

The Second COE-ARI Joint Workshop

**Dynamic Rimlands and Open Heartlands:
Maritime Asia as a Site of Interactions**

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"National" and "Overseas" Markets in Early 19th-Century Vietnam: A View from the Mountains and the Sea

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As a scholar of Vietnam's economic history I had a pleasant surprise when I read a comment by Vo Tri Thanh, a leading Vietnamese economist, regarding the situation in 2006: "Sino-Viet trade is more frequent than domestic trade between the northern and southern Vietnam."² This echoed a remark by a Chinese scholar working on contemporary Guangxi, who said that, in the early 1990s, 90% of Guangxi's overseas trade was with Vietnam, and of this trade 90% was done at the border.³

Neither scholar related these findings to the past. But it is worth asking whether these patterns were centuries-old, or as a new phenomenon emerged in the tide of globalization? If the former, can we determine what was the magnitude of this overland trade, and how it might have compared with the maritime trade down the coast, for example? We might also ask what proportion did overland and maritime trade contribute to the revenue of the Vietnam in the century before colonial conquest, and whether it is possible to establish some basic ideas of the different degrees of commercialization in Vietnam at the time? I am grateful to the workshop organizers for giving me the chance to explore these questions on the structures of regional commodity distribution and interactions between the mountains and the sea. I particularly like this setting, between the mountains and the sea, as "waters and mountains" means "country", in Vietnamese ("*non nuoc*"), as well as in Chinese ("Shan He").

Busting market towns among the mountains

I will start my examination with the overland trade at the northern border, based on a manuscript on tax regulation of 1813 (*Tuan ty thue le*). It lists the prices of over 300 commodities in the northern provinces, and is useful for evaluating the regional differentiations between the Red River Delta and the outer provinces. This document also helps me to compare the commodities in Canton and other Southeast Asian ports

¹ "中越边境贸易现状", *Yazhou Zhoukan*, (Hong Kong), no.21, vol. 20, 28 May, 2006.

² Conversation with Miss Pan Jine, research fellow of the Institute of World Economy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, October 2004.

of the early 19th century that I have collected. To complement this document of tax regulations I use two other sources, the Administrative Statute of Dai Nam (*Dai Nam ho dien su le*), and a Han-Nom manuscript "Thong quoc dinh dien san vat thue le" of a similar nature. Both contain data of land taxes, head taxes and customs-house taxes through different reigns, and especially from the early to the mid-19th century. When the three sources are put together they show a picture of the mountainous region at the early 19th century Sino-Viet border, when the Chinese mining boom was in its decline but the frequent economic exchanges that had come with mining had created a chain of market towns along the rivers running down from the north. At this remote periphery of both Han and Viet civilisations, there seemed to have existed a group of bustling markets towns in the early 19th century. This formed an interesting contrast to the Red River Delta where there existed one city, Hanoi, and a township, Pho Hien (*pho*).³ yet in the mountainous Outer Six provinces (*ngoai luc tran*, as compared to the *noi ngu tran*, the Inner Five provinces of the Red River Delta)⁴ there were 24 market towns (*pho*). This finding reverses the general impression and conventional hierarchical map of Vietnamese landscape, in which Viet people lived in the more cultured and urbanized centers, while the backward rural bush peoples lived in remote mountain peripheries where nothing much happened.

While we have little information on these townships, the commodity pricelist of 1813 provides at least some clues about the residents and the nature of these townships. The cost of daily life seemed to be much higher in these townships and nearby areas than in the Delta,⁵ while Chinese commodities at the Outer Six provinces were often cheaper than the Delta.⁶ While the former suggests a limited number of people were living from farming and sideline household production than in the Delta, and more relied on market supply for their daily life, the latter indicates the direct and more frequent trades between the bordering provinces and China which saved the

³ Even include all the market streets in Hanoi (19) the number was still less than in the mountains region. The names of 19 streets are found in Nguyen Vinh Phuc & Tran Huy Ba, *Duong pho Ha noi: lich su, van vat, thang canh*, Hanoi, 1979, pp.516-537. This book used an early 19th century source *Bac thanh dia du chi* (Gazette of the northern Vietnam). I have counted the names with *pho, Phuong*, and *Hang* in them and got 19.

⁴ 10 *phos* in An Quang, 7 in Tuyen Quang, and 7 in Lang Son, Cao Bang and Thai Nguyen. Here I use Sakurai, *The Formation of Vietnamese Villages*, (Betonamu sokuraku no kissei), Tokyo: Soubunsha, 1987, pp.155-157. The source he used missed the two *phos* in Lang Son, which were recorded in the Qing archival documents of the Ming and Qing periods), series G, "Report by Fukangan, Governor General of Guangdong and Guangxi", in 1791, pp.187-188.⁵ At the markets of these Outer Six provinces, for example, pigs and ducks were 20% to 60% more expensive, chickens were four times more expensive and eggs double that of the Delta. One big duck in Cao Bang was 0.40 quan, in the Delta it was 0.25; 10 big chickens were 1 quan in the Delta while 1 of the same kind was 0.40 quan in Cao Bang. A good quality mat cost twice as much as it was on a Delta market. 40 quan per 100 mats in the Delta, while in Cao Bang was 80 quan and in Lang Son it was 90 quan.

⁶ Shark's fin, for instance, cost the same at the Delta markets as in Lang Son and Cao Bang, and birds' nests were even 40% cheaper in Cao Bang than in the Delta.

transportation cost than the trade to the Red River Delta.⁷ As such Chinese commodities occupied an important, even dominating, place in these townships, they provided the necessities for everyday life, such as cheaper ceramic tea cups, wine cups, cotton fabric from Teochiu and Fujian, bronze pots, dry fruits, coloured paper sheets etc. Put it more precisely, the Outer Six provinces of the early 19th century seemed to have been situated more in the Chinese commercial realm than they were in the Viet world.

While many residents of these townships might have been Chinese, it is hard to imagine that these rather frequent economic exchanges did not involve the Nung, Tay and other peoples in the area, who might not have lived in the townships but were supposedly "self reliant" and lived in "closed societies" that had nothing to do with these townships, as is often claimed in regard to such upland tribal societies. As Chitrana Prasertkul points out in his study on the Yunnan-Tai-Burma trade of the 19th century, very few of the groups inhabiting these frontier lands actually existed on fully self-sufficient economies.⁸ His argument portrays the frontier world as something more than a geographic conglomeration of mutually isolated societies, but as some sort of functional unit, integrated by a crucial cohesive force.

The prosperity of this region started in the mid-18th century, when mining at the border areas was in full swing. Woodside points out that the output of two of the largest copper mines in this area throughout the second half of the century averaged from 220 to 280 tons per annum, making it one of the largest copper-complexes of Asia.⁹ Some mines hired as many as 10,000 Chinese workers, and the mines paid taxes directly to the local Nung chiefs.¹⁰ The interactions between the Chinese and the local Nung and the peoples must have been quite frequent. The cost of red cotton blankets, locally produced by people in the mountainous region, for example, was 30% to 40% cheaper at the markets of the Outer provinces than it was in the Delta.¹¹ Lead and processed opium were also considerably cheaper than in the Delta. As the Le king described in a letter to the Qing emperor Qianlong, "So many people gathered together at the Tong Tinh mining site that it became a township; there one finds food stalls and restaurants,

⁷ Cao Bang stands out as such an example. In general, the Cao Bang price index was higher than the rest of the Outer provinces and much higher than the Delta, but medium quality Chinese silk and silk fabrics were often much cheaper than they were at the Delta markets. These include Nanjing silk, coloured gauze fabrics, and coloured silk threads etc. Some other medium-range commodities were cheaper in the Outer Provinces. Silk shoes, for example, in Lang Son and Gisen from Western counties (Yangshen) were cheaper than they were in the Delta and other markets.
⁸ Chitrana Prasertkul, *Yunnan Trade in the Nineteenth Century: Southwest China's Cross-Boundaries Functional System*, (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1989), p.33.
⁹ Alexander Woodside, "The relationship between political theory and economic growth in Vietnam, 1750-1840", in Anthony Reid ed., *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies*, (London and New York: MacMillan, 1997), pp. 259-60.
¹⁰ Le Quy Don, *Kien yan deu luc*, p.414.
¹¹ In Delta it was 8 quan per piece, while in Thai Nguyen and Hung Hoa was 6 quan, and Tuyen Quang was only 5.

tea houses and medicine shops, and it is prosperous indeed. (送里) 内城聚成市, 城外茶楼, 茶坊, 茶肆, 极为繁荣).¹² There was even some space for cultural life. In Cao Bang, cheaper than they were in the cultured Delta, suggesting that there was a demand for such items in these remote townships. Entertainment could also be easily found. An officer from Taiwan recorded in 1835 seeing two singing girls in Lang Son who sang and danced gracefully, and returned the guests beautiful smiles when they threw gold (?) coins to them.¹³ The singing girls (曲妓) were expensive, according to a Chinese officer who visited the Outer provinces in 1883, "because Viet officers were allowed to call singing girls [at the expense of the court?]", "The two girls he saw, who were from the Delta area, wore amber earrings instead of gold and gems (as Chinese women usually did), and dressed in narrow sleeved tops with long skirts. They were thus refreshing to the officer's eyes, who commented that they were "as beautiful as the girls in [Chinese] paintings".¹⁴ No black teeth were mentioned.

Here as everywhere else Viet women were actively involved in trade. While we have no pre-19th century records on this for the Outer Provinces, as we do for the late 18th century Delta and Dang Trong, the Chinese officer who visited in 1883 reported that "trade is carried out by women, and even the wives and daughters of high officers sit at the markets with scales in their hands. [For instance.] Prime Minister Nguyen Van Tuong's wife sells oil, and the daughter-in-law of the Governor Luong Huy Ich sells opium, and both became rich."¹⁵

Taijing prefecture [of Guangxi] is at the end of the border ... and the items being traded here were nothing but cotton fabric, silk, rice and salt. Other items such as silver, copper, lead, tin, *dansha*, mercury, and gems were all from Jiaozhi, and not produced locally.

Mining brought more Chinese and along with them increasing trade volume in the later 18th century. According to Fukangan, the Governor General of Guangdong and Guangxi, the same Taijing prefecture was in 1791 frequented by traders from

¹² File of the Grand Council, quoted from *Gudai zhong yue guanxi shi ziliao xuan bian*, p.654.
¹³ Cai Tinglian, *Haihan zashu* (Miscellaneous notes on the places at the south of the sea), (written in 1835, reprinted in Taipei: Taiwan wenxian congkan, no.42, 1959), p.39.
¹⁴ Tang Jingsong, "Qingying niji", in *Zhongguo zhanzheng*, Zhongguo jindai shi ziliao congkan, (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1957), vol.2, p.85.
¹⁵ Tang Jingsong, "Qingying niji", p.85. Oil was an important item from China and by the late 19th century opium became the most important item from Mengzi to Vietnam.
¹⁶ *Taijing fuzhi* (Gazette of Taijing), Juan "Shihuo" (Economy).

Table 1 Major Viet export to Longzhou (Guangxi) port, 1889-1903, (taels)

Year	cu nau	hardwood	aniseed	sa nhan	oil
1889	5910	3432			
1890	12772	6962			
1891	16762	3661			
1892	15497	7065	447	3693	
1893	13794		2941	1396	
1894	19247	12635	74463	1528	
1895	14274	9886	13968	3171	
1896	16022	6203	44391	1546	
1897	27206	6471	48711	256	
1898	29364	84	72804		
1899	28663	7000	33041		
1900	45697		42725		
1901	29573	30000	81249		
1902	25998	27000	10088		
1903	24302	9000	44617		

The tributary system should be considered within this broader context. While one assumes that tributary trade would have acted as an important driver for trade between China and Vietnam, an interesting observation arising from the map of markets towns is that very few of such towns were located along the tribute route from Hanoi to the Southern Pass in Guangxi. The travel log by Cai Tinglian of 1835 mentioned above also confirmed this, saying that the route from Bac Ninh to Lang Son was sparsely populated and not much activity was to be found there.²³ This was also reflected in the figures of table 2 (see below), which show that the trade tax collected from Lang Son, where the most important Southern Pass was located, provided only 13% of Cao Bang's contribution. In other words, tribute trade did not seem to be the most important or most dynamic commerce between China and northern Vietnam, something that made Vietnam quite different from Siam in the 18th and 19th centuries. Because of the existence of Sino-Viet border trade, more multifaceted internal and external trading linkages were involved than the simple "tributary model".²⁴ If we turn to customs taxes, we find toll-houses were often located next to these

²³ Cai Tinglian, *Hainan za zhu*, p.20.
²⁴ This is not to say that tribute trade was unimportant. A Nguyen regulation of 1831 on private cargoes allowed for officers on missions to China gives us some idea of the quantity of tribute trade. According to this regulation, the main envoy was allowed 5 chests, his two deputies 4 chests each, the 8 attachés and interpreters were allowed 12 chests, and another 5 chests were shared by the 9 men of their entourages. *Dai Nam thuc luc chinh bien*, f.85, year 1833, p. 2624. The reason for this regulation was that previous tributary missions had taken so much of their own Commune, Da Bac district, Hoa Binh, Vietnam", MA thesis, Swedish University of Agricultural Science, 2004, p.39.
²⁵ China: *Imperial Maritime Customs*, (Shanghai: Statistical Dept. of the Inspector of Customs, 1867).

Shaozhou, Huizhou, Chaozhou (or Teochiu) and Jiyangzhou of Guangdong province,¹⁷ and as we see from the discussion above, trade items became increasingly focused on Chinese manufactured goods from Guangdong. The northern border provinces thus shared the trend that emerged in other Southeast Asian countries, from luxuries good to bulk commodities in the mid-18th century.¹⁸

The increasing trade likely also influenced the fashion of the peoples in this region. In the 18th century there appeared a trade item, *cu nau*, or dyestuff, that became one of the most important trade items in the region. This wild yam produces a brown colour that was used widely for peoples in this region for dyeing clothes. What interests me here is why the brown colour became so dominate in this region while it was not the case before. The Viet kings of the 12th century, for example, were recorded as dressed in yellow colour for the top and purple colour for the skirt, and wore gold pins for the hair. The rest of men wore black. Women favoured green dresses and black skirts.¹⁹ By the 19th century however, brown became the dominant clothing colour of the northern Viet peasantry.²⁰ I suspect that this change of fashion had something to do with the mining industry. If so, like the *ao baba*, the cloth style of the babas of the Straits Chinese which became fashionable first in Cochinchina then the whole territory Vietnam in the late 19th century, the clothes of miners might have influenced the peoples at both borders in earlier 19th century. As this wild yam could only be found from the mountainous Outer Six provinces, in the bordering provinces, in 1813. Nung and Tay peoples collected and traded this item and not from the Delta, the price of *cu nau* in the Delta was 2.8 times more expensive than with China and the Red River Delta.²¹ In the absence of consistent data of the early 19th century, some figures of the late 19th century would show the proportion of *cu nau* in Vietnam's export to China.²²

¹⁷ Report of Fukangan 福康安 to Qianlong emperor, p.404.
¹⁸ Vic Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800-1830*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.46-47; number of Chinese exports to Yunnan in the 18th century also grew, and included tobacco, tea, porcelain, felt, thread, steel needles, cloth shoes, paper etc. See Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier*, (Harvard University Press, 2006), p.173.
¹⁹ See Fan Chengde, *Gulhai yuheng zhi*, p.52.
²⁰ The south seemed to have different colour preference. Cai Tinglian recorded black top, red pants and brown silk turban as standard Viet official dress. The elites wore blue and black top and same colour turban, and all wore red pants. *Hainan Zazhi*, p.5.
²¹ This item is still being collected and exchanged between the Tay and Viet peoples in the contemporary Vietnamese society. Thirty kg of *cu nau* can exchange from forty to sixty kg of rice. See Le Minh Giang, *Community Forest Management - A case study of Tay people at Tat village, Tan Minh Commune, Da Bac district, Hoa Binh, Vietnam*, MA thesis, Swedish University of Agricultural Science, 2004, p.39.
²² China: *Imperial Maritime Customs*, (Shanghai: Statistical Dept. of the Inspector of Customs, 1867).

townships. In 1820, the revenue from these houses in the Outer provinces formed 52% of the Nguyen's total income, as shown in the Table 2. Outer provinces are marked with *.

Table 2 Taxes collected from customhouses from northern and central Vietnam, (1820 and 1844)

	1820	%	1844	%
HAI TINH	1362		1400	
khu doc	883		13000	
tam nggia	1362		1400	
ha huynh	760		6000	
subtotal	3005	0.64	33000	5.15
NGHE AN				
subtotal	2343		20000	
kha luu	2343		20000	
luong trung	2880		12000	
phu diep	861		2500	
subtotal	6084	1.31	34500	5.38
THANH HOA				
ha trung	2255		8500	
yen phai	2006		10000	
my canh	1010		1500	
tam lu	3026		4000	
nga son	1930		6000	
than dan	3314		5000	
van phai	1183		2500	
thien linh	1010		1500	
subtotal	15734	3.4	39000	6.08
NAM DINH				
van ninh	7500		1300	
vy hoang	43000		43000	
subtotal	7500	1.6	44300	6.9
HUNG YEN				
me so	78320		105000	
cam co	78320	16.9	105000	16.4
SON TAY				
dinh huong	86150		110000	
subtotal	86150	18.6	110000	17.16
HUNG HOA*				
quan tu	42100		42000	
bao thang	43000		30000	
subtotal	85100	18.4	72000	11.23
TUYENQUANG*				
tam ky	11800		26000	
subtotal	11800	2.55		4.1

HAI DUONG	13610		23000	
luc dau	900		1000	
subtotal	14510	3.13	24000	3.74
QUANG YEN*				
xuat tu	3600		6000	
tam mon	3920		5000	
an luong	750		8000	
subtotal	8270	1.79	19000	2.96
BAC NINH				
can dich	10900		17000	
subtotal	10900	2.35		2.65
THAI NGUYEN*				
dong lao	2300		7000	
mau chi	380		2500	
luong ha	7155		5300	
cam giang	3312.5		2975	
subtotal	13147.5	2.84	17775	2.77
Lang Son*				
Lang thanh	14500	3.13	13000	2.28
CAO BANG*				
na thong	54457.5		34450	
luong ma	36199		36561.5	
na lan	6890		6625	
trung dang	8612.5		6625	
lenh cam	2120		2120	
subtotal	108279	23.38	86381.5	13.48

We assume that the above figures from the customs-houses along the border reflected, more or less, the taxed volume of the Sino-Viet trade at the townships. It is remarkable that in 1820 one province of Cao Bang contributed over 23% of the trading taxes collected from northern Vietnam. This then becomes more striking, when we compare this result with the maritime revenues of northern Vietnam of 1825 and 1826. According to the Nguyen archives, Vietnamese ports collected 18,849 *quan* in 1825 and 28,269 *quan* of taxes in 1826.²⁵ At this time, there is no doubt that the junks visiting the Mekong Delta were seriously underreported,²⁶ so that the two figures given by the *Chau Ban* should be more properly seen as the revenues collected in northern and central Vietnamese ports. As such, the maritime revenues of northern Vietnam were only around 20% of the revenues from one inland province, Cao Bang.

²⁵ *Mục lục Chau Ban Theu Nguyen* (Catalogue of the Nguyen Archives), (Hanoi: Van Hoa, 1998), pp. XLI-XLIII.
²⁶ For overseas trade of the southern Vietnam see Li Tana, "The late 18th century Mekong delta and the World of the Water Frontier", in Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid, ed. *Vietnam Beyond Borders*, University Press of Wisconsin, 2006, pp. 154-155.

On, to put it another way, the combination of two years' maritime revenues from the northern ports roughly equaled the tax collected from a single customhouse, Bao Thang of Hung Hoa province, in 1820.²⁷ More significantly, from this we can calculate that the value of overland trade was somewhere between 8 to 12 times larger than the maritime trade of northern Vietnamese ports in the early 1820s. This was higher than the contemporary Burma, where the value of overland trade ranged from 67 to 117% of the value of trade at Rangoon in the early 1820s.²⁸ Putting the two pictures together allows us to establish a basic idea of the proportion of overland and maritime trade revenues for Burma and northern Vietnam, as well as the commercial vitality of the southwest Chinese border areas of the time and its impact on the demographic, economic and social changes in this region.

Trade: Internal or external?

However, it is not easy to differentiate between overland and maritime commerce for Vietnam in this area, as an 18th century Guangdong officer put it:²⁹

Jiangling is the only land connection between Guangdong and Annam, and in theory it should be easy to control the people who sneak in and out. Yet the land of all Guangdong ends at the sea, from Chaozhou at the east and to Lianzhou at the west, which ranges 3000 //i. Those people trade overseas and the poor who live on water transportations are countless. ... the small boats, if they cannot go far to other foreign countries, as long as the wind is blowing in the right direction, they can go to Annam with no difficulty, and it is extremely hard to know whether those who left came back or not.

The observation implies that small-scale or peddlers trade in this area was probably not under the surveillance of either the Chinese or Vietnamese governments. If so, this helps explain the rather small percentage (around 2% of north-central provinces total) of trade taxes collected from the coastal province of Quang Yen province, compared to those from inland Cao Bang and Lang Son. And this unaccounted maritime trade could be considerable.

Rice was an example of such item not accounted for by China and unreported in Vietnam. It was most important maritime trade item from the Delta, although in theory it was never to be exported. Thus, for instance, the emperor Minh Mang was reportedly nervous about any news of famine in Guangdong and Quangxi, as it meant

²⁷ There was no coincidence that the Chinese bandit troops of Black Banner chose Bao Thang as their base to fight the French in the 1880s.
²⁸ Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 170.
²⁹ Report of Wang Anguo, the Guangdong governor to Qianlong, January 1744, National Archives no. 1, Beijing, copied files of the Grand Council (*Junji chu lufu zouzhe*), file no. 7773: 7.

more rice would be rushed out from his domain. In 1826, for example, as soon as he heard that there was a famine in the Qin and Lian prefectures of Guangxi, he ordered the officers to check the routes carefully.³⁰ The gap in the prices between the two areas was indeed huge: while rice in northern Vietnam in 1826 was about one silver *tael* per picul,³¹ in famine stricken Guangxi traders could realise four to five *taels*.³² But checking whether the rice was being exported rather than traded within the country was not easy. Quang Yen, for example, was a steppingstone between China and Vietnam, and between the land and the sea. A trip to the Delta could start there, and whether the ships were coming from China or within Vietnam was anyone's guess. Chinese traders by land would come with their cargos to the market towns at the border of Quang Yen, then hire junks to carry their goods and passengers to trade in Quang Yen, Hai Duong and Hanoi.³³ On their way back, if they had rice on board it would be impossible to tell where the rice was going to China or Vietnam.³⁴ Because of this widespread practice, and in order to tell the Viet ships from the Chinese ones, Minh Mang made a special order that no Viet ship could be built in the Chinese junk style, so his rice could not be easily smuggled out.³⁵ Things became more complicated with an issue added to this already confusing situation. Chinese junks were allowed, once they came to the ports and paid taxes, to act as a shuttle service, transporting cargos and taking passengers on the rivers within the country.³⁶ This was the same story as we see in contemporary Dang Trong (southern Vietnam or Cochinchina), where a Hainanese in the 1820s was said to have built eighteen junks in the Mekong Delta and twelve berths at the ports along the coast. His junks traveled between these ports, carrying both people and cargoes, and made a fortune.³⁷ Chinese might have been the only group who provided such services, given their commercial drive, their junk capacity and their ability to pay monetary taxes.

Tax revenue was the reason that the Chinese were allowed by the court to

³⁰ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc chinh bien*, II, J.29, p. 1790.
³¹ *Muc luc Chau ban lieu Nguyen*, p. XXXIII. It was average 1.3 *quan per phuong* (30kg), and silver: *quan ratio was 1 tael: 2.65 quan in 1813*. See the prelist.
³² *Muc luc Chau ban lieu Nguyen*, p. XXXIII.
³³ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc chinh bien*, J.70, year 1831, p. 2405. The French noticed this in the 1880s during the Franco-Sino War. They reported that "the whole coast" around Ten An district of Quang Yen was open to loading and unloading for junks. During the War Chinese transported troops and arms by the sea to Ten An, then to Lang Son by land, by the road connecting Ten An and Lang Son. Report by the *Historical Sources on the Sino-Viet borders*, ed. Xiao Dehao and Huang Zheng, (Beijing: Shehui Kexue chubanshe, 1993), p. 1135.
³⁴ Two Vietnamese women who sold rice to a group of Chinese pirates were carried off and gang-raped. Guangdong dang [Unpublished palace memorials], cited from Robert Antony, *Like Froth Flooding on the Sea: The World of Pirates and Seafarers in Late Imperial South China*, (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2003), p. 116.
³⁵ *Dai Nam Thuc Luc chinh bien*, J.78, year 1833, p. 2516.
³⁶ For example, see *Muc luc Chau ban lieu Nguyen*, year 1825, p. 151.
³⁷ Li Tana, "Late 18th and early 19th century Mekong Delta in the Regional System", in *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. by Nola Cooke and Li Tana, (Rowman and Littlefield/Singapore University press, 2004), p. 76.

left bank of the Red River and the Black River on the Vietnamese map only suggest to me that a different and distinctive set of market networks existed that connected more to Yunnan, and thus that they belong to separable systems of trade routes, because of the ethnic divergence, and the different degrees of Chinese Vietnamese influence.

Maritime trade and the Teochiu networks

The maritime dimension was never less important for Vietnam, a country whose peculiar shape means that nowhere is over 200 (?) km from the sea. Even for overland trade, the sea connected both the overland and the river transportation in this region. Some commodities could only have arrived by sea. For example, sapan wood, a product of Siam and its south, appeared on our 1813 list as cheaper on the Red River Delta markets than it was in Canton;⁴² pepper, again not a local product of northern Vietnam, was cheaper in there than it was in Terengganu and Bangkok of the same period.⁴³ Both of these products could have only been brought from the south directly to northern Vietnam by the sea.

Other commodities that seem also to have come to northern Vietnam by the sea were more likely imported from southern China. White sugar is such an example. While we found that at Canton market it was 6.5 tael per picul in 1810,⁴⁴ on the market of the Red River Delta it was 2.94 in 1813, and on the markets of An Quang, the border province, it was but 2.26 taels, more than half of Canton export price. Although the cheap sugar could have been from Cochinchina, as Crawford reported in 1821-22, a picul of white sugar was 2 dollars (= 1.44 tael) in Saigon,⁴⁵ the fact that the bordering province An Quang's price was lower than in the Red River Delta suggests that this sugar would have been more likely directly from Guangdong.

The tax regulation lists clearly some items from Teochiu, recording them as Teochiu blue or white cotton cloth (潮州藍布, 潮州白布), Teochiu fireworks (潮州炮), and Teochiu needles (潮州針). Interestingly, cloth from Teochiu was 25% cheaper than that of Fujian (吉安藍布, 吉安白布). These factors suggest that the white sugar mentioned above was likely also from Teochiu, as sugar was one of the key products of Teochiu in the 19th century.

The Teochiu network thus stands out as very likely being one of the most important trading networks of northern Vietnam in the early 19th century. As "one of

⁴² 1.58 taels per picul in the Red River Delta, in Canton it was 2 taels per picul in 1792, see Morse, *Chronicles*, p. 519; even in Bangkok it could be as dear as 3 taels in the 1810s, see Milbourne, *Oriental Commerce*, II, p. 442. Sappanwood was found in late 19th century Hung Hoa. See *Dong Khanh Dic du chi*, p. 753. But it did not seem available in the 1810s, the period we are focused here.

⁴³ Milbourne, *Oriental Commerce*, II, pp. 323, 442.

⁴⁴ Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998) p. 55; Morse gave a lower price for 1835. See Morse, *Chronicle*, vol. 4+5, p. 350.

⁴⁵ Crawford, *Journal*, p. 520.

undertake such enterprises. In the 1760s, for instance, mining taxes alone were paying the costs of the government of the Le Thinh state in northern Vietnam.³⁸ This situation becomes even more striking, when we add in the taxes from customs-houses and trade taxes collected from Chinese shops in the mining country.³⁹ It might be no overstatement to say that the Viet court lived more on taxes from the six Outer provinces than the five Delta provinces, from mid-18th century to early 19th century.

This picture seems again to make the more Sino northern Vietnam comparable to its southern neighbours in Siam and the Malay states during the same period, but the geographic proximity between northern Vietnam and the Chinese empire made the complexities of "inter" and "outer" far more problematic. This complexity was highlighted by a new development in the late 19th century, which saw tin from Yunnan go by the Red River route to be exported to Hong Kong.⁴⁰ Another picture makes these intertwined relations more interesting: According to Carol Benedict, when bubonic plague was bursting out in Yunnan in 1857, it spread along the two Sino-Viet trading routes, one to Longzhou by 1866, and the other to Beihai in 1867, and both arrived at Guangxi by the routes from the territory of Vietnam. (map) This makes it easier to understand why, as late as the 20th century, Sino-Viet border trade was not included in bilateral agreements between the two countries with both regarding it as an extension of their own domestic trade.

One important remark that needs to be made here is that the above information and discussion are intensively focused on the areas between the Ky Cung and Lo rivers. When I mark the townships and customs-houses on a map, it shows that almost all of the markets and customs-houses were located within this area. Only two were found on the right bank of the Red River, and there was none on the left bank. This certainly can not be understood to mean there was no trade going on at the left bank of the Red River, but rather points to the areas where the Viet sphere of influence faded and stopped, up to the mid-19th century (see the figures above of the customs-houses in 1844). It is interesting to note that the Viet state sphere of influence in this region seems to have shrunk by the early 19th century. According to Le Quy Don, during the mining boom of the second half of the 18th century, there had been few Viet customs-houses in the Black River area.⁴¹ If so, the presence of Chinese mining activities in that region might have actually helped to draw Viet political power into the largely Tai speaking country, but that power faded after Chinese mining activity went bust there in the early 19th century. If so, the scanty points of interaction between the

³⁸ Woodside, "The relationship between political theory and economic growth in Vietnam", p. 259.

³⁹ Le Quy Don, *Phu Bien Tap Luc*. ***

⁴⁰ Prince Henry d'Orleans suggests by the 1890s that some items of the English and French manufacture (needles and metal buttons) were entering Yunnan via the Red River valley, whilst cotton also entered China via this route. Yunnanese opium certainly entered the region of south-west China via the trail, and tobacco from Canton may have reached this remote region of south-west China via the circulations overland link through Vietnam. *The Haw: Traders of the Golden Triangle*, p. 75.

⁴¹ Le Quy Don, *Kien Van Thieu Luc*, pp. 363-365.

the busiest and best harbor in Guangdong" by this time,⁴⁶ Teochiu connections may well have played a dominant role in northern Vietnam's commerce. Certainly, the published catalogue of the Nguyen Archives (*Muc luc Chau Ban Trieu Nguyen*) for the years 1825-26 certifies its significance. According to this source, half of the junks visiting Vietnamese ports in 1825-26 were from Teochiu, while the other half were from Hainan. There were but 3 from Canton and none from Fujian.

Table 3 Chinese junks visiting Vietnam, 1825-26

Year	Teochiu	Hainan	clear	junk	Canton	shipwreck	Leizhou
Year 1825	10	1	1	3	1		
Year 1826	14	16	1	1	3		1 Hainan
total	24	17	2	4	4		1
nam dinh 9	4	12	2	3			
nam dinh 10	10	1	1	3			
quang nam 1	1						
gia dinh 1	2						
nghe an 2	2						
thanh hoa 2							
quang ngai							
hue	14						
total	19	3	2	4	0		2

An important point here is that, in contrast to the trade between Vietnam and China, trade between northern (*Dang Ngoai*) and southern Vietnam (*Dang Trong*) does not seem as smooth and frequent, judging from the prices at the northern markets. For example, *Dang Trong's* local products such as elephant tusks, birds' nests and shark's fins, were 20% to 60% more expensive on *Dang Ngoai* markets than they were in Canton.⁴⁷ That there was a limited degree of integration between northern and southern Vietnam in terms of circulation of commercial products is also evidenced by the fact that the price of lacquer from Cambodia and cinnamon from Quang Nam was double that at Canton market. On the other hand, elephant tusks, cardamom, cinnamon and pepper were cheaper in the Delta than the Outer Six Provinces. The latter point is important, because it suggests a direct trade existed between the Red River Ports and the south.

⁴⁶ Ye Xianen, ed. *Guangdong haiyun shi, gudai bulen* [A history of Guangdong shipping, ancient period], (Beijing: Renmin jiaotong, 1989), pp. 186-187.
⁴⁷ Birds' nests: 15-18 tael per *can*, in Batavia of the 1810s it was 13-14 tael. Elephant tusks at the Tongking markets was 45-60 tael per picul, while in Canton was 37 tael in 1792. Shark's fin was 22.64 tael per picul in Tongking, in Canton in 1836 was 15.

But to what extent was the economy of the south important to the north, and vice versa? They were no doubt both important to the capital of country, located in the central region; but otherwise, as the two regions were separated by over 1500 kilometers, and with similar products (rice, salt, betel nuts, silk, etc) produced in both deltas, how much incentive was there to exchange? This explains the comment made by the contemporary economist, which I quoted at the beginning of this paper. Our Water Frontier project certainly suggests that the more important markets and trade partners of Nguyen Cochinchina were undoubtedly non-Viet rather than the Viet people in *Dang Ngoai*. This was partly because in the 17th-18th century the two regions never traded directly until the fall of the Nguyen as it was against the state law to have any direct dealings with the north. Missionary reports often state that it was a capital offence to go from Cochinchina to Tongking, though of course not for Chinese.⁴⁸ This situation might have changed after Nguyen Anh united the country in 1802 but whether or to what extent there was a national market created under the 19th century Nguyen dynasty remains unclear.

There is one further important point I would like to develop that arises from a price list of the 1813. I would like to use it further to consider the relations between commerce and scholarly culture, in northern Vietnam especially. From the late 16th century on, when Chinese block prints became less and less expensive and thus more and more accessible to ordinary people, many books were exported overseas to Japan, Korea, Ryukuu and the two Viet states, at a low price. A Japanese record of 1845 in Nagasaki listed prices of some of the most important reference books on Chinese philosophy and history, most of them consisting of hundreds of volumes. Two series of such reference books cost less than one watch brought by a Dutch ship.⁴⁹

The tax regulation on commodities traded at ports and toll-houses in northern Vietnam in 1813 (discussed above) suggests that books sold in Vietnam were even cheaper than they were in Japan. The most expensive kind was "ancient books", 19 *quan* for a box, but this was less expensive than 250 grams of opium mud. The cheaper category, 100 volumes of "general books" would cost only five *quan*.⁵⁰ This was equivalent to the price of seven pairs of cotton shoes, or ten bamboo hats, or 200 bricks made in the ceramic center of Bat Trang.⁵¹

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Nola Cooke for this information.
⁴⁹ Oba Osamu, *Jiangho shidai rzhong mihua*, pp. 58-59.
⁵⁰ Or 0.17 tael of silver. The silver: cash ratio in 1813 was 10 tael: 28 *quan*. See *Dai Nam thuc luc chih sien* 大南實錄 vol. 46, p. 239.
⁵¹ Tuan by thue le 越南稅則 Tax regulations in ports and poll boxes), MS, held in Han-Nom Institute, Hanoi, shelf number A.978, p. 28.
⁵² Ink sticks for writing cost about 8 to 13 *quan* per 10 *can* (2.5 kilogram). This quantity would last

thousand sheets of writing paper would cost the same as one pair of wooden slippers or one piglet, while 100 writing brushes cost the same as a basket of low quality black sugar. It was noticeable that a locally made writing brush (*but nam*) was 40% more expensive than the cheap ones from China.

It is obvious from the information above that the profit margin for Chinese merchants in the book and stationary trade was minimal. The bulk of trade was, unsurprisingly, goods for material consumption. The tax regulations of 1813 listed fourteen sorts of brocades, twenty-four types of satin, nine styles of damask, six kinds of silk, and sixteen varieties of cotton fabric, clearly aimed at a wide span of consumers from the rich to the poor. Many commodities might have been made from raw materials exported to China from elsewhere in Southeast Asia, processed and then re-exported to Vietnam. These items were also remarkably inexpensive. Among the metal products, for example, we find that 1,000 tin buttons cost only 5.3 *quan*, or 0.19 tael of silver, 100 copper horse bells cost 2 *quan*, and needles made in Teochiu (Chaozhou) cost 13.5 *quan* for some 10,000 packets.⁵³ My point here is that the dissemination of the essential books of Confucian learning, which formed the ideological foundation of Vietnamese statecraft and political culture, was heavily subsidised by commerce in other merchandise.

Commerce thus spilled into the world of gentry cultural practices in ways more concrete than we have acknowledged. About one-third of the 6000 Han-Nom items collected in the Han-Nom Institute in Hanoi are Chinese books of different editions.⁵⁴ A large number of them are textbooks for civil examinations, primers, moral tracts, law texts, and models for prefaces, letters, and contract writing, aimed at a wider audience. Western missionaries of the 18th century northern Vietnam recorded some titles of books available in the northern Vietnam, and many of them seem to be a corrupt version of more classical works.⁵⁵ Interestingly, these were exactly the kind of books produced for and by the mass-market in the interior of Fujian and the Yangzi River delta.

If the cultural centre-piece of Confucianism cannot escape the grasp of trade and the market, one has to consider the statecraft that was built on this basis. Conventional Vietnamese historiography tends to portray overseas trade as something involving only merchants, custom officers, and the court, and to claim that it played merely a marginal

⁵³ Tuan ty true le, p.46.

⁵⁴ Catalogue des livres en Han Nom, (Hanoi: Khoa hoc xa hoc, 1993), vol.1, p.23.

⁵⁵ Among the books quoted there were *Lijing* 禮經, (book of Rites), *Chengzi* 程子 Chunquiu 春秋集解

Kongzi jiaoyi Laozi 老子家範 *Jingzi* 經子 *Soushenji* 搜神記 *Taiping junsu* 太平御覽 *Taiping daoxue* 太平

wenlin 文林苑 *Jiangdao* 文林苑 *Jiangdao* 文林苑 *Jiangdao* 文林苑 *Tong jian* 通鑑 *Tong jian* 通鑑

Mizhi 心齋 *Kindeng* 心齋 *See Opusculum de Sectis apud Sineses et Turckneses (A Small Treatise on the*

Sects among the Chinese and Tongkingese): A Study of Religion in China and North Vietnam in the

Eighteenth Century, by Father Adnriano di Theda, tran. & annotated by Olga Droz, (Ithaca: Cornell

Southeast Asia Program, 2002).

role in Viet history. In this paradigm, the key to understanding Vietnam's past was and always will remain "the village", village culture and the village-bound Viet literati. *Huong uoc* (village regulations or village agreements) have therefore been celebrated as the national embodiment of Confucian culture in the countryside. To modern scholars, these village regulations represent the values of the peasantry, reminding one of land, attachment to the land and to the village, and the rigid social order.

Ironically, the model of *huong uoc*, supposedly the brainchild of the land-bound literati, most likely also came from the sea. It is telling that among the five thousand copies of *huong uoc* in existence, there is only one copy that claimed to be compiled before the 17th century, in the famous Hong Duc period [1470-90], while the rest of the earliest ones were all produced in the 17th century, particularly in the late 17th century.⁵⁶ As Shimaou put it, a "*khoan uoc* compiling campaign" began in centres of advanced Confucian learning in northern Vietnam during the Camh Tri and Chin Hoa periods (1663-1690).⁵⁷ The extent to which this movement can be separated from the one that had flourished in Canton and Fujian in the 17th century,⁵⁸ or be isolated from the Chinese book trade, remains to be seen. But at this stage it seems that we can seriously question the gulf between the perceived opposite poles of Viet history - one being land/bureaucrat/peasantry, and the other sea/civil/merchants. It is most likely that they had much closer relations with each other, and depended on or even nurtured each other.

A more interesting question is about the context in which this "compiling campaign" began in northern Vietnam. It is clear that in 17th century Fujian and Guangdong the consolidation of village structure was often a response to the increasingly frequent clashes between villages over land in the mountains or newly developed sandy lands on the coast. In other words, the strength of any village was most immediately relevant to the welfare of its villagers, vis-a-vis their collective struggle against other villages.⁵⁹ Village regulations were produced in such circumstances, to coordinate the interests of major families, legalize the rules that would bind the members together so the village leadership could interfere and control socio-economic activities and redistribute resources. Such a village was surely manufactured by a highly developed political and economic culture, and refined by its competitive relations with other similar entities nearby. It was anything but a "natural" and "autonomous" form. That the motive for village consolidation lies outside the village rather than inside is clear from the fact that many big villages had their own

⁵⁶ My gratitude to Professor Shimaou Minoru 篠原 暲 for his enlightenment on this issue.

⁵⁷ Personal communication with Shimaou Minoru.

⁵⁸ Qu Dajun, *Guangdong xinyu*, "xiangyue 鄉約" and "tangshi xiangyue 唐氏鄉約", pp.256-257.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Yang Guozhen 楊國珍 and Chen Zhiming 陳志明, "Mingqing fujian tubao bulun 明清福建土堡堡壘" [More on the village castles in the Ming and Qing periods], in *Mingqing fujian shehui yu xiangcun jingji* 明清福建社會與村莊經濟 [Fujian society and village economy in the Ming and Qing

periods], (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987), pp.20-23.

militia ("xiang bing" or "tu bing") to defend their villages from bandits and particularly pirates in the coastal area. One is reminded that this was precisely the case with the big landlords in the coastal area in Thai Binh and Nam Dinh in the late 18th century, when the Tay Son invaded the north.⁶⁰ Thus the increasingly closed northern villages and communities which the 19th century French encountered and made so well known through their colonial literature, might actually have reflected the decline of the representative cargos, the wealth and the urban sectors of the Red River Delta from the late 17th century⁶¹ rather than an unchanging social state inherited from the most distant Viet past.

Expansion without Empire: Integrating the Studies on Social Organizations in Southeast China and Southeast Asia¹

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When we juxtapose central historical issues regarding late imperial China with those on early modern Southeast Asia, a very interesting peculiarity, almost an oxymoron, presents itself. As Sinologists preoccupy themselves with questions on why China fell, or more precisely, fell back behind Western Europe, various scholars are struck by the general Chinese economic success in the history of Southeast Asia.

The situation is an indication of how far both fields of study - early modern Southeast Asia and late imperial southeast China - have ignored each other. In the English-language scholarship, the study of the history of Asia is generally broken up into area studies as Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and so on, where academics tend to become specialists in one or two countries in each sphere of study. With regard to China and Southeast Asia, various historians like Hsu Yun-chiao, Chen Ching-ho, Lo Hsiang-lin, Denys Lombard etc., who, interestingly, were operating predominantly in non-English academia, had long examined the historical interaction between the two regions. Lombard, who had applied Fernand Braudel's longue durée and Mediterranean Sea paradigms in his analysis of Southeast Asian history, was especially a strong advocate for the integration of south China and Southeast Asia as a field of study. In his words,

... wanting to understand Southeast Asia without integrating a good part of southern China into one's thinking is like wanting to give an account of the Mediterranean world by abstracting Turkey, the Levant, Palestine and Egypt.²

These doyens have passed on however and new-generation Sinologists and Southeast Asianists generally fail to engage one another. The dissociation between Southeast Asian studies and China studies is very unfortunate, particularly since the historical evidence yielded and the research methodologies developed in both fields in the last two decades could arguably help understand various issues on the other side and stimulate new research directions.³ To illustrate how integrating the two fields of

¹ I wish to thank Michael Szonyi for his great help in the process of research and writing for this paper. He has pointed out to me the main scholars in China working on lineage organizations in the initial stage of this research and also subsequently answered my many questions via email on the development of these organizations during the Ming-Qing transition.

² Cited in Nola Cooke and Li Tana, *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880* (Singapore/Oxford: Singapore University Press/Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 2.

³ Evans, G., C. Hutton and Kuah Khun Eng, Eds. *Where China Meets Southeast Asia: social and*

⁶⁰ See Hoang Le *nhât thong chi* 黎一統 for details.
⁶¹ Momoki Shiro suggests that the fatal blow to the Tongking Gulf trade happened in the late 17th century, as a part of the 17th century crisis. Momoki Shiro, "****", in *Pho Hien*, (Hanoi: The Gioi, 1994), pp.****.