[5] Janice Stargardt, "Indian Ocean Trade in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Demand, Distance, and Profit," *South Asian Studies*, 30(1), p. 37.

Shipwrecks provide historical clues

A well-preserved Arab ship from the 9th century AD was discovered in 1998 off the Indonesian island of Belitung. It carried a large cargo of Chinese ceramics presumed to be destined for markets in the Middle East. However, it also contained packing materials made from the fibers of plants only growing in the Indonesian archipelago. One scholar has speculated that China supplied the wares, but Malays, with their knowledge of seafaring, offered manpower and logistical support for ensuring safe transport.[6]

The Sinan wreck excavated off the Korean coast and dated to the 14th century provides evidence of the Song Dynasty's monetary policies: it minted huge volumes of copper coins to keep up with the outflow from the Chinese economy to Southeast Asia where there was enormous demand. The cargo contained about 8 million copper coins. Only during the Mongol Yuan Dynasty was the coin economy replaced by a silver standard and paper money.[7]

When we think of trade in this time period, we often think of barter. These wrecks, however, remind us of the human capital and knowledge required to keep these extensive maritime networks functioning and the role played by developments leading to mass production and the introduction of money as a system of exchange.

Mainland Southeast Asia in the "Charter Era"

Civilizational cores in mainland Southeast Asia expanded in concert with the prosperous Song Dynasty. There were two types of polities that developed during this time, a period which Lieberman calls the "charter era" because a number of polities that emerged "established a vernacular civilization" that retained a sense of collective identity despite later disruptions. One type was centralized, with a defined, urbanized core. The other typically developed from dyadic relationships between a port and an upriver community that supplied the trade goods the port depended upon and was characterized by loose organization and shifting administrative capitals.

In the territory that today would be part of Cambodia and Vietnam, were two important charter civilizations, Angkor and Dai Viet, and one multi-centered civilization, Champa, whose multilateral interactions and inter-dependence played a decisive role in Southeast Asian history.

[6] Alain George, "Direct Sea Trade Between Early Islamic Iraq and Tang China: from the Exchange of Goods to the Transmission of Ideas," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 25, 4 (2015), pp. 579-624.
[7] Geoffrey Wade, "An Early Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, 900-1300 CE," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40(2) (June 2009), p. 223.

Angkor and the Khmer

Angkor was the first to emerge in mainland Southeast Asia's "charter era" as a major power center. The capital of the Khmer Empire, it was situated near the lower Mekong and Tonle Sap lake in what is now Cambodia. It developed to an astonishing degree between 950 – 1150, becoming the most extensive low-density, agricultural-based urban complex in the world.[8] Perhaps most famous for its temple complexes Angkor Wat (c. 1140) and Angkor Thom (c. 1200), it also featured a highly-complex hydraulic system and a ruler-straight road network that ran as far east as the South China Sea to facilitate maritime trade and military defense. The agricultural system of dykes relied on cooperation between communities rather than state control for operation, yet at its peak the kingdom "may have contained one or two million people, probably more than 5% of the total Southeast Asian population of the time."[9] The cause of Angkor's demise sometime between the 14th and 17th centuries is a subject of debate, but persuasive scientific evidence points to climate change—extreme monsoons interspersed with decades-long droughts—as a contributing factor.[10]

Dai Viet

Dai Viet in the tenth through thirteenth centuries can be considered a charter polity in that it established the "first distinct Vietnamese written identity [and] a permanent capital (Southeast Asia's most enduring)," but "throughout the first millennium CE the Red River delta was more clearly enmeshed in the Sinic world than most parts of what we now call China."[11] The Ly Dynasty (1009-1225) won independence from China but maintained many Chinese/Confucian administrative practices. 1226 saw the ascension of the Tran Dynasty which took power through marriage and began systematic internal reforms. Importantly, the Tran widened their administrative base in the countryside, elevating "qualified minor-title people to higher administrative posts at the capital."[12] The kingdom was divided into

Just a little bit of History Repeating

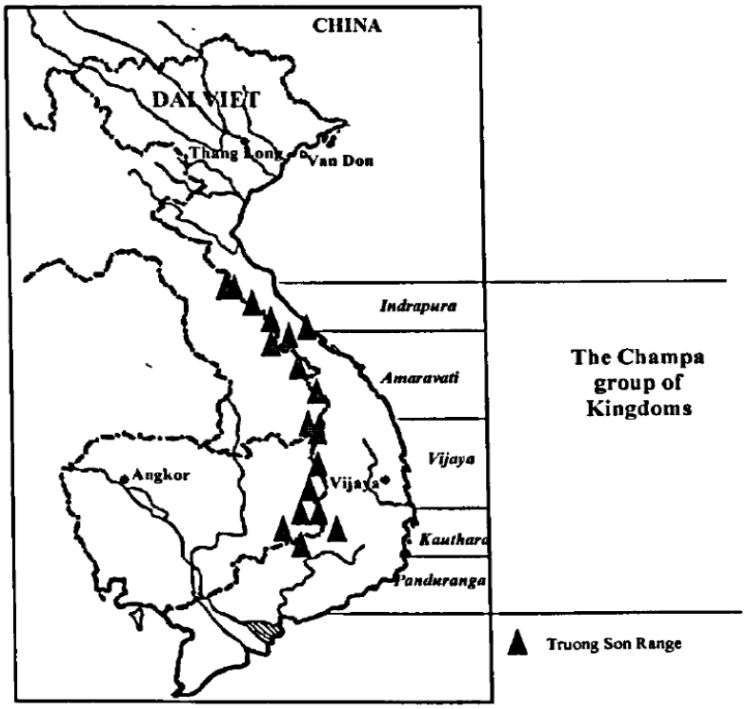
Angkor was dependent upon annual monsoon flooding to support its vast agricultural system: a hydraulic network covered an area of nearly 1,000 km^2 and connected the main city with its suburbs. The complexity and scale of this internally interdependent network, an initial competitive advantage that engendered its rise, also proved its downfall. The vast scale made the system resistant to change, thus when several abrupt reversals from drought to extreme monsoons occurred in the 14th century, society could not effectively respond. Serious flooding damaged infrastructure and agricultural production was imperiled by drought. Low crop yields likely contributed to the population decline, meaning fewer citizens to manage the overtaxed and interdependent hydraulic system. **What lessons can we draw about our own large-scale and interdependent networks in this time of increasing climactic disruption?**

[8] Roland Fletcher, et al., "The Case of Angkor and Monsoon Extremes in Mainland Southeast Asia," in *Megadrought and Collapse: From Early Agriculture to Angkor*, edited by Harvey Weiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), Chapter 10.
[9] Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p. 41.
[10] Brendan M. Buckley, et al., "Climate as a Contributing Factor in the Demise of Angkor, Cambodia, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol 107, No. 15 (April 13, 2010), pp. 6748-52.
[11] Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p. 47.
[12] Vu Hong Lien, "Mongol Invasions in Southeast Asia and their impact on relations between Dai Viet and Champa (1226-1326 C.E.)," PhD Dissertation, University of London SOAS (2008), p. 48.

twelve regions which were then subdivided into smaller units. This resulted in farm estates and tribal settlements, which functioned autonomously with private armies, forming a defensive perimeter around population centers, an important advantage when the Mongols invaded.

Champa

Unlike its neighbors Dai Viet and Angkor, Champa was not a centralized kingdom but instead a grouping of five, separate kingdoms that evolved into a loose confederation. Situated in today's Central Vietnam, the five states making up Champa were: Indrapura, Amaravati, Vijaya, Kauthara, and Panduranga. Chinese texts suggest that in the second century CE, the Cham people were already living in principalities or chiefdoms in that region. In 137 CE, Cham invaded and took the southernmost Chinese outpost of Siang-lin. At that time, the territory that would become Dai Viet (northern Vietnam) was under Chinese (Han) sovereignty and called Jiaozhi or Giao-chi. The governor of Jiaozhi, foreshadowing the obstacles the Mongols would later face, decided against reconquest, eschewing an expedition to a swampy land, rife with tropical diseases which would deplete men and treasure. The lack of grain reserves was another prescient concern.[13] It is hypothesized that the warrior who led the attack on Siang-lin proclaimed himself king of the Cham principalities and thus established Champa as a polity.[14]



Map 3: The five segments of the Champa group of kingdoms[49]

[13] Georges Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture* (Thailand: White Lotus Press, 2002) (trans. from the 1928 2nd rev. ed., *Le Royaume de Champa*, by Walter E.J. Tips), pp. 24-26.
[14] Ibid. p. 26.
Map 3 from Vu Hong Lien, "Mongol Invasions," p. 55.

Situated in a narrow band between the sea and mountains, the geographical position of the Champa kingdoms informed their internal and external relations. The prominence of each kingdom fluctuated over time, with the rise and eventual political extinction of all. Cham forest products such as aromatic woods, spices, and precious animal products (e.g., ivory and rhinoceros horn) were exported to China and throughout the rest of Southeast Asia. The Song Dynasty recorded tribute missions from Champa throughout the 12th century ("tribute" indicated official trade, with a portion of the cargo given to the emperor as a gift).[15] But the location of archaeological finds of 13th century Vijaya-Cham ceramics in the Sinai Peninsula underscores the most valuable asset: Champa's location on the maritime trade routes between China and the western Indian Ocean.

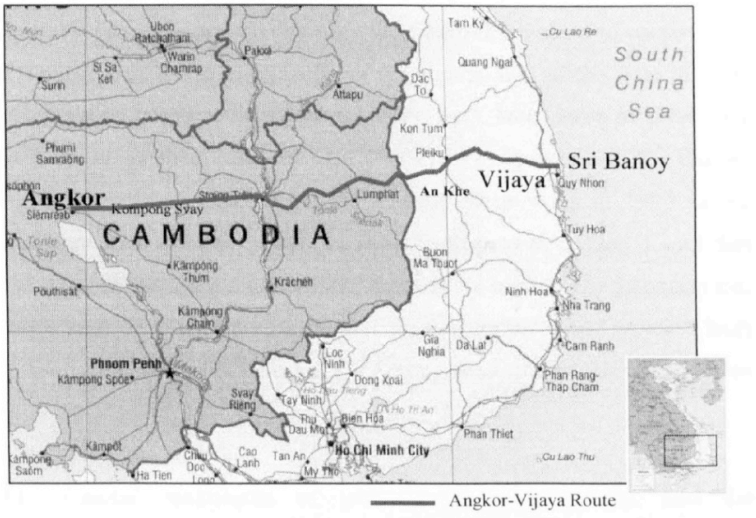
The fragile balance of power between the kingdoms within Champa meant that its centralized neighbors, Dai Viet and Angkor, were often pulled into internecine conflicts and diplomatic intrigues. When it wasn't seeking their help, Champa often waged war on these neighboring states. In the 12th century, the three polities engaged in multilateral warfare in 1123, 1131, 1136, 1145, 1147, and 1150.[16] In 1177, the Chams sailed up the Mekong and "plundered the riches of Angkor." The Khmer leader who drove them out, Jayavarman VII (r. 1181-1220) turned Angkor into a militarized state and became the "conqueror and builder *par excellence* of Khmer history."[17]

[15] Ibid.., pp. 56-57.
[16] Ibid., p. 59.
[17] Reid, *Critical Crossroads*, p. 41.

The invasion in 1177 resulted in significant changes in Champa as well. Jayavarman VII turned the tables and dominated Champa, partitioning it in 1192 by appointing his brother-in-law King of Vijaya and installing a Cham defector to Angkor as King of Panduranga in the south, placing it under feudal rule.[18] Khmer rule over Champa was consolidated by 1203, but the seat of power shifted to Vijaya which had not previously held prominence. Vijaya's rise in importance has been credited principally to its port of Sri Banoy (Thị Nại in Vietnamese), situated along today's Quy Nhon Bay in Binh Dinh Province, which was developed into a major trading hub in the early 13th century by the Cham or by Khmer in Champa.[19] By the end of Khmer domination in 1226, Sri Banoy was Champa's major center of international commerce.[20] However, the port was not the only infrastructural component developed to facilitate trade at this time. A stele at Preah Khan records that "'the Khmer king Jayavarman VII built 57 rest houses along the road from Angkor to Vijaya.'"[21]

A route through the mountain passes linking Angkor with the port of Sri Banoy would have given both Angkor and Vijaya a distinct advantage in the competition for position in the international trade network.

> …the westbound route from Vijaya appeared to link up with a Khmer eastward road, running from the east gate of Angkor, to form the Angkor-Vijaya route mentioned in the [stele inscription]….[I]ts location [was] partially mapped out…in the 1920s to prove that it was a road indeed, at least on the Cambodian side, and that it was accompanied by a number of rest houses. The Angkor-Vijaya route, thus, whether as a road or a system of tracks, made it feasible that products transported from the hinterland to Sri Banoy in Vijaya could be, not just from the plateaux, but from Angkor.[22]



[18] Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom*, pp. 78-79.
[19] Vu Hong Lien, "Mongol Invasions," p. 63.
[20] Ibid. (internal citation omitted).
[21] Ibid., p. 66 (citation omitted).
[22] Ibid., p. 67.

The Economic Importance of Trade for the State

From its inception, the Song Dynasty was aware of the importance of trade for its coffers. The Song exercised increasing control over southern ports and systematized trade for financial advantage using three avenues. First, taxes were imposed on exports from China; the revenue was utilized solely for military expenses. Second, duties were levied on imports. For fine quality goods, the levy was one-tenth the value. The third avenue comprised the bulk of revenue: the purchase and sale of goods, some of which was subject to government monopoly.[23]

Because enforcement was critical for the state, a good deal of beauraucratic effort and administrative expansion resulted.

> To coordinate the overseas trade and its taxation, the Song established maritime trade supervisorates at various ports. These…supervisorates had a range of functions, including inspection of incoming ships and their cargoes, assessing the cargoes and charging duty, purchasing government monopoly products, registering Chinese ships going aborad, issuing certificates for merchants, enforcing prohibitions against export of controlled commodities…and providing accommodation for maritime merchants. The large profits they made for the state are well attested.[24]

When the Mongols began their campaign to overthrow the Southern Song, they sought to emulate, and even expand, the Song's profitable maritime trade strategy. "By the time the Mongols took over the whole of China, after the defeat of the Southern Song in 1279" they had reestablished, under their control, a number of the maritime trade supervisorates. With their "newly acquired Song navy," the Mongols began to "expand their influence and activities into the South China Sea. The next major stopover on the east-west maritime route, Sri Banoy, became a choice location for the establishment of" the next, new maritime bureau.[25]

What had been a decisive advantage for Champa now became its Achilles' heel. The threat prompted a period of tense, diplomatic realtions between Champa and Dai Viet. This rapprochement followed a protracted period of conflict (with war in 1252) between the two states that itself had resulted from competition for the spoils of trade.

First Mongol Invasion

Following its war in 1252 with Champa, Dai Viet enjoyed five years of peace. This was disturbed in 1257 when it was drawn into the Mongols' strategy to take over southern China and depose the Southern Song. By virtue of its position along the border, the Mongols saw Dai Viet as a convenient "back door" through which troops could travel from their newly acquired territory in Yunnan to southern China where they could attack from the rear.[26]

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[23] Wade, "Early Age of Commerce," p. 224.
[24] Ibid., p. 225.
[25] Vu Hong Lien, "Mongol Invasions," p. 74.
[26] Ibid., p. 82.

To execute these plans, a Mongol general sent envoys to demand passage on three separate occasions to the Tran emperor. On each occasion, the Mongol envoy was jailed in the Vietnamese captial. This provocative response likely was due to the importance of the Song's goodwill for Dai Viet's political and commercial status. Dai Viet was put in the impossible position of keeping the superior Mongol army at bay while demonstrating loyalty to the Song.[27]

The Tran emperor anticipated the bellicose Mongol response and issued an edict ordering the population "'to take arms to fight.'"[28] The defense of Dai Viet was put under the command of General-in-Chief Trần Quốc Tuấn (later known as Trần Hưng Đạo). In January 1258, the Mongols launched their first incursion into Dai Viet toward the capital, then called Thang Long. After several days of intensive battles, with the Tran emperor leading troops, the Mongols reached the capital only to find the rest of the court had been evacuated.

The Mongols occupied the capital for nine days, but after suffering from heat, humidity, lack of food, and perhaps cholera or malaria, decided to retreat back to Yunnan. Having heard of the planned retreat, the Tran emperor launched a counter-attack on the departing Mongol troops who were again harrassed as they passed an estate by the Red River where they were engaged in a hard battle by the owner and his men. This was the first documented instance of Vietnamese peasants fighting as an armed group under the Tran.[29] As the Mongols failed to open a passage between Yunnan and southern China, it was also their first defeat.

The Mongol Threat to Southeast Asia: 1276-1282

The Tran maintained a balancing act of diplomatic relations with both the Song and Mongols for fourteen years until the Song were finally defeated. The loss of the Song capital of Hangzhou signaled a new phase for the Mongols: expansion into the South China Sea. Champa was the first stop on along the east-west maritime route between China and India. The Cham King, Jaya Indravarman V, was pressured to accept vassalage status. The king stalled diplomatically for six years, sending large tributes to Kublai Khan while ignoring his demands. Tiring of the delay, in November 1282, Kublai Khan instructed a military commander with experience in naval warfare to proceed with an expedition against Champa. Champa turned to Dai Viet for assistance.[30] The Tran sent as many as 20,000 men to Champa to join the fight against the Yuan force.[31]

> The activities from China during the period of 1276-1282 CE served as a prelude to a direct intervention from China in both Dai Viet and Champa, which has been remarked as a noteworthy incident in the history of the region. From the time that Dai Viet broke free from Chinese domination in the tenth century, China had not

[27] Ibid., p. 84.
[28] Ibid., p. 85.
[29] Ibid., pp. 101-02.
[30] Ibid., p. 124.
[31] The Tran were motivated by self-interest; the emperor understood that if Champa fell to the Mongols, the invaders would then turn attention to Dai Viet and, when attacked from both the north and south, the kingdom could not defend itself against the numerically superior Mongol forces.

> tried to stage any large-scale intervention in regional affairs. The Mongol series of invasions directed by Kublai Khan against Vietnam, Champa, Burma, and Indonesia in the last quarter of the thirteenth century was the first. One way to interpret this unusual series of events is by looking at the availability of the Mongol tools of aggression: the newly formed Mongol navy, the advance of their sailing techniques, and the development of their arsenal.
>
> By the beginning of the 1280s, the Mongols had acquired all the necessary means to carry out expeditions across an open sea, something they had not been able to manage before their conquest of southern China. They had also learned some valuable lessons in Japan, through their early attempted invasion of 1274.
>
> The Mongols then decided to develop their maritime capacity by expanding the Song Navy that they captured in 1279. However, their own creation of a marine transport fleet in 1281 turned out to be a fatal mistake. The failure of the transport fleet in supporting the Mongol cavalry force in Dai Viet and Champa became a contributing factor in the Mongol defeat in both polities, and a weakness in Kublai Khan's maritime plan in Southeast Asia.[32]

The Mongol Invasions in Dai Viet and Champa: 1282-1288

The Mongol fleet arrived at the entrance to the port of Sri Banoy on December 30, 1282. Located at the north end of Quy Nhon Bay, the port was naturally defended as the invaders had to transverse a narrow inlet bordered by rocky cliffs. The Cham defended the port itself with one hundred catapults modeled on the type the Mongols had popularized, along with thousands of armed troops. Despite this, and after ferocious battles, the Mongols overtook the citadel at Sri Banoy then marched inland and captured the capital, Vijaya in February 1283.

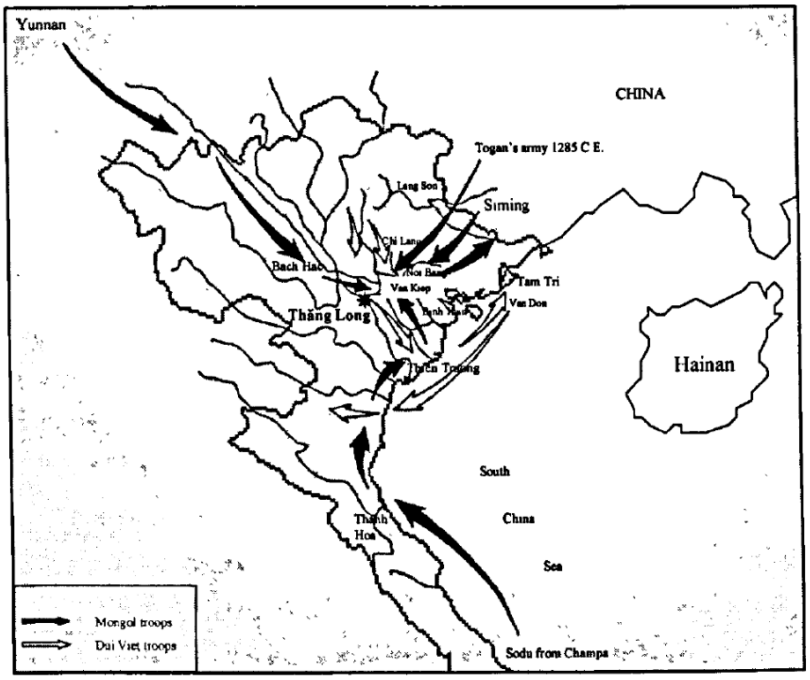
The Cham then began a guerilla-style war, ambushing Mongol troops in dense jungle that, centuries later during the Vietnam War, was nicknamed the "corridor of death" by American troops. By mid-March, due to guerilla attacks, the grueling terrain, and tropical disease, the Mongol army was in severe difficulty and its commander had to send for rescue.[33] Troops assembled to undertake that rescue deserted in high numbers.

The long wait for reinforcements caused the Yuan commander to withdraw from Vijaya to two regions adjacent to the southern border of Dai Viet. The Yuan demanded access through Dai Viet to reach its troops, but permission was denied. This set the stage for the next invasion of Dai Viet.

[32] Ibid., pp. 132-34 (citations and internal ellipses omitted).
[33] Ibid., pp. 150-51.

The Second Mongol Invasion of Dai Viet: 1285

The Tran emperor, preparing for war, mobilized both land and naval forces and appointed Prince Tran Quoc Tuan as Commander in Chief. The Mongol invasion came in January 1285 from two flanks. Trần Hưng Đạo issued a decree to the farm estates that had been created under the Tran to contribute their private armies and militiamen came out in the thousands. Tactically they were employed to attack Mongol forces from the rear, cutting off supply lines. Despite this, Mongol forces were able to occupy the capital of Thang Long once again. Another battalion then sailed north from Champa.



Map 10: The second Mongol invasion of Đại Việt, 1285 C.E.

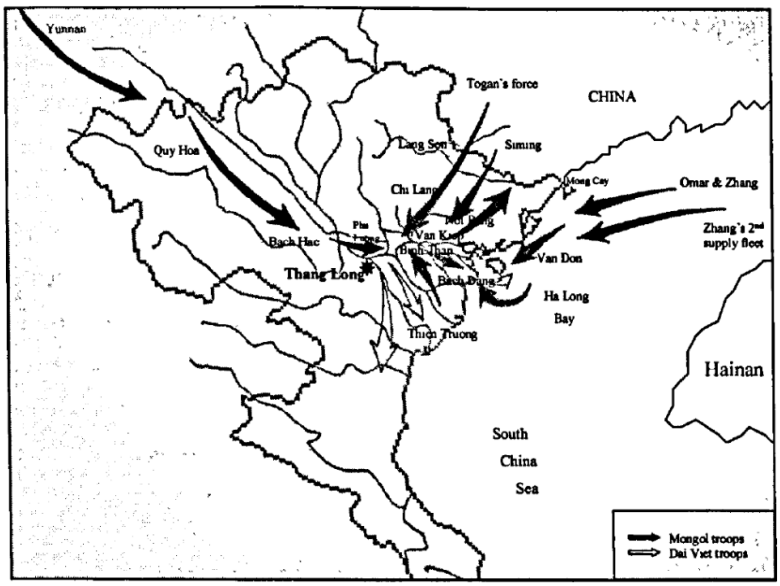
The irregular forces from the farm estates employed guerilla-style tactics and ambushes, digging holes in roads to trap the Mongols' horses and raiding their camps at night. Battles raged all over Dai Viet territory. The beginning of the monsoon season brought the decisive advantage to Dai Viet, however. Disease again broke out among Mongol troops and many died. Retreating to the Red River, the Tran army confronted one of the commanding Mongol generals, Sodu, and won a pivotal battle.

One notable feature was the participation of former Song troops, dressed in their southern Chinese uniforms, on the side of the Tran. It was reported that the Mongols were greatly confused upon seeing their former enemies on the battlefield and were "routed as the result." General Sodu was killed and the Tran captured thousands of Yuan troops.

The Mongol armies returned to China with only a fraction of their troops. The second invasion was over for Dai Viet.

The Third Invasion of Dai Viet: 1287

Enraged, Kublai Khan immediately ordered a third invasion which got underway in 1287 and this time would rely on naval strength. Hundreds of warships and seventy supply ships were prepared.



Map 11: The third Mongol invasion of Đại Việt, 1287-1288 C.E.

The Yuan naval force of 18,000 men, 500 warships, and 70 supply ships entered Ha Long Bay in November 1287. The Yuan admiral quickly defeated the Tran troops protecting the entrance to the bay, then proceeded at great speed toward the capital. However, in his haste, he left the supply ships far behind and unprotected. They were attacked and sunk by the Tran navy, thus depriving the Yuan forces of all foodstuffs and, more importantly, fodder for their horses.

By February 1288, the Mongols had once again taken the capital, but the Tran royals had once again fled. Guerilla warfare, similar to prior invasions, again raged across the country with the many private armies of the farm estates joining in. Kublai Khan ordered another transport fleet with provisions to be sent, but it was also sunk shortly after entering Ha Long Bay. With a shortage of food for the troops and hay for their horses, the Yuan ranks again began suffering from the climate and tropical disease.[34]

Learning of a planned retreat by the Yuan back to China, Tran Hung Dao organized a counter-offensive on land and sea. He set up a naval ambush by ordering stakes to be driven into the riverbed of the Bach Dang River and stationed forces on either side, hidden by thick reeds. When the Yuan ships reached that point in the river on their way back out to sea, Tran Hung Dao engaged them in battle while the tide was high, and then his fleet of small boats escaped as the tide went out. The Yuans' larger ships were impaled on the stakes, becoming immobile targets for the Tran troops who captured 400 ships and several Mongol generals, including the

[34] Ibid., p. 180.

commander Omar. The Mongol troops on land fared no better, and were harassed by continual ambushes as they retreated back to China.

The End of the Mongol Threat

Kublai Khan continued to be enraged by his defeats and ordered preparations for a fourth invasion. Fortunately for all, the plan was abandoned when Kublai Khan died in 1294. The invasions, although ultimately unsuccessful, wreaked havoc on Dai Viet, ultimately setting the stage for a challenge to Tran rule.

Map 2. Southeast Asia c. 1000–1500