Cham Islands in Champa Maritime Space from 11th to 15th Century

Nguyen Van Kim¹, Tran Van Manh²

^{1,2} University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi Email: nguvenvankimls@vahoo.com, tranvanmanh.csis@gmail.com

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Abstract: Situated in a critical position on the sea routes in Southeast Asia, the Cham Islands or Cu Lao Cham (Vietnamese: *Cù Lao Chàm*) emerged remarkably as an important outport of the maritime kingdom of Champa since the first centuries. Over many centuries, the region of the Cham Islands and the estuary port of the Great Champa, also called Dai Chiem seaport (Vietnamese: *Đại Chiêm hải khẩu* or *Cửa Đại*), not only was seen as a destination and a trade centre of the small state of Amaravati, but also played a significant role in linking the kingdom of Champa with the outside world. In history, Cham people actively integrated into the region and the world, contributing greatly towards the formation of "the silk road", "the spice route", and "the ceramic route",... in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to the economic linkage, they were also used as channels for the exchange of cultures, beliefs, religions, scientific and technical knowledge between the kingdom of Champa and other Asian countries, creating new driving forces of development and enhancing the creative capacity in societies of the region.

Keywords: Cham Islands, maritime space, Champa, the $11^{th} - 15^{th}$ centuries.

Subject classification: History

1. Introduction

In the history of humankind, maritime economic and trade connections always play an important role in development. The sea trade routes contributed part towards the development of cultures, diplomatic ties, and cooperation between nations. In Asia, the Champa maritime space used to be very significant for the connection of Southeast Asia with the markets in Northeast Asia and Southwest Asia.

As a group of islands in Central Vietnam, the Cham Islands (Vietnamese: $C\hat{u}$ Lao Chàm) kept an extremely significant position in the Southeast Asian coastal trade route. At the same time, it had a close linkage with other sea routes running across Insular Southeast Asia. Over many centuries, the Cham Islands were known as an outport of the port town by the estuary of the great kingdom of Champa, which was an extremely important trade port of the maritime polity of Champa. Using an interdisciplinary and multifaceted

approach, the paper focuses on analysing the role and position of the Cham Islands in the East Asian trade and transportation networks, highlighting the regional and inter-regional linkage, describing characteristics of the Cham Islands as an outport, an island port, and a multifunctional port, and interpreting changes in the role and functions of the Cham Islands during the maritime history of the kingdom of Champa and the period under the reign of the Nguyen lords in Đàng Trong (lit. Inner land, the region in Central to South Vietnam, which was later enlarged to become Cochinchina) from the 16th to the 18th century.

2. Champa sea in the network of Asian maritime routes

The Asian maritime history is closely attached to the establishment of centres. economic zones, and trade routes. Known have been the significant roles and strong influence of three centres of civilisation, which were also considered three large markets, including China, India and West Asia. With economic centres, many Asian countries also played an important role in economic exchange, contributing towards the establishment of two main trade routes connecting the East with the West. Many researchers often call them the continental silk route and the maritime silk route³ [58], [52], [59]. In fact, those trade routes were not only seen as an economic lifeline but also channels for the transmission of culture, technical and scientific knowledge, and religions and the movement of people etc. In various aspects, the international trade network brought about driving forces

and improved the development potential and creativity in Asian societies.

Located in the middle of the East Asian sea route, since the first centuries AD, the Champa sea, which is a crucial part of the East Sea (Vietnamese: Biển Đông) at present, were considered a destination and a waypoint by many merchant boats coming from Northeast Asia. Southeast Asia and West Asia. Based on a broad view and the relative subdivision into nagara (or small states), we can realise that the Champa maritime space not only played a role in connecting mandalas in Southeast Asia but, to a larger extent, also undertook the function of linking the kingdom of Champa with other regions and territories in Asia [19, pp.29-53]. With cultural exchange and maritime trade activities, Cham people actively integrated into the region and the world, contributing greatly towards the formation of "the silk road", "the spice trade route", and "the ceramic trade route" etc. running across Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, from the port of Alexandria in the Mediterranean region to the trade ports in the Gulf of Tonkin and those in southern provinces of China such as Guangzhou, Fujian, and Zhejiang, etc. [50, pp.446-447], [27, pp.59-83, pp. 247-361].

During the first ten centuries AD, together with the foundation of the kingdoms of Lam Ap (192-749), Panduganra (758-859), and Indrapura (875-982), a large maritime space was also set up by some sea powers as their own territory off the shore of the central coast. Due to the geographical location, the maritime space bore natural characteristics of the Chinese - Japanese subregion, while having advantages of the Indian - Malaysian subregion; the two subregions are included in

the West Asia - Pacific region. The geographical advantage, duality and abundant natural resources of the Champa sea were recorded in many local and international maps, documents and research works [33, pp.178-179], [45, pp.89-137], [9, pp.291-314].

In regard to the natural resources and the goods of the kingdom of Champa, it is written in "the History of Song: Chronicles of Foreign Countries" (Vietnamese: Tổng sử - Ngoại quốc truyên) as follows: "Local produce consists of incense, frankincense, areca, sapan wood, eucalyptus, beeswax, flowery fabrics, thread-plaited cloth, white woollen fabric, rattan mats, mats made of banyan-leaves, gold, silver, and iron bars, etc. In terms of grains, they have rice, sticky rice, peanuts, and sesame, instead of wheat. Once the local mandarin provides one bucket of seeds, he will collect 100 buckets of output products in tax. In terms of flower and fruits, they have lotus, sugar cane, bananas, and coconuts. Regarding birds and animals, there are many peacocks and rhinoceroses. In regard to cattle, there are a lot of cows and buffaloes, but not donkeys. There are also wild buffaloes that are not used to draw the plough; instead, they are killed for the sacrifice to the demons. When the buffalo is about to be killed, the shaman prays the following phrase "A la hòa cập bạt", which means "Let you die and reincarnate soon". When local people have caught an elephant or a rhinoceros, they will offer it to the king. While travelling, local people usually ride elephants, use small sedan chairs, or ride horses bought from Jiaozhou (i.e. Dai Viet). People eat meat of chamoises and water bugs. Champa custom and clothes are similar to those of the Abbasid Caliphate" [11, pp.286-287].

Of the products exported to the North, some were produced and exported from the Champa seaports and probably the Cham Islands as well. In the 12th century, Edrisi, a Moroccan geographer, wrote: "The islands of the Champa sea produce aloe wood and other perfumes... On its shores are the domains of a king named Maliaridja, who takes control over a large number of wellpopulated and fertile islands, covered with [rice] fields and pastures, and producing ivory, camphor, nutmeg, clove, girolle, aloe wood, cardamom, piper cubeba and other substances [seeds] that are found as local products there... There is no king in India who possesses riches comparable to these islands, where trade is significant and wellknown. Among these islands is that of Mayd. It contains a large number of streets and is larger and more fertile than that of Mudja... Kings have black and white slaves and beautiful eunuchs... This is where the Chinese ships coming from the islands of China gather and settle; that's where they're heading and from that point they're leaving to go elsewhere" [60, p.191].

Owing to the favourable geographical conditions, the Champa monarchy, which was impacted strongly by many domestic and international factors, focused on developing the sea economy and promoting trade and diplomatic ties with other countries in the region and the world. Cham people established a chain of port towns, creating a large network of business connecting closely with many markets and centres of raw materials and commodity circulation [37, p.72]. Using the central coast as a foundation and considering the sea economy to be the strength, local communities in the kingdom of Champa set

up "a system of trade ports to facilitate trade with foreign countries. Those ports played an important role in the formation of "the maritime silk road" in the 9th and the 10th centuries and became prosperous in the subsequent centuries" [38, p.346].

After spending years doing research on the central coast and referring to relevant historical materials, Le Dinh Phung, a historian, identified a system of ancient trade ports belonging to Champa mandalas, which were located along the coast from the north to the south. It includes the following trade ports: (1) Katligara in Quang Tri province; it was probably near the presentday Cua Viet port; (2) Jilina in the area of Hue imperial city, near the present-day Tu Hien and Tu Dung ports; (3) Indrapura, which was an important port located in the gateway of Indrapura capital city to the sea. It is Dai Chiem seaport located in the area of Hoi An, Quang Nam province; (4) Vijasa or Thi Nai (Cri Boneithilibi Nai), which is Thi Nai – Nuoc Man (lit. Salt Water) port in Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh province; (5) Lingaparvata located in the edge of Tuy Hoa city, Phu Yen province; (6) Kauthara located in Nha Trang coastal city, Khanh Hoa province; and, (7) Panduranga, which is the present-day Phan Rang port.

In addition, the author also confirmed a large number of other places and lagoons in Central Vietnam, which were convenient for the anchorage of boats and ships, such as Vung Bang in Quang Ngai province and Vung Ro in Phu Yen province, etc. Together with Thi Nai port of Vijaya, therefore, Dai Chiem seaport was a large trade port playing an especially important role in the history of economic development and foreign trade of the kingdom of

Champa. Apart from the large trade ports located in important positions, other places, including lagoons and piers, were also used as landing stages, where boats and ships were moored to get food and fresh water, load or unload goods, do short-distance business, or shelter from storms [29, p.630]. Thus, a system of coastal trade ports was set up by the small states of Cham people in Champa maritime space. Thev the proactively took part in the regional and international networks of maritime trade routes and thereby connecting the trade ports Asian Commercial with "the Network", of which the Champa sea is one of the components. Thanks to the trade activities, Cham people disseminated and received economic resources and new cultural values, which are the very factors contributing to the one-time thriving cultural heritage.

In a wide range of research works, the authors, including: Tran Quoc Vuong, Tran Ky Phuong, Ngo Van Doanh, Le Dinh Phung, Kikuchi Seiichi, Momoki Shiro, Lam Thi My Dzung, Bui Minh Tri, Le Hong Khanh, Dinh Ba Hoa, Nguyen Chi Trung, Tran Van An, and Do Truong Giang, etc. have emphasised the role of the port towns located by the estuary, especially Dai Chiem seaport in the basin of Thu Bon river, based on empirical and fieldwork research. During the period of the kingdom of Champa, therefore, foreign merchant boats often dropped into Dai Chiem seaport to do and exchange produce, while travelling from Arab countries, India, and Southeast Asia to China and Japan or vice versa [56, pp.105-110].

Over many centuries of the "Early Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, 900-1300

CE", the Champa sea was not only a place where people gathered and resided but also a centre for the connection of the "Nearshore Commercial Route" (Vietnamese: Dương châm lộ; i.e. Western Trade Route, as in some documents). Owing to the rise of the maritime kingdoms, the enhancement of maritime knowledge, and the invention of the nautical compass and better sampans etc., the second maritime route named "the Oceanic Commercial Route" (Vietnamese: Đông Dương châm lộ; i.e. Oriental Trade Route) was set up and developed in Southeast Asia in the 11th and 12th centuries, which ran along Maritime Southeast Asian countries. With the Nearshore Commercial Route, a large number of merchant and cargo boats leaving the trade ports in China such as Guangzhou, Fujian, and Hainan, etc. often sailed across Jiaozhou Bay to Champa and Chenla before sailing across the Funan West Sea and the Strait of Malacca to reach Southwest Asia. Short-distance trade activities and maritime services also took place. Along the coast of Vietnam, trade activities were carried out, connecting the ports in northern Vietnam such as Van Ninh (Mong Cai) and Van Don with those in Central Vietnam such as Lach Truong, Hoi Thong, Cua Sot, and Ky Anh and then those in the Champa sea, the West sea (Oc Eo -Funan) and finally the Kra canal (from the 2nd to the 7th century). Since the late 6th century, however, the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Sunda were gradually used in competition with the Kra canal, sharing the influence and resources. The change in the international commercial networks was one of the major factors leading to the decline of the empire of Funan [25, pp.229-246], [18, pp.182-206].

From another perspective, the merchant boats coming from Southwest Asia and Maritime Southeast Asia (crossing the straits of Malacca and Sunda) gathered in the Champa sea, before moving to the trade ports in North Central Vietnam and those in Northeastern Vietnam (Dai Viet). Based on the favourable geo-economic and maritime economic conditions as well as abundant natural resources development potential gained by Champa from Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia, the leaders of the kingdom of Champa thought about developing maritime economy and increasing the capacity to exploit the ocean [26, p.45]. Owing to the "Oceanic Commercial Route" and the "Nearshore Commercial Route" running along the countries in Southeast Asian peninsula, Champa was successful in setting up not only the north - south linkage but also the east - west linkage; i.e. it had relations with both Maritime Southeast Asia and Mainland Southeast Asia (also called Southeast Asian Peninsula)⁴. The exchange of economic activities and establishment of trade ports and towns in the islands and by the estuaries along the central coast created essential conditions for the kingdom of Champa to develop its maritime economy, commercial exchange, and exploitation of the sea resources, while building imperial cities with grandiose architectural works and igniting maritime cultural resources.

In regard to the activities of the Southeast Asian commercial networks, although all the nations and economic centres shared the common linkage, each of them had particular relations, both regionally and inter-regionally. Different

from economic activities in agriculture, handicraft. commerce. in especially maritime trade, to some extent, require more relations and a wider space of other words, commercial linkage. In economy, including maritime trade, cannot be created and developed without a system. The space and systems, or systematic networks of linkage, are essential for development of commercial economy. As shown in history, in the Asian commercial system, major trade ports and large economic centres played a leading role in running the activities of the whole system. Thus, the islands such as Van Don, the Cham Islands, the Re islands (Ly Son), Con Dao, Phu Quoc, and Tho Chu etc. were destinations and important commercial hubs. Due to their particular features, those island ports had close linkage with the Champa coastal ports and the trade centres in the region of South China as well as those in the farther northeast, such as Taiwan, Ryukyu kingdom, Japan, and Korea. Based on the linkage of the chain of island ports, many monarchies of Dai Viet and Champa actively took part in the Asian internal economic activities.

From the 11th to the 15th century, maritime economic activities in East Asia relied greatly on Jiaozhou Bay, the Champa sea, and Maritime Southeast Asian countries. As important as the Gulf of Tonkin, Luzon quickly became not only a centre for linkage and commodity circulation but also a significant market in East Asia. Merchant boats coming from North Asia often dropped into the Philippines before sailing further southwards to the kingdom of Malayu with the straits of Sunda and Malacca. In reality, the trade activities carried out by the

merchants created a turbulent economic atmosphere in the region and the Champa sea held multifaceted attraction due to its particular position [15, pp.207-230]. In the Champa institutions were history. proactive and active in finding an appropriate development model for the purpose of achieving its development targets. The kingdom of Champa was inclined to develop the maritime economy. Over centuries, Cham people and the ethnic communities residing in the socio-political space of Champa together built a diversified economy. They exploited natural resources in mountains, forest, plains and the sea as well [23, pp.105-115]. Cham people not only carried out effective exploitation of the resources but also promoted the use of knowledge and regional resources to establish and reinforce its political institutions, building social relations and structure, and widening diplomatic ties and cultural creation. As acknowledged popularly, in essence, the kingdom of Champa was comprised of maritime polities, Amaravati in Quang including Nam, Indrapura in Dong Duong, Vijaya in Binh Dinh (988-1471), Kauthara in Khanh Hoa, and Panduranga in Phan Rang. Those polities, or small states, joined and constituted the maritime kingdom of Champa in form of the linkage centralisation [14, pp.25-39]. The kingdom left a huge cultural heritage typical for not only Southeast Asia but also the entire Asia and the world as well [48, pp.110-115], [28, pp.128-334], [30, pp.573-632].

3. Cham Islands: potentialities and position

Based on the natural geographical perspective and historical, archaeological,

and anthropological documents that are available, we strongly believe that the Cham Islands always had a close linkage and, furthermore, regular interactions with Dai Chiem seaport (the port town by the estuary of the great kingdom of Champa), Amaravati. Simhapura (in Tra Kieu). Indrapura, other and some small neighbouring states. Over centuries, the offshore islands and Dai Chiem seaport played the most important role in the Champa maritime commercial system. Although the role of the Cham Islands was recognised with respect to the prosperity of Hoi An (Faifo) and the maritime commerce in Dàng Trong from the 16th to the 18th century, it is still necessary to clarify the awareness of the potentialities and position of the Cham Islands in the Champa maritime commercial system and the maritime space in Central Vietnam as well as the Champa socio-political changes from the 11th to the 15th century.

Firstly, in recent research works, compared with other small states Champa, nagara Amaravati is considered some authors to be the most comprehensive complex. In history, this small state had all favourable conditions for development with three ecological spaces, including: the plain space, of which the centre was the basin of Thu Bon river; the highland space in the mountains in the west; and, the coastal space, or more precisely the sea and island space, covering a large maritime area in the east. Each of the spaces bore particular features, in terms of the natural geography, ecological system, environment, and economic activities of the residential communities. The potentialities and strengths of those areas were different

from each other, but they actually complemented each other to create a general capacity and gather overall momentum for development of the kingdom.

Located inside the background of those areas, the Cham Islands emerged as a linkage between Amaravati and other trade ports in the Champa sea. In a broad view, the three entities, including the Cham Islands, Dai Chiem seaport, and Thu Bon estuary, together with other seaports of the kingdom of Champa formed a linkage axis connecting Amaravati with other countries in Southeast Asian Peninsula such as Laos and Chenla. The linkage axis consisting of the trade routes for business and exchange of salt, seafood, silk, gongs, and jars etc. helped to set up and strengthen the relations between different regions in Southeast Asia and Asia. As time went by, the consciousness of the sea and the factors related to the maritime economy and culture penetrated deep into mind and culture of local people in the Annamite Range - Central Highlands and other areas lying further inland in the peninsula [19, pp.37-70].

Realising the potential benefits brought by trade, many institutions and local rulers tried to take full advantage of the rivers so that they no longer undertook merely the function of carrying water but were used for cultural exchange, transportation, connections between different ecological spaces and ethnic groups. In the "horizontal axis" (the East – West Axis), the Cham Islands and Dai Chiem seaport located by the estuary of Thu Bon river played a dual role as a factor for economic development and protection of the regime in the east and a linkage between "the sea and island space", "the plain space", and "the highland space", which were under the influence of Champa [12, pp.285-314]. In the chain of connections of the Champa trade port system, the axis between Dai Chiem seaport and Chiem Bat Lao seaport (the Cham Islands) was one of the major linkages for economic activities of the kingdom. Besides, a large number of values of the ecological spaces were integrated and kept in the Cham Islands. As a result, the Cham Islands play a significant role in transmitting and preserving cultural heritage of various regions. Owing to the Cham Islands and Dai Chiem seaport, Amaravati was seen as a central kingdom for centuries, keeping a dominant position to affect other small states. Certainly, Amaravati not have achieved would its sound development economic prosperity and without taking advantage of the Champa sea, especially the Cham Islands and the vast maritime space of the archipelago.

Secondly, based on the in-depth surveys carried out in Central Vietnam with the geoecological and geo-economic approaches as well as the scientific intuition, Tran Quoc Vuong, a historian and an archaeologist, interpreted clearly the role of the chain of islands, including also the Cham Islands, in the background of the natural world and the seaport culture in Central Vietnam. Accordingly, "in the mountain bases, there are large and small rivers, running from the west to the sea in the east. The rivers are short and very blue. They do not carry much alluvium. The plains are narrow. Many estuaries are really deep, appropriate to build lagoons and ports for the anchorage of boats and ships. In addition, the mountain-forming movement created offshore islands and archipelagoes. Excluding the farther coral archipelagoes such as the Paracel islands and

the Spratly islands, the islands and archipelagoes found near the seashore, such as: Hon Me, Bien Son, and Nghi Son islands (Thanh Hoa province), Song Ngu and Hon Mat islands (Nghe Tinh region), Hon Co and Hon La islands (2 Hon La), Hon Nom island (2 Hon Chua), and Hon Gio island (Quang Binh province), Con Co island (Quang Tri province), Cu lao Cham or Cham Islands (Quang Nam province), Ly Son or Re islands (Quang Ngai province), Phu Quy (Phu Yen province), and Hon Tre (Khanh Hoa province)... formed the screens" protecting the Champa seaport [51, pp.308-340]. From the archaeological perspective, it is possible to affirm that "the Cham Islands were a link of the cultural course in the period from 3500 to 3000 BP in the coastal areas and offshore islands in Central Vietnam" [7, p.108].

In the subsequent centuries, a North -South linkage axis was formed based on the Cham Islands and other offshore islands. With the Champa sea, the linkage axis had (mostly very close) relations with the inland political and economic centres, while keeping certain independent activities. As written clearly in an Arabic ancient bibliography, "The ship left Hind (India) and it took 10 days to reach Sanf (Champa). Local people had fresh water and exported aquilaria crassna there... stopped by Sanf-fulaw and Cham Pulaw (the Cham Islands) to get fresh water and then headed towards Sin (China)" [46, p.121]. According to the New Book of Tang (Chinese: 新唐書, Vietnamese: Tân Đường thu), "After leaving Guangzhou, we travelled for 200 Chinese miles southeastwards by sea and reached Don Mon mountain. With favourable wind, we sailed westwards and reached Cuu Chau (Cuu Chau Rock) in two

days. Having travelled southwards for two days, we reached Chiem Bat Lao mountains (the Cham Islands) emerging from the sea, which were 200 Chinese miles due east of the state of Huan-Wang (Vietnamese: Hoàn Vuong; i.e. Panduganra). After continuing to sail southwards, we reached Leng-Shan (Vietnamese: Lăng Sơn) in two days and then the state of Mon Doc (Binh Dinh province) in one more day. We continued sailing and reached the state of Co Dat (Nha Trang) in one day and then Chau Dot Da Lang (Panduranga, the present-day Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces) in half day. Again, we sailed for two days and reached Quan Dot Long mountain (Con Dao or Poulo-Condore islands). After spending five more days sailing southwards, we reached a strait named "zhi" (Chinese: **\mathbb{E}**, Vietnamese: $Ch\acute{a}t$) by local people (...) (Strait of Malacca), of which two shores are one hundred Chinese miles far from each other; the north shore belonged to the state of La Viet, while the south shore belonged to the state of Phat The" [33, pp.44-48]. In the chapter titled Foreign Countries No.5 in Volume No.324 of the History of Ming (Chinese: 明史; Vietnamese: Minh sử), "Champa is located by the coast in the south. Departing from Quynh Chau, with favourable wind, we could reach Champa in one day and one night. If we departed from Fuzhou. we bluow have southwestwards and reach it in ten days and ten nights... In the period of the Tang dynasty, it was named sometimes "Zhan Bu Lao" (Chinese: 占不劳; Vietnamese: Chiêm Bất Lao) and sometimes "Zhan Po" (Chinese: 占婆; Vietnamese: Chiêm Bà); the country where the king resided was named "Zhan Cheng" (Chinese: 占城; Vietnamese: Chiêm

Thành; i.e. the kingdom of Champa). Under the reign of Zhi De (Chinese: 至德; Vietnamese: Chí Đức), the kingdom was renamed "Huan Wang" (Chinese: 環王; Vietnamese: Hoàn Vương; i.e. Panduranga). At the time of the Later Zhou and the Song dynasties, "Zhan Cheng" (Kingdom of Champa) was used to name the country, which had to pay annual tribute" [11, p.306].

Thus, merchant boats could travel by sea from the Cham Islands to Jiaozhou or directly to Hainan and then Guangzhou. The boats travelling from Guangzhou to Srivijaya or Palembang was no longer necessary to sail along the coast, but they could sail across Hainan and then head directly to the Cham Islands [60, p.121]. During the trans-Asian journeys, when the weather was favourable, many merchant boats stopped by the Cham Islands just to get food and fresh water or do small repairs without coming to coastal large seaports, which were always under the strict control of the local government. The places appropriate to the need of the merchants were the islands and archipelagoes, where local people lived for a long time; fresh water was found; the lagoons were deep; and, the wind was not strong. As a result, the Cham Islands played an important role in "the Nearshore Commercial Route" and "the Oceanic Commercial Route" due to its geographical position with many favourable and particular conditions.

Thirdly, from the perspective of the systematic approach, we can see that the Cham Islands, the island ports and the estuary ports were not isolated, but they always had active and systematic connections with each other. Within each mandala of the small states of the kingdom

of Champa, three entities, including port towns (by the estuaries), capital cities, and holy lands, were connected by the rivers running from the mountain in the northwest to the sea in the southeast. This sacred linkage axis was a foundation for the formation and an essential factor for the prosperity of each of the states [49], [57].

In regard to the natural conditions, the Cham Islands were near enough to the shore (15km) to play a role as a screen preventing raging waves and hurricanes from ravaging the estuary areas of the Thu Bon and Han rivers as well as Dai Chiem seaport. Being a screen (a mountainous defence) protecting Dai Chiem seaport of nagara Amaravati for centuries, the Cham Islands certainly undertook the function as a military seaport of the kingdom, taking control over the boats and ships coming in and out as well as the flows of people moving across the Champa maritime space for the sake of keeping peace and, more importantly, the prosperity of the kingdom. As an island port, the Cham Islands also role of played the receiving disseminating information on the political and economic changes in Asian societies.

Many centuries later, some Western explorers, priests, and merchants still recognised the role of the Cham Islands as such a screen: "A small island called Callao (also named Pulo Champello; i.e. the Cham Islands), situated at the distance of about thirty miles to the southwards of Turon bay... This island completely commands the entrance of the main branch of the river on which Fai-foo, the ancient mart for foreign commerce, is situated; and is completely inaccessible on every side but that which faces the mouth of this

river" [13, p.102]. In 1909, the historical writers of the Nguyen dynasty (1802-1945) made the following assessment: "Chiem Bat Lao (i.e. the Cham Islands) was a mountainous defence for Dai Chiem seaport",5. Thus, the kingdom of Champa was so powerful and Dai Chiem seaport was so prosperous for a number of centuries, partly owing to the role played by the Cham Islands as a defending screen and a gateway.

Fourthly, having quite large, deep, and calm lagoons for anchorage, land for cultivation, and fresh water as well as abundant natural resources for use, the Cham Islands became a residential place of the people during many cultural periods⁶. In the east - west linkage, the Cham Islands undertook a function as an outport of Dai Chiem seaport, the kingdom of Amaravati, and perhaps some other small states of Champa. It is important that the Cham Islands was really rich in natural resources, due to the surrounding large sea [43, pp.11-90], [44], [39]. One could exploit successfully precious seafood and swallow's nest from the islands and concentrate on trading in valuable commodities such as sugar, silk, cinnamon. pepper, aloe wood. and rhinoceros' horn, etc., which were produced in the central plain and mountains, by exporting them to the international markets. For Asian seafarers, the offshore islands in Central Vietnam, including separate islands and chains of islands generally, were always seen as waypoints of their voyages. Over centuries, the Cham Islands were always the most important destination for international merchant boats, when they came to the Champa sea, before leaving for the Jiaozhou sea and East Asia [42, p.460]. In the chapter "Accounts of Muslim Traders" of the book titled "Routes and Kingdoms" (Al-masalik wa'l-mamalik), Ibn Khurdadhibih described his three-day voyage from Qmar (Cambodia) to Sanf (Champa), before sailing towards Luqin (Long Bien) in the Red River delta.

The document titled "Accounts China and India" (Akbar al-Sin wa'l-Hind) tells about a ten-day trip from Kadrang (Cambodia) to Sanf (Champa), where they stopped by to get fresh water. And then, they sailed across Sundur Fulat (Hainan island) to reach "the Gates of China" in Guangzhou. All the merchant boats travelling along this route usually stopped by the Cham Islands, before moving towards the north. The traces found in many places such as Bai Ong and Bai Lang include the artefacts of Viet Chau and Truong Sa ceramics dating back to the 9th and 10th centuries as well as other pieces of Islamic ceramics of the same date. Remarkably, both of the above-mentioned documents show that the main product of Champa was aquilaria crassna (sanfi), which was considered the best by Arabian and international traders and could be sold at a very high price in the world and Asian markets [5, pp.78-88], [47, p.385].

In the Chinese ancient bibliography, it was also written about the regular participation of Islamic merchants in the Champa diplomatic and commercial missions to China, especially during the late period of the Tang dynasty (618-907) and the period of the Song dynasty (960-1279) [41, pp.91-44]. In addition to the evidence related to the diplomatic missions, a large number of artefacts coming from East Asia and Southwest Asia, such as Chinese ceramics, Islamic ceramics, and glass products (including a lot of coloured and high-quality glass ones coming from

Southwest Asia and Egypt), which have been found in the Champa vestige sites and seaports, have demonstrated the international importance of the Cham Islands and the Champa maritime trade over many centuries.

4. Conclusion

The Cham Islands played a role as an outport of Dai Chiem seaport, which was the main trade port of the kingdom of Champa, as well as an important island port in the chain of the islands located along the Nearshore Commercial Route in the East Sea. It was not only a waypoint for foreign merchants but also an "entrepôt" commodities in the Southeast Asian coastal commercial route. Economic activities in the Cham Islands, to some extent, were similar to those in Van Don trade port of Dai Viet [27, p.14]. Based on the development characteristics, the Cham Islands could be seen as an island port, which was one of the four typical forms of ports in the history of Vietnam⁷. According to the role, functions, and diversified activities, the Cham Islands were a really multi-functional port of the maritime kingdom Amaravati and the entire maritime trade system of Champa. Over many centuries, the Cham Islands had all the three essential elements as follows: (consisting of places for exchange and trade: Bai Lang and Bai Ong, etc.); Centre (where people gathered and commodities were delivered); and Network (connecting the regional and inter-regional economic systems). The convergence of the three elements made the kingdom of Champa

become an inter-regional and, to some extent, an inter-world centre [35, pp.37-55]. In other words, the Champa seaports bore all the three fundamental features: the superiority, the versatility, linkage. The kingdom of Champa established trade ports as well as regional and international commercial ties and, in turn, Asian commercial activities exerted great impacts on the economy and politics of the Champa maritime polities [59, p.120].

According to historical documents, after Dai Viet became independent in the tenth century, a trend of the southward expansion started due to the political pressure from the north. In 979 and 982, the pressure imposed by Dai Viet resulted in the decline of Amaravati and the emergence of other small states such as Vijaya (in Binh Dinh), Kauthara (in Nha Trang), and Panduranga (in Phan Rang) [53, pp.178-179]. The epitaphs in two stelae dating back to 1029 and 1035, which were found in Panduranga, provide us with information about the presence of many international merchants, especially Islamic ones. The available historical documents also prove "the marriage-based diplomacy" between Dai Viet and Champa through the marriage of Champa King Sri Harijit (Jaya Simhavarman III or *Chế Mân*, 1285?-? 1288-1307) with Dai Viet Princess Huyen Tran in 1306, owing to which O and Ri (Ly) regions of the kingdom of Champa were handed over to Dai Viet⁸. By 1471, the influence of Dai Viet expanded to Vijaya and Thi Nai well-known trade port. The political changes resulted in many impacts on economic activities and life of the kingdom of Champa. By the 15th and 16th centuries, the vestige of the earlier

cultural periods was rarely found in the "traditional" land of Amaravati and Vijaya; etc. As we can suppose, the decrease in those vestige sites is closely related to the decline of the kingdoms as well as the Champa and Thi Nai trade ports, which no longer played a role as internationally significant trade ports [22, p.76], [55, p.223].

Due to the historical changes in the period from the 11th to the 15th century, the role played by the Cham Islands as an outport became less and less important. Trade activities were still carried out and, to some extent, the Cham Islands still remained as a multifunctional island port due to the abundant natural resources and particular geographical location.

Since the late 15th century, with the activation for the Asian maritime commercial system, the Cham Islands gradually restored the central position in the Southeast Asian trade network, owing to the presence of Asian and European merchants in the trade ports, which previously belonged to the kingdom of Champa. In the 16th century. Hoi An (Faifo) trade port was increasingly rehabilitated and bore a new appearance. Over about three centuries, from the 16th to the 18th century, a large number of explorers, international merchants, missionaries, and trade corporations (such as CIO, VOC, and EIC...) visited Hoi An, Nuoc Man, and other trade ports in Central Vietnam and they all were deeply impressed with the position of Pulociampello (Cham Islands) [1, p.91]. Remarkably, it is necessary archaeological mention the and to interdisciplinary discoveries and research findings related to a shipwreck in the sea of the Cham Islands (from May 1997 to June

1999). The ship was 29.4m long and 7.2m wide, containing more than 240,000 artefacts, including mostly ceramic products made in the kilns in Chu Dau - My Xa (Hai Duong province) and dating back to the late 15th century, which provide us with further information about various aspects such as: the tradition, competence, and the particularity of Dai Viet ceramics; the exchange of cultural values. craftsmanship and knowledge between Dai Viet and Champa; international and regional commercial ties; the relationship among Dai Viet, Champa, Siam, and Southeast Asia; and, the role of the Champa and Cham Islands' maritime space over more than ten centuries [31, pp.20-22], [3, p.236], [40, pp.54-91].

Notes

^{1,2} The paper was published in Vietnamese in: *Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam*, số 1, năm 2020. Translated by Nguyen Tuan Sinh, edited by Etienne Mahler.

³ The terms "Silk Road" was initially raised by Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), a German geographer, in 1877 in a book titled "China". It is written "Seidenstraße" in German or "Silk Road" in English, referring to a network of inland and maritime trade routes which connected the East and West in the medieval period.

⁴ Drang Lai epitaph, which was discovered in Drang Lai temple (Gia Lai province) and dates back to 1435, says clearly: "And, the Cham people, who were ordered by your Excellency to inhabit here in the highlands together with Viet, Khmer, Laotian, Siamese, Javanese, and Bengali people: the total number of the inhabitants is 170" [13, p.55].

⁵ As recorded by the historical writers under the Nguven dynasty, "Located 68 Chinese miles due east of Dien Phuoc district, there is an island emerging from the sea. It has several names such as Ngoa Long (i.e. Sitting Dragon), Cù Lao (i.e. island), and Tiêm Bút (i.e. pen rack) or Chiem Bat Lao as its ancient name. It plays a role as a defending screen for Dai Chiem seaport. Residents of Tan Hiep commune live in the southern side of the mountain. One can do farming in the fields in the mountain; our seafarers often stopped by the island to get fresh water and firewood. There are three temples: one to worship the "Phuc Ba" general, another - "Tu Duong Hau", and the last one - "Bich Tien". Some called the last the temple of Cao Cac, Bo Bo... [34, pp.418-419].

⁶ In regard to Son Tra peninsula and the Cham Islands as well as other islands in Central Vietnam, Le Quy Don wrote: "Off the seaports in Thuan Hoa and Quang Nam, there are rocky mountains of different sizes emerging from the sea and playing a role as a defending screen for the seaports. In southern district of Bo Chinh (Vietnamese: Châu Nam Bố Chính), there is an offshore mountain named Cu Lao Co. It takes about four "canh" (a canh is roughly equivalent to two hours) to sail from Bac Bien village, An Nau commune to the island. In Dien Ban prefecture, there are Hon Tra and Hon Lo islands offshore Da Nang seaport. It takes half a canh to sail from mainland to those islands. In Thang Hoa prefecture, there are large mountains named Cu Lao Cham (the Cham Islands) emerging in the sea off Dai Chiem seaport. Three of the mountains are located proportionally. Two of the three mountains are larger and covered with green trees. People live and do farming in the mountains. They plant various fruits such as oranges, mandarins, beans, and peanuts, etc. There are freshwater streams. The rest one is smaller and barren. It takes two canh to sail from the mainland to those islands" [7, pp.105-111], [10, p.116].

⁷ Based on the formation characteristics of the trade ports in Vietnam, we can classify them into four basic groups: i) River ports: such as Thang Long (Hanoi), Pho Hien (Hung Yen province), Cu Lao Pho (Dong Nai province), Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), and Oc Eo (An Giang); ii) Estuary ports: such as Van Ninh (Quang Ninh province), Do Me (Domea, Hai Phong City), Lach Truong (Thanh Hoa province), Hoi Thong (Nghe An province), Thanh Ha (Hue City), and Champa seaport - Hoi An (Quang Nam province); iii) Seaports (located in lagoons): such as Ky Anh (Ha Tinh province), Thi Nai - Nuoc Man (Binh Dinh province), etc.; and, iv) Island ports: such as Van Don (Quang Ninh province), Cu Lao Cham or Cham Islands (Quang Nam province), Con Dao and Phu Quoc [16, p.16]. ⁸ In 1307, O and Ly regions were renamed Thuan Chau and Hoa Chau (i.e. the region of the present-day Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, Quang Nam, and Da Nang) according to the order of King Tran Anh Tong (1276-1320) [24, p.17].

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