

# CONTACTS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN NORTHERN VIETNAM FROM 7<sup>th</sup> CENTURY TO 13<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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## Introduction

Until now, there have been a few books and researches on the spreading and influence of Islam and Islamic culture on Vietnam. Authors of these works, such as Pierre-Yves Manguin (1985), Lamiat (1997), Rie Nakamura (2000), Lương Ninh (2004), Ngô Văn Doanh (2009) mostly focus on interactions and exchanges in central and southern Vietnam specially Champa. In the volume 9 of *Dictionary of Islam* by Lamiat (1997), “Sanaf” or Champa was referred as main location of interactions with Muslim traders. He also confirmed that “Sanaf” was mentioned in the writings of Arab travelers and geographers since the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> In the paper “The first Islamic countries in Southeast Asia”, based on Chinese documents, Ngô Văn Doanh (2009) mentioned to cultural interactions between Champa and Islamic World and influences of the Islamic World and Islam on Chams and Cham culture in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Lương Ninh (2004) in *History of Champa kingdom* included information of trading activities between Champa and “Pashi” merchants - Muslim merchants who lived in China in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Other proofs of this interactions between Champa and Islamic world such as two epitaphs belonging to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century were also analyzed in this book.<sup>3</sup> It can be seen that most of resources cited in the writings of Vietnamese scholars were Chinese documents. Meanwhile, although G.R. Tibbets<sup>4</sup> (1979), Pierre-Yves Manguin<sup>5</sup> (1985), George F. Hourani<sup>6</sup> (1995), Lamiat (1997) had already mentioned the Arab documents on this topic, there is still room to examine these historical sources in a more comprehensive context.

With close examination of both historical documents of Vietnam, China and writings of Muslim traders and geographers, this paper aims at shedding a clearer light on the contacts between the Islamic world and northern Vietnam during an important period of maritime trade: “An early age of Commerce in Southeast Asia (900-1300 C.E)”.<sup>7</sup> In detail, in the first section, basing on the travel logs and geographical books of Arab and

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<sup>1</sup> لامنت، (1997)، فرهنگ اسلام، ج 9، ص 17

<sup>2</sup> Ngô Văn Doanh (2009), Những quốc gia Islam giáo đầu tiên tại Đông Nam Á (The first Islamic countries in Southeast Asia), *Tạp chí nghiên cứu Đông Nam Á (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies)*, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> Lương Ninh (2004), *Lịch sử vương quốc Champa (History of Champa kingdom)*, ĐHQG Publisher, p.194.

<sup>4</sup> G.R.Tibbets (1979), *A study of the Arabic texts containing material on Southeast Asia*, Great Britain: William Clowes (Beccles) Limited, Beccles and London. (In Tibbets’ book, he selected the most important Arabic sources and translated parts related to South East Asia. There was an introduction containing his analysis and comment on the authenticity of these materials).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Yves Manguin, The introduction of Islam into Champa, *JMBRAS*, Vol. LVIII, Part 2, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> George F.Hourani (2005), *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in ancient and early medieval times*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Geoff Wade (2009), An Early Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, 900-1300 CE, *Journal of Southeast Asia Studies*, 40 (2), p.221.

Persian traders and geographers, we would like to point out and analyze the position and role of “Sanji” (or “Jiaozi Yang”), “Luqin” in trade route between Islamic countries and China, as well as knowledge of Middle East traders and geographers about the region. In the second section, historical writings of Vietnam and China will be examined to highlight the trace of interactions between two distance parts of world.

## **1. Contacts of the Islamic world and northern Vietnam in writings of Arab and Persian travelers and geographers**

Arabs and Persians thanks to their navigational skill and knowledge of the sea, since ancient times, familiarized themselves with the vast region of Southeast Asia. Most prominent among of the many foreigners who journeyed across the vast stretches of the Indian Ocean and regions of the western Pacific to find their fortunes in the great ports of China were Arabs and Persians from the far west. André Wink (2002) even argues that the 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries constituted a period of expansion of Muslim (Arab and Persian) commerce on all major routes in the Indian Ocean, turning the Indian Ocean into an “Arab Mediterranean”, but suggesting that Islamic influence during this period was essentially of a commercial nature.<sup>8</sup>

The merchants of Siraf (an important port in the Persian Gulf) embarked on voyages towards China each year. Gradually these traders explored the famous Southeast Asian trading routes and finally reached China. Many goods from China, Southeast Asian polities and India were all consumed within the Muslim world. The eastern items most in demand in these markets - silk, porcelain, sandalwood and black pepper - were bartered for incense (Arabian gum resins), pure-bred Arab horses, ivory, cotton textiles and metal objects. Naturally, they became prominent as navigators in these oceans, producing travel books and navigational guides for traders and seafarers as well as knowledge for Islamic geographers. These Arabic or Persian texts provide us with details of the Southeast Asian ports visited by Middle Eastern traders during this period.

In order to access the information of commercial activities conducted by Muslim traders in the northern part of Vietnam from 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century, we can examine two types of sources: travel books (or travel logs, سفرنامه in Persian) and geographical books (المسالك و الممالك in Arabic means "book of roads and kingdoms"). Travel books are documents recorded by travelers of their journey, notably *Selseleh al-Tawarikh* or *Akhbar al-Sin wa al-Hend* (سلسله التواريخ يا اخبار الصين و الهند) of Sulaiman Tajir Sirafi. Geographical books are writings of geographers and includes information of climes of world (اقليم). These books were mostly written in Arabic because at that time, Arabic was the most important language in Islam Caliphate. They were translated into Persian and later some of them were translated into English to introduce to European readers the cultural and science achievements of the Islamic world. The Arabic and Persian versions of these books are available in

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<sup>8</sup> André Wink (2002), *Al-Hind: the making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Leiden, Vol I: Early Medieval India and the expansion of Islam 7<sup>th</sup>- 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, p.65.

many libraries and academic institutes in Iran as a precious heritage of Persian talents during the Golden Age of Islamic Culture such as National Library, Library of Ministry for Foreign Affairs or Libraries of universities such as Al-zahra University in Iran.

#### a. Travel books (or travel logs) relating to Vietnam

As mentioned above, travel books of Muslim traders play a critical role in realizing the trade route and activities of traders in Southeast Asian region. While analyzing travel books as a historical source, we must pay attention to a distinguished point. The Muslim traders and travelers travelled for trade, not to see the world. In these books there are many fabulous and fictitious materials. Even in case of merchants such as Sulaiman, their works are believed to inspire the fictional stories of Sindbad episodes of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

One of the most important travel books was *Selseleh al-Tawarikh* or *Akhbar al-Sin wa al-Hend*. It is believed that in 851, there was a collection of reports on travels from Siraf to Canton of China. The author was presumed to be Sulaiman Tajir Sirafi because the name appeared in these reports. Sulaiman is believed to be a merchant (tاجر) coming from Siraf - an important port at the Persian Gulf. 65 years later from 851, Abuzid Hasan Sirafi combined Sulaiman's reports with the information of another merchant named Ibn Waheb Qarishi, and compiled the book as seen nowadays.<sup>9</sup> About the value of this book, Hossein Fuzi claimed that Sulaiman's book is "one of the most important Arabic travel books about Indian Ocean and China Sea in the 9<sup>th</sup> century"<sup>10</sup>. The unique manuscript which was written by Arabic is preserved in Paris National Library. In this paper, we will examine this book's Persian translated version by Hossein Qachanlu.<sup>11</sup>

In this travel book, Sulaiman mentioned the route from the Persian Gulf to China, and referred to Champa as "Kampa" or "Annam" and "Cochin-china".

"سپس کشتیها به سوی محلی که به آن کامپا" نام و کوشیین شین" گویند و (تا این محل) ده روز زاه فاصله است حرکت می کنند. کامپا دارای آب شیرین و گوارایی است و عود کامپایی را از آنجا می آورند و پادشاهی دارد و مردم آن گندمگونند و هر یک از ایشان دولنگ می پوشند. پس وقتی دریانوردان آب "وارا (و شیرین) از آنجا بر گرفتند به سوی محلی که به آن "صندر فولات" گوند، لنگر می کشیدند. صندر فولات جزیره ای است در دریا که مسافت تا آنجا دو روز راه است و آب شیرین دارد."<sup>12</sup>

*Then ships directed to Kampa "Annam and Cochinchina" and took 10 days to arrive there.*

*Kampa has drinking water and Kampa incense is purchased from that place. There is a king and people of that land has dark skin and wears saron (two piece clothes). After taking drinking water,*

<sup>9</sup> سلیمان تاجر سیرافی (1381)، *سلسله التواریخ*، با گرد آوری و اضافات: ابوزید حسن سیرافی، ت: حسین قرچانلو، انتشارات اساطیر، ص 14-15

<sup>10</sup> زگی محمد حسین (1389)، *جهانگردان مسلمان در دوره میانه*، ت: عبدالله ناصری طاهری، نشر علمی، ص 21-22

<sup>11</sup> سلیمان تاجر سیرافی (1381)، *سلسله التواریخ*، با گرد آوری و اضافات: ابوزید حسن سیرافی، ت: حسین قرچانلو، انتشارات اساطیر.

<sup>12</sup> سلیمان تاجر سیرافی (1381)، *سلسله التواریخ*، با گرد آوری و اضافات: ابوزید حسن سیرافی، ت: حسین قرچانلو، انتشارات اساطیر، ص 59-60

*ships travel to Kandar-Fulat - an island and the distance to that island is 10 days by sea route. Drinking water is available there”.*

"بعد از آن جزایر و سپس دریای کریدنج، آنگاه دریای صنف است که عود صنفی بدان منسوب است. آنگاه دریای چین و آن همان دریای صنجی است که پس از آن دریایی نیست"<sup>13</sup>.

*After those islands and sea of Kardaranj, there is Sanf (or Sanaf) which has Sanf incense. That is China Sea or also named Sanji Sea which is the last sea.*

"سپس کشتیها به سوی دریایی که به نام "صنجی" دارد حرکت می کنند. پس از آن به سوی دروازه های چین می روند و آن رشته های کوهایی است در آن دریا که میان هر دو کوه از آن تنگه ای است که کشتی ها از آن گذر می کنند. بنابر این چون با یاری خداوند به سلامت از صندر فولات بگذرند کشتی ها به سوی چین حرکت می کنند و ظرف مدت یک ماه به چین می رسند ولی این کوهایی که کشتیهای از آنها عبور می کنند مسافت هفت روز راه است پس چون کشتیها از دروازه گذر کردند و وارد خلیج ها شدند و به آب شیرین می رسند"<sup>14</sup>

*Then ships traveled to the area of Sanji Sea. After that they sailed to gates of China and there were many mountains with channel between two mountains and ships had to travel through this channel. With the blessing of God, these ships traveled from Sandar Fulat to China safely and after one month they arrived China but they must spend 8 days on going through mountains then they passed gate and arrived a bay and can access drinking water.*

In this writing, name "Sanji Sea" (صنجی) was referred as the last sea which was also called "China Sea". In this sea, there are many mountains and navigators must be on this sea 1 month before they reached China from Sandar Fulat.<sup>15</sup> It is no doubt that "Sanji Sea" is "Jiaozhi Sea" or "Jiaozhi Yang" 交趾洋. We believe that this is one of the soonest writings that referred to the name of "Jiaozhi Yang". Relating to the name of "Jiaozhi Yang", with the survey on Chinese logs, Li Tana confirmed that in the Chinese documents, the term "Jiaozhi Yang" appeared only from 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> However, as seen above, the name of "Sanji Sea" was mentioned even from 9<sup>th</sup> century in the writings of Sulaiman, The appearance of this name can be clarified sooner than the 13<sup>th</sup> century in other Arabic geographical books, notably the book of Al-Ma'sudi which will be analyzed in details in the next section.

<sup>13</sup> سلیمان تاجر سیرافی (1381)، *سلسله التواریخ*، با گرد آوری و اضافات: ابوزید حسن سیرافی، ت: حسین قرچانلو، انتشارات اساطیر، ص 161

<sup>14</sup> سلیمان تاجر سیرافی (1381)، *سلسله التواریخ*، با گرد آوری و اضافات: ابوزید حسن سیرافی، ت: حسین قرچانلو، انتشارات اساطیر، ص 60

<sup>15</sup> سلیمان تاجر سیرافی (1381)، *سلسله التواریخ*، با گرد آوری و اضافات: ابوزید حسن سیرافی، ت: حسین قرچانلو، انتشارات اساطیر، ص 60

<sup>16</sup> "In the thirteenth century there appeared a term "Jiaozhi Yang" (Jiaozhi Ocean), no doubt derived from Jiaozhi (Giao Chi), the old Chinese name for Đại Việt. However, whether it referred to the Gulf of Tonkin or to the sea along the central Vietnamese coast was never clear, in most sources it seemed to refer to the latter and to exclude the former, while in others it encompassed both. It appeared only in the thirteenth century and not earlier in most of the Chinese travel logs", Li Tana (2006), A view from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast, *Journal of Southeast Asia Studies*, 37, pp.85-86.

## b. Geographical books:

Along with travel books, geographical books also shed light on the commercial activities and contact between the Islamic world and northern Vietnam during this period. With the support of caliphs, only in 8<sup>th</sup> century, geography appeared and flourished in the Islamic Caliphate and it is clear that math geography as well as natural geography of the Islamic world owed to Greek, India and Iran geography traditions. Road books contributed greatly to the development of this science. The road books included practical aims: providing information of far-flung regions for the agents of the state postal and intelligence services (barid, khabar). These books were usually called Book of Roads and Realms and “ilm al-turuq” – “science or knowledge of the roads”. However, compilers of biographies generally have little to say about geographers, no doubt because geography was never quite recognized as an independent discipline. A geographer was usually mentioned in biographies because their works in other fields. For example, in the case of Ibn Khurdadhbih, he wrote on music or Al-Ma’sudi is known for being a historian.

In Arab books, geographers described the division of the inhabited world into “climes” (iqlim- اقليم in Arabic and Persian) and mentioned places situated within each clime. This tradition derived from Ptolemy and Al- Khwarazmi’s books in which information was arranged according to climes. Al- Khwarazmi divided the inhabited world into 7 climes from One to Seven and among them, Iraq with its capital Baqdad belonged to the Fourth, the central clime. This pattern was then followed by numerous authors even though the figures he used to divide climes were out of date by his time.<sup>17</sup>

	Name of book	Author	Original Language	Examined versions
1	Al- Masalik wal- Mamalik (المسالك و الممالك)	Ibn Khurdadhbih (d.885)	Arabic	Arabic and Persian
2	Muruj al-dhahab (مروج الذهب)	Abu Al-Hasan Ali al-Ma’sudi (d.956)	Arabic	Persian
3	Kitab Nuzhat al- Mushtaq fi- khliaraq al- Afaq (كتاب نزهة في اختراق الافاق)  (The book of pleasant journeys into faraway lands)  (India and the neighboring territories as described by the Sharif Al- Idrisi)	Al- Sharif al- Idrisi (b.1100)	Arabic	Arabic

<sup>17</sup> M.J.L Young, J.D. Latham and R.B. Serjeant (1990), *Religion, learning and science in the Abbasid Period*, Cambridge University Press, pp.305-306.

First, *Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* (المسالك و الممالك) of Abu'l Qasim 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Khurdadhbih (d. 885) which was written during the reign of the caliph Al-Mu'tamid (870-892) is considered the earliest surviving piece of Arabic literature which may fairly be described as an original geographical work. Ibn Khurdadhbih's work describes a vast, well organized and well-known empire. He was the first of the cultured Iranianized administrators to compose a book on geography. Sometime during his life, he held the office of Director of Post and Intelligence (Saheb al-barid wa al-khabar) and maybe this position partly prompted him to compose his *Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* (Book of Routes and Realms).

Reflecting the Persian geographical tradition, *Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* (compiled in 864 and rewritten in 885) divides the world into four regions. The four regions are: the mashriq - the East (modern Persia, Afghanistan, losing itself in India, China and Central Asia), the maghrib - the West (northern Iraq, Byzantine, Syria, Egypt), the Jarbi - the North (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Gilan (northern province in today Iran), Tabarestan (northern part of today Iran)), the tayman - the South (the Arabian peninsula). It recorded that the route from India to China passed via Bullin, leaving Sarandip on the right, passed Langabalus, Kalah, islands of Jaba, Salahit and Harang, Spice Islands then embarked from Mait to Tioman. On the road to China they arrived at "Sanf" (or Sanaf - Champa) from which they moved to "Luqin". "Luqin" was described as one of four major ports of China and also the gateway to China.

"از صنف تا لوقین که اولین منزل (منزلگاه) چین است از راه خوشکی و دریا صد فرسخ دارد. در لوقین سنگ چینی و حریر چینی و سفالهای چینی سبزرنگ نیکو و نیز برنج دارد. از لوقین تا خانفو که بزرگترین بندر است چهار روز راه دریایی و 20 روز راه در خشکی است... از خانفو تا خانجو هشت روز راه است... از خانجو تا قانطو 20 روز راه است..."

*From Sanf to Luqin which is the first China's habitant place and the distance on land and sea routes was 100 farsokh. At Luqin, there were Chinese rocks and Chinese mats as well as beautiful Chinese blue - coloured – porcelains and rice. The distance from Luqin to Khanfu - the biggest port was 4 days with the sea route and 20 days with the land route.... From Khanfu to Khanju was 8 days.....From Khanju to Qantu was 20 days....".<sup>18</sup>*

The second book we will refer here is that of Al-Ma'sudi. Although Abu Al- Hasan Ali al-Ma'sudi (d. 956) does not fit well into any school or tradition, he is generally thought of as a historian.<sup>19</sup> The contents of his two surviving works is historical in nature but in fact the introductions are chiefly geographical. His two surviving

<sup>18</sup> ابن خردادبه، المسالك و الممالك، ص 52

Arabic version:

"و من الصنف الى لوقين، وهي اول مراقي الصين مائة فرسخ في البر والجر وفيها الحجر الصيني و الحرير الصيني و الغضار الجيد الصيني و بها ارز"  
ابن خردادبه، المسالك و الممالك، ص 19

<sup>19</sup> He was called by European as "The Herodotus of the Arabs", "the Muslim Pliny", by Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406: famous Tunisian Muslim historian) as "Imam al- muwarikhin" (a leader of historians).

works are *Muru al-Dhahab* (Meadows of Gold) and *Al-Tanbih wa al-ishraf* (Indication and Conspectus). By his own account, he was a great traveler and visited most of the lands of Islamic Caliphate except the Maghrib. In his book, information arranged unsystematically. He moved erratically from one to another topic, mixing history, geography, law with each other.... But the most distinguished virtue is perhaps his open-mindedness, which leads him to devote much space to the non-Islamic lands unlike other classical authors. In his book named *Muru al-Dhahab* (مروج الذهب), he mentioned to all seas and oceans along the sea route from Siraf to China. He called the sea on the way from Sanf to China as the "China Sea" or "Sanji Sea" and said that this was a sea with many strange but interesting information:

" پس از آن بترتیبی که گفتیم دریای هفتم یعنی دریای چین است که بعنوان دریای صنجی معروف است و دریایی خبیث و پرموج و خب است و خب بمعنی سختی عظیم دریاست و ما کلماتی را که مردم هر دریا در مخاطبه بکار میبرند یاد میکنیم. در این دریا کوههای بسیار است که کشتیها بناچار باید از میان آن عبور کند و چون خب و موج این دریا فراوان شود موجوداتی سیاه نمایان شوند که طول قامت هر یک پنج تا چهار وجب باشد و گویی پسرکان ریز اندام حبشی اند بیک شکل و یک اندام و بر کشتیها بالا روند و بالا رفتنشان بسیار شود اما زیان نرسانند. چون دریانوردان این موجودات را بینند بدانند که سختی در پیش است که ظهورشان علامت خب دریاست و آماده آن شوند و باشد که نجات یابند و باشد که به محنت افتند.... این قصه که گفتیم بنزد کشتیبانان و تاجران بصره و سیراف و عمان و دیگران که بر این دریا رفته اند مورد خلاف نیست... در این دریا یک نوعی خرچنگ هست باندازه یک ذراع یا یک وجب و کوچکتر که از دریا برون شود و چون باحرکت سریع از آب در آید و بخشی نشیند سنگ شود و آثار جنبندگی از آن برود و این سنگ را در سرمه و داروی چشم بکار برند و قصه آن مشهور است<sup>20</sup>.

*...After that, there was the seventh sea which is China Sea and is known as Sanji (صنجی) Sea and this sea have strong tides and currents which meant "difficult to pass" sea. We use the term that native people used to call their land in our writing. **There are many mountains in this sea and ships must pass among them, there are many black creatures which attach ships but not damage them.** Because navigators see them and understand that there are challenges waiting for them and their appearance symbolizes the difficulty in the sea and sailors prepare for that. This tale is similar to that which is narrated by merchants and navigators from Basra, Siraf and Oman who traveled in this sea. There is a kind of crab that quickly moves and becomes stone when they are in dry area. This stone can be used to make medicine for eyes and sormeh (traditional powder to make up women's eyes).* <sup>21</sup>

Ma'sudi also confirmed that merchants and ships from Basra, Siraf and Oman and others traveled to this sea.

The information related to Vietnam is also mentioned in the geographical book of Al-Idrisi - another important Arab Muslim geographer. Abu Abdollah Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abdollah Ibn Idris al-Hammudi al-Hasani called Al- Sharif al- Idrisi, was born in 1100. He stayed at the court of King Roger, the

<sup>20</sup> علی بن حسین مسعودی، (1387)، مروج الذهب، مترجم: ابوالقاسم پاینده، شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، ج1، ص 153، 152

<sup>21</sup> علی بن حسین مسعودی، (1387)، مروج الذهب، مترجم: ابوالقاسم پاینده، شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، ج1، 153، 152

Norman king of Sicily and during that time he compiled his work on world geography, *Kitab Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi- khlirag al- Afaq* (كتاب نزهه في اختراق الافاق) -it is also called *Kitab al- Rujar* which was completed in 1154. This book is a monumental geographical work and a very important source for the study of mediaeval history and geography. Al-Idrisi in his book mentioned to "Luqin"- a "coastal area" between India and China.<sup>22</sup>

In *Jama' al-tawarikh* (جامع التواريخ -Compendium of Chronicles) by Rashid al-din Hamadani, a country named "Kaf-je Guh" (كفجه گوه) means Chiao-chi or Jiaozhi was mentioned. Hamadan described the conquest of Mogul army to Chiao-chi. This is a large historical chronicle about Mogul conquest and Ilkhanate in Iran. The term "Kaf-je Guh" was mentioned in the invasion of Qubilai to this area.<sup>23</sup>

" در هفتمین سال از تاریخ توجه به آن بلاد در کنار رودخانه کنگ موران و آن مملکت را بستند، و پادشان آنجا (سوچو) نام را بکشند، و دیگر ولایات کندر و ایکی بوزه و مقومان و کلنک و (کیای و) کفجه گوه و غیر آن را مسخر گردانیدند."

*In the seventh year, they paid attention to the region near the Kang Moran river and they dominated that country. They killed its king (named Suchu), and assaulted other territories such as Kandar, Iki Buze, Maquman, Kalank and (Kiai and) Kaf- je Guh.*

In conclusion, we have surveyed records related to Vietnam in Arab travel books and geographical books written in the period from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century. By analyzing these documents, some important points can be figured out as follows:

First, since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, names of some places related to Vietnam such as "Sanji Sea", "Kampa", "Annan", "Luqin" were recorded in those sources. From the Arabian and Persian geographical aspect, these place names were acknowledged to belong to "the seventh sea" or "the seventh clime" - the last clime. As mentioned above, Arabian and Persian authors described the division of the inhabited world into "climes" ("iqlim" in Arabic and Persian) and described places situated within each clime. The tradition that geographical information was arranged according to climes was derived from Ptolemy and al-Khwarazmi's method, and then was followed by many other geographers. So, on the way to explore the new climes and expand their commercial activities, navigators and merchants had knowledge of new places such as "Kampa", "Annan" and "Luqin" and they considered them as connecting points on the route to China.

Second, these Arabic sources provide us with significant information about name of places related to Vietnam, such as "Annan" and "Kampa". The name of "Annan" indicated to Annan Protectorate 安南都護府 which was established by Tang dynasty in 679 in the northern and northern central region of Vietnam. Meanwhile, it is no doubt that "Kampa" is Champa (Campanagara). In Vietnam and China historical sources, the kingdom of

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<sup>22</sup> S. Maqbul Ahmad (1954), India and the neighboring territories as described by the Sharif Al- Idrisi, Part 1: Arabic text, Aziz Husain Manager National Printers'Co. Aligarh, p80-81

<sup>23</sup> رشید الدین همدانی(1373)، جامع التواریخ، نشر البرز، ج 2، ص 899



Chams spread from the central to southern region of Vietnam and had many names such as: Lâm Ấp 林邑, Hoàn Vương 環王... Among them, the name of “Champa” just appeared since the late 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Especially, the Arabic documents also indicate the soon appearance of the term “Sanji Sea” or “Jiaozhi Yang” 交趾洋. Although this name was just recorded in Chinese sources since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as seen above, this term was mentioned in Arabic records, notably *Selseleh al-Tawarikh*, 4 centuries sooner, since the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Analyzing *Selseleh al-Tawarikh*, we realize that although the author didn't mention proper names of positions, Sulaiman Tajir Sirafi definitely described the area of Hạ Long Bay in general and Vân Đồn in particular. Sulaiman reported that at the region of “gates of China”, "there were many mountains with channel between two mountains and ships had to travel through this channel". Notes on this special terrain coincided with the description on Mount Vân Đồn (also have been known with the name Đoạn Sơn 斷山) in *Annanzhi* 安南志 which was compiled in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. According to *Annanzhi*, "Mount Vân Đồn, or Đoạn Sơn, located in the large sea of Vân Đồn district. There are two opposite mountains with a flow of water runs through (...). During Lý – Trần Dynasty (11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century), commercial ships of many countries gather here."<sup>24</sup>. We can observe this special terrain at the area of Cống Đông - Cống Tây in Quang Ninh province (Pics.1-2). During the period from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century, Vân Đồn was famous as a flourishing trade port of Dai Viet. In 1149, when ships of Java, Siam requested for the right of residence and trade, the Lý Dynasty commended to set up a settlement 莊 at Vân Đồn to purchase precious things.<sup>25</sup> Trade with merchant ships from Java and China was also confirmed in the record of 1360 in the *Complete Annals of Dai Viet* 大越史記全書 or records of the book *Dao Yi Zhi Lue* 島夷志略<sup>26</sup>, all these things presents the importance of this region in the world trade route.<sup>27</sup> Nowadays, at two islands named Cống Đông - Cống Tây, there are many material traces such as stupa of Trần Dynasty (the 14<sup>th</sup> century) or dense layers of ceramics which illustrates bustling trading activities at that time (Pic.3). Therefore, records of Sulaiman is a proof for the presence of Arabian ships at the region of Vân Đồn. However, because Sulaiman did not mention to trading activities at that port, we have no clue of the fact that in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, whether there was a port at Van Don such as that of the Lý – Trần Dynasties or not.

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<sup>24</sup> 「雲屯山、即斷山、在雲屯縣大海中、兩山對峙、一水中過、立木棚置水門、民家列居兩岸、李陳氏時各國商舶多聚於此」（『安南志（原）』卷一）。

<sup>25</sup> 「己巳十年（宋紹興十九年）春二月，爪哇、路貉、暹羅三國商舶入海東，乞居住販賣，乃於海島等處立庄，名雲屯，買賣寶貨，上進方物」（『大越史記全書』本紀卷之四、己巳十年（1149）春二月條）。

<sup>26</sup> 「冬十月，閩蒲國商舶至雲屯海庄潛買蠙珠」（『大越史記全書』本紀卷之七、戊子八年元至正八年（1360）冬十月條）。「舶人不販其地。惟偷販之舟，止於斷山上下，不得至其官場，恐中國人窺見其國之虛實也」（『島夷志略』交趾）。

<sup>27</sup> Yamamoto Tatsuro (1939), Yun-tun, *Annam's Commercial Port*, Toyo Gakuho, 9. 桃木至朗（2005）、「ベトナム北部・北中部における港市の位置」（歴史学研究会・編『港町の世界史①港町と海域世界』青木書店）。

Relating to the name “Luqin”, Kuwahara Shinzo (1923) and Hà Văn Tấn (2008) hold the idea that “Luqin” was Jiaozhou 交州<sup>28</sup>. However, we think that “Luqin” is the name of “Lục Châu” 陸州, administrative unit of the Tang Dynasty which spread along the coastal area of today Quang Ninh - Guangxi. While describing Luqin, Arab and Persian authors mentioned to “mountains” (in *Al-Mamalik wal- Masalik* of Ibn Khurdadhbih), “Chinese rocks” (in *Al- Mamalik wal-Masalik* of Ibn Khurdadhbih, *Selseleh Al-Tawarikh* of Sirafi *Muruj al-dhahab* of Al-Ma’sudi), “black creatures” (in *Selseleh Al-Tawarikh* of Sirafi; *Muruj al-dhahab* of Al-Ma’sudi). These records share similarities with records in *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答 about the area surrounding the Tonkin Gulf (Pic2). When *Lingwai daida* described Tianwei channel/canal (天威遙) which was constructed in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century by Gao Pian 高駢 at the area of today Jiangshan Peninsula (Fangchenggang 江山半島, Pic3), it also mentioned 3 anxieties when people traveled along this coastal area including “big rocks” (巨石屹立) and “whales” (鯨波觸之). We think that “mountains” or “big rocks” which Arab authors referred to were reefs along the coastal region of the Tonkin Gulf, while “black creatures which attach ships but not damage them” must be whales that *Lingwai daida* mentioned to as one of three threats. In term of linguistics, the letter “Lu” in the name “Luqin” is close to the letter “Lu” 陸 in Luzhou 陸州 – name of an administrative unit in the Tang Dynasty spreading along the coastal area from Quang Ninh (Vietnam) to Mount Wu-lei 烏雷山 (Qinzhou, today Guangxi). The letter “qin” can be a variant of “zhou” 州 or “Qiong” in “Qiongzhou” 瓊州 (Hainan Island)<sup>29</sup>.

## 2. Contacts of the Islamic world and northern Vietnam recorded in Vietnam and Chinese documents

The contact between traders from western Asia and Annam was recorded long before Islam. With its important geographical position on the trade route between western and southern Asia with China, Jiaozhou 交州 (later Annam) was a destination for foreign ships with navigators from the western Asian countries. With the close examination of historical documents of Chinese such as *Liang shu*, *Chin shu*, Joseph Needham (1963) in his book referred to embassies or traders from Ta-Chhin (Roman Syria), the An-His (Parthians) came to Annam on their road to China.<sup>30</sup> Li Tana also pointed out that “from the Han period onward, Hu merchants were encouraged to visit Jiaozhou, because its “main value [to China]...was commercial”. There were several dozen Hu 胡 people was in Jiaozhou under the rule of Governor Shi Xie 士燮 (187-226).<sup>31</sup> However, the term “Hu”

<sup>28</sup> 桑原隲藏 (1923) 「宋末の提舉市舶西域人蒲壽庚の事蹟」 (東亞研究会。Hà Văn Tấn (2008), *Một số vấn đề lý luận sử học* (Some issues on historical theories), ĐHQG Publisher, pp.169-170.

<sup>29</sup> 「天威遙、欽之士人曾果, 得唐人『天威遙碑』, 文義駢儷, 誠唐文也。碑旨言: 安南靜海軍地皆濱海, 海有三險, 巨石屹立, 鯨波觸之, 晝夜震洶」 (『嶺外代答』卷一、天威遙)。

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Needham (1963), *Science and civilization in China*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 1, pp.187-199.

<sup>31</sup> Li Tana (2006), A view from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast, *Journal of Southeast Asia Studies*, 37, p.92.

during the Han dynasty was commonly used for Persian and Arab merchants and not necessarily meant Muslim merchants.<sup>32</sup>

During the Tang dynasty, along with Guangzhou 廣州, Annan played as an important port attracting many foreign ships. Annan (or Jiaozhou) was the place that foreign merchants and Chinese officials met on their haft way. This originated from the favor geographical condition, and the fact that foreign traders could buy many precious things such as sandalwood, ivory, pearl... from Annan.<sup>33</sup> Available records illustrate data on the arrivals of Arab and Persian ships to Annan during the first part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. According to *Collection of Stories on the Shady and Spiritual World of the Viet Realm* (*Việt điện u linh tập* 粵甸幽靈集) which was compiled in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Emperor Suzong of Tang 唐肅宗 (reigned: 779-805), “the Arab and Persian ships”大食波斯 attacked to the sea gate named “Thần Thạch”神石口 of Annan (the position of this place is unclear now), but the Tang army could defeat them thanks to the spirit of Lý Phục Man 李服蠻.<sup>34</sup>

During the late of 8<sup>th</sup> and early of 9<sup>th</sup> century, under the court of Emperor Dezong of Tang 德宗 (reigned: 779-805), the Military commissioner of Lingnan 嶺南節度使 made a report to the Tang court on maritime exchanges between foreign ships and Annan as well as the impact of these activities on the tribute of Annan to this court. Therefore, he suggested that the central government appointed an envoy along with him to go to Annan and merchandise goods.<sup>35</sup>

There are some evidences about the contact with Persian in Annan. In *The Old Book of Tang* 旧唐書 and *The Institutional History of Tang* (Tang Huiyao, 唐会要) in 714, a Tang mandarin named Zhou Qingli 周慶立 during his mission as the Superintendent of Maritime Trade (Shibosi, 市舶司) - who took a charge of commercial activities with foreign ship at Annam, cooperated with a Persian monk 波斯僧 whose name was clarified as Jiyang 及烈 in *Tang Huiyao*) and wanted to make precious things to tribute to Tang Emperor. However, Liu Ze 柳澤 - royal adviser submitted a petition to the emperor with the content: “Qingli

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<sup>32</sup> This term literally meant Sogdian, but by extension was commonly used for all Persians (Bosi 波斯) and Arabs (Tashi 大食) as well. The Manichaeon astronomer who came to China in 719 was a Hu, and so was the Zoroastrian princess Maasis who died in Sian at the age of 26 in 874. Joseph Needham, Ho Ping-Yu and others (1963), *Science and Civilization in China: Vol.5.*, p.84.

<sup>33</sup> 「其紫檀欄木、檀香、象牙、翡翠毛、黃嬰毛、青蟲真珠、紫鑛、水銀、出廣州及安南」 (『唐六典』卷二十二)。

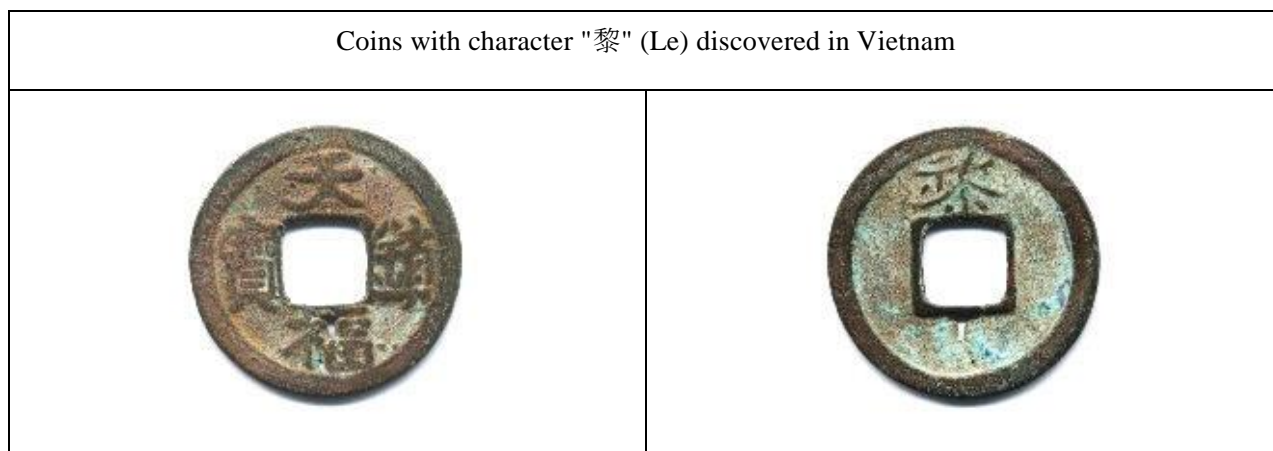
<sup>34</sup> 「肅宗時，又破大食波賊於神石口、代宗時’又破昆侖闍婆賊於朱鷺」 (『越南漢文小說集成 第一冊』 (粵甸幽靈集)、上海古籍出版社、2010年)。

<sup>35</sup> 「嶺南節度經略使奏、近日舶船、多往安南市易進奉事大實懼闕供、臣今欲差判官、就安南收市、望定一中使與臣使司同勾當、庶免隱欺、希顏奉宣聖旨、宜依者」 (『翰苑集』卷十八、論嶺南請於安南置市舶中使狀)。

wanted to use strange things (evil goods) to create mysterious things, use frivolous tricks to get the fun. This will weaken the national budget, and a good king should punish this strictly”.<sup>36</sup>

When the Lý Dynasty 李朝 had just established in Vietnam, in the early 11th century, the dynasty applied an open-minded foreign trade policy. We can indirectly convey this via a writing of Song Dynasty. According to *Tzuchih T'ungchien* (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government), October 1018, former mandarin of interpreter 通判 of Guangzhou reported on the fact that many foreign traders came to Jiaozhou to trade and then brought coin with character “黎” and low quality coins to Guangzhou to trade, and it commented that this was illegal.

Coins with character “Lê” is the coin used during the early Le dynasty (前黎朝、980-1009) in Vietnam. On the front cover, there was name of the coin such as “Thiên Phúc trấn bảo”天福鎮寶 and the back had the character “黎”. Replying to this convince, Guangzhou government said that those foreign ships did not have intention to come to Jiaozhou to trade, but because of unexpected strong wind, they lost their way to Jiaozhou. However, this government of Guangzhou also agreed that withdrawal these coins was necessary. Therefore, whether the explanation is correct or not, we must confirm that in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, many foreign ships still continued to come to Jiaozhou to trade, at the same time, Annan government also actively used their coins in trading activities.

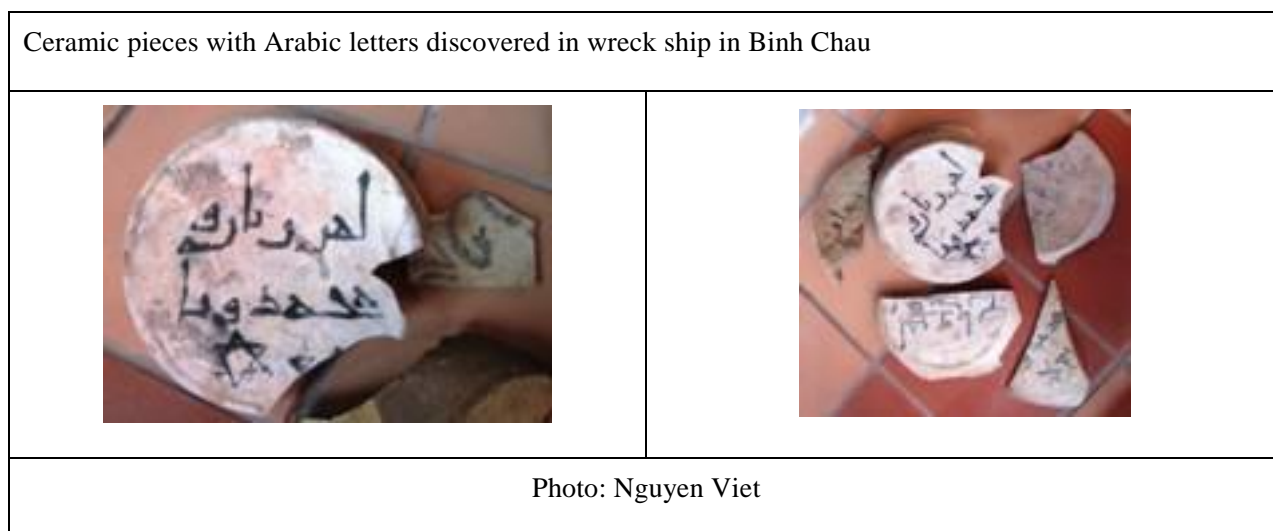


Archeological findings also showed the role of coastal areas of Vietnam in trading route from China to Western Asian countries. The 8/9 century CE shipwreck in Quang Ngai Coast (Central Vietnam) contributed evidences to the active trading activities of Hu merchants in the coastal areas of Vietnam. The shipwreck in Binh Châu (Quảng Ngãi Province) is called as “Arab ship” or “roped wreck” - a specific shipbuilding technology of Arab countries. With the coins, goods and facilities found inside this ship, the archeologists confirmed that this ship was shrunk in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century. The findings in this ship are similar to that of another Arab wreck in Indonesia dated in 9<sup>th</sup> century. Archeologists and authors of report on this ship

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「二月乙丑、（中略）時右威衛中郎將周慶立為安南市舶使、與波斯僧廣造奇巧、將以進內、監選使、殿中侍御史柳澤上書諫、上嘉納之」（『舊唐書』卷八、開元二年十二月乙丑條）。

determined that the presence of many coins with square hole in this Arab ship was due to trading purpose with countries such as Đại Việt, Champa.<sup>37</sup> The ceramic pieces with Arabic letters such as "Muhhamad Waba" (محمد ويا)-a name clarified the appearance of Arab or/ and Persian in this ship).



Champa - Đại Việt close relationship in this period also contributed to the contacts between Muslim merchants with Pu 蒲 as surname. As we know, Pu (Vietnamese: Bồ) family name was commonly used for Persian merchants in Chinese documents. In Champa, where Muslim traders had set up stations as one link in their long chain of trade, Pu (蒲、"Bồ" in Vietnamese) families spread and stayed. *Complete Annals of Đại Việt* wrote: "In 986, (the emperor of early Le dynasty) ordered Ngô Quốc Ân (吳國恩) to go to tribute to the Song dynasty and talked about a Champa people named Bồ La Át (蒲羅遏) who brought more than 100 person with him to find shelter".<sup>38</sup> That meant in this period, there were Muslims who migrated to the northern part of Vietnam, Lý Dynasty's territory.<sup>39</sup>

This migration flow continued in next 2 centuries. For example, in May, 1124, another group of Pu people came to Đại Việt from Champa. *The Complete Annals of Đại Việt* mentioned that Pu people of Champa with Persian origin named "Bồ Đà La" (蒲陀羅) brought 30 persons with him to migrate to Đại Việt.<sup>40</sup> We also found out some documents "referring" to the appearance of Persian in northern Vietnam in 12<sup>th</sup> century. In 1121, in May, governor of Giao Giáp (交甲管) named Phạm Ba Tư (范波司) "offered white deer" to the emperor.<sup>41</sup> The proper name "Ba Tư" 波司 could prove the Persian origin of this person.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.drnguyenviet.com/?id=6&cat=1&cid=105>

<sup>38</sup> 「遣吳國恩如宋報聘、仍言占城人蒲羅遏率其族百餘」 『大越史記全書』本紀卷之一、戊七年〈宋雍熙三年〉條。

<sup>39</sup> For more information please refer to: Pham Thi Thanh Huyen (2012), Vai trò của thương nhân Ả rập, Ba Tư trong việc truyền bá Islam vào Champa (Role of Arab, Persian merchants in spreading Islam into Champa), Kỷ yếu hội thảo quốc tế: Quan hệ Việt Nam- Tây Nam Á (Proceedings of international conference: Vietnam- South West Asian relationship)

<sup>40</sup> 「五月、占城國人波司蒲陀羅等三十人來附」 (『大越史記全書』本紀卷之三、甲辰五年宋宣和六年五月條)。

<sup>41</sup> 「五月、交甲管范波司獻白鹿」 (『大越史記全書』本紀卷之一、壬寅三年宋宣和四年條)。

During Trần Dynasty, the Middle Eastern cultural presence in this court was also clear. In fact, in 1268, the junior ruler Trần Thánh Tông 陳聖宗 and his older brother was reported to dance in the Hu style in the royal palace to amuse their father, the senior emperor, Trần Thái Tông 陳太宗. The older brother changed clothes and put on a white cotton clothes as a gift of his father.<sup>42</sup> Wearing white clothing while dancing the Hu dance was not a tradition in Chinese or Vietnamese culture. On the other hand, in the Islamic culture, the white color represented for cleanliness, purification.

As Li Tana (2006) pointed out when she surveyed *An Nam chí lược* (A short history of Annam 安南志略) and *Yuanshi* 元史, it can be seen that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century there were many Muslim merchants in Đại Việt. However, there are some points which should be argued here. “When Mongol envoys visited Đại Việt in 1266, they found a good number of Muslims residing there. This discovery prompted a letter written by the Mongol emperor Kublai to Đại Việt in 1267, in which he criticized the Việt court for not allowing the numerous Huiho to talk to his envoys during their visit. In 1268, Kublai followed up with another attempt to approach the Huiho in Đại Việt, demanding that Emperor Trần Thánh Tông send the Muslim merchants to China so that he could ask them about the situation in the Middle East. Thánh Tông replied evasively, claiming that there had only been two Muslim merchants in the country, but that as both had died. Kublai’s request could not be met, something the emperor angrily denounced as a lie.”<sup>43</sup>

As can be seen, thanks to Đại Việt’s geographical position, open policy of governments as well as relationship with Champa and China during the period from 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century, northern Vietnam involved in the contact with the Islamized and not yet Islamized people from the Islamic world frequently.

## **Conclusion:**

Trade boom in Southeast Asia and between China and Western Asian region from 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century especially from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century created favor condition for inter-cultural connections between involved regions. The development of navigation technologies as well as the geography as a science in the Islamic World during the Abbasid Caliphate nourished the awareness and writings about the world including northern Vietnam - a far-flung region. Traders such as Sulayman Tajir Sirafi and geographers of the Islamic World such as: Ibn-Khurdadbeh, Al-Ma’sudi, Al-Idrisi... helped us much to trace the relationship between the two regions from the early period of Islam. By connecting scattered information in historical documents of Vietnam, China

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<sup>42</sup> 「冬十月，宋人來附。〈先是，宋國偏居江南，元人往往侵伐，至是以海船三十艘裝載財物及妻子浮海來蘿葛原。至十二月，引赴京，安置于街媯坊，自號回鷄，蓋我國呼宋國為鷄國，以宋有段子藥材等物置賣為市，故也〉」『大越史記全書』本紀卷之五、甲戌二年（宋咸淳十年，元至元十一年）冬十月條）。

<sup>43</sup> Li Tana (2006), A view from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast, *Journal of Southeast Asia Studies*, 37, p.90.

and descriptions in geographical and traveler books of the Islamic world, we can see a more comprehensive picture of good cultural and economic relationship between northern Vietnam and the Islamic world. The larger vision of the writers is that: whether there is a diaspora of Islamic merchants in northern Vietnam during this historical period, the role of the traders in spreading Islam in Vietnam in general and northern Vietnam in particular. These questions will be continued to examine in other papers.